

Investigating Knowledge and Use of Iraqi EFL University Learners Of Hedging Devices

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1- Introduction

Hedging is the process whereby speakers 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 (Salager-Myers, 2000:3). This position associates hedges with scientific imprecision and defines them as linguistic cues of bias which avoid personal accountability for statements. In our daily interactions, we feel the need to modulate our messages to guarantee a certain level of acceptability and possibility of existence (ibid, 1995:141)

Myers (1989:12) argues that hedges are better understood as positive or negative strategies. Banks (1994:6) argues that a certain degree of hedging has become conventionalized, i.e., that the function of hedges is to conform to an established writing style. The appropriate use of hedging strategies is a significant communicative resource for student writers at any proficiency level. The problem is that proficiency in the pragmatic area appears to be notoriously difficult to achieve in a foreign language.

Hyland (1994:240) remarks that the use of modality presents considerable problems for linguistically unsophisticated writers of academic texts. Hedges may be expressed by different constructions:- modal auxiliary verbs, modal lexical verbs, auxiliary verbs, adjectival and nominal modal phrases, if clauses, compound hedge, introductory phrases, and approximators of degree.

Modal expressions are complex because they are poly pragmatic, that is, they can simultaneously convey a range of different meanings. It is difficult to relate particular forms to specific functions on a one – to one basis because a single linguistic form such as 'could', for example, can express ability and permission as well as possibility (Coates, 1987:110). Particular items can therefore only be understood as expressions of doubt and certainty by attending to the context in which they occur. Meanings do not reside in the items themselves but are assigned to utterances which contain them. This conveys the idea that the concept of hedging is vague in itself, and therefore it is not easy to limit it within certain boundaries.

Hedging appears to be an area which L2 students find problematic (Hyland 1996, 2000) and often a neglected area in teaching. Darian (1995:101) also comes to the conclusion that "hedges, probably the clearest indicators of hypotheses". Hedging devices are complex for foreign learners for two reasons: First, hedging devices can simultaneously convey a range of different meanings. Another difficulty is that, epistemic meanings can be signaled in many different ways, and with a variety of devices and expressions.

The problem lies in that EFL college students may hardly use the hedging devices appropriately in academic discourse due to the constraints of language competence or cultural background.

The study aims at:

- 1- Identifying the level of EFL college students in recognizing hedges in English .
- 2- Identifying the level of EFL college students in producing hedges in English .
- 3- Finding out the differences EFL college students' recognizing and producing hedging devices.
- 4- Identifying the errors made by EFL college students on the test of hedges.

It is hypothesized that:

- 1- The level of EFL college students in recognizing hedges is below the average .
- 2- The level of EFL college students in producing hedges is below the average .
- 3- Most Iraqi EFL college students show greater tendency towards using particular hedging devices such as modals auxiliary , lexical verbs and they neglect other devices.
- 4- Iraqi EFL college students face difficulty in mastering hedging devices at recognition and production.

The steps adopted to fulfill the aims of the study are as follows :

1. Presenting a theoretical background about hedging devices.
- 1- Selecting a sample of Iraqi EFL college students as subjects for conducting a test to investigate their recognition and production of hedging devices.
- 2- Administering a diagnostic test to find out the level and difficulties they may face in using the various devices.
- 3- Analyzing the results of the test in order to reveal the difficulties EFL college students face and the sources of their errors.

The population of the study is confined to EFL college students at fourth stage at the Department of English, College of Education at two Universities: Babylon and Al- Qadissiya during the academic year (2008-2009).

2- Exploring the concept of Hedging

The term " hedge" refers to the idea of barrier "limit", "defense" or to the means used to protect or defend oneself. As Hyland (1998:1) states , the study of hedging in different contexts has only just begun , and he points out that straightforward definitions of hedging are not common in literature .Crystal(1975:11) demonstrates that the area of hedging has in fact been described as "a huge meadow of research" for linguistics. 'Hedge' as a linguistic concept is introduced by Lakoff (1972 cited in Crompton 1997:271). This linguistic phenomenon is understood by linguists differently. In the arena of academic discourse there is no a common understanding or a clear definition of the concept.

Hedges are seen as pragmalinguistic communicative features of academic language. Lakoff (1972:462) asserts that "natural language sentences are neither true nor false nor sensical but true to a certain extent and false to a certain extent, true in certain respects and false in others". Therefore, from a functional viewpoint he explains hedges as "words or phrases whose job is to make things fuzzy"(ibid,195) this definition is the starting point for several studies on this phenomenon.

Hyland (1998:1) defines hedges as devices used to convey tentativeness to reflect uncertainty. Hedges draw attention to the fact that statements do not just communicate ideas, but also the writer's attitude to them and to readers . Following Lakoff, Brown and Levinson (1987) develop a different perspective on the basis of speech act theory and consider hedges as strategies for minimizing the threat to face. Along the same line with Brown and Levinson , Myers (1989:12) argues that hedging can be explained by positive and negative "politeness strategies". He also argues that social variables like social distance and power difference exist in academic writing. Academic writers have to use the same linguistic strategies because an academic knowledge claim is Face Threatening Act for other researchers in the field. This is the approach of hedging as an interpersonal negative politeness phenomenon.

Hedging has also been approached as a textual precision tool adjusting propositions to the shared knowledge of senders and addressees. The supporters of this view argue that the association of hedging with fuzziness or vagueness might obscure the important function of hedges (Salager -Meyer 1993). Rounds (1981) asserts that hedges are not used simply to make things fuzzy but on the contrary to make scientific claims more precise. Skelton (1988:37) supports this view by saying that hedges are not always a problem or a cover up tactic but also a resource to express scientific uncertainty and doubt. "Science has always oscillated between the desire to be precise and the impossibility of quantifying accurately the world" (Gilbert and Mulkay 1984 cited in Salager- Mayer 1994:151). Conceptual fuzziness in the form of hedges can be thought to serve the textual function of language

According to Salager - Meyer (1994:154), Lakoff is talking about purposive vagueness and tentativeness to make statements more acceptable to the reader/hearer. By hedging, one can adjust the proposition to the assumed knowledge and expectations of the intended audience. Hedges provide ways of being more precise in reporting results.

In fact, it is difficult to interpret the meaning of hedges in one way only, so they are polypragmatic (Hyland 1996a:437). In other words, hedging is a multi faceted linguistic phenomenon. It is a well known fact that "argumental arrogance" is not well regarded by the scientific community (Blisset 1972 cited in Hyland 1996a:141). Learners usually tone down

their claims in order to protect themselves from certain attacks. One of the most important linguistic devices to tone down the statements is the use of hedges.

Another possibility of interpreting the term is that hedges express the extent to which the writers commit themselves to the truth value of their statements. Crompton (1997:252) defines hedge as "an item of language which the speaker uses to explicitly qualify his/her lack of commitment to the truth of a proposition". Hyland (1996:143-8) summarizes the definition as follows: "A hedge is any linguistic means used to indicate either 1) a lack of complete commitment to the truth of a proposition or 2) desire not to express a perspective on their statements." Applied linguists do not agree on the definition of a hedge, since they have different viewpoints and different theoretical assumptions. Salager-Meyer (1998:37-8) argues that the different definitions of hedge represent the various developments of this concept. She claims that insisting on objectivity and absolute precision is not applicable to social sciences including linguistics because hedge is "culturally inherent" to language and it is a "mental phenomenon".

Clemen (1997:235) explains that the concepts "hedge" and "hedging" find their way from logic and semantics into the study of texts in 1966 by Weinrich under the heading of "metalinguistic operators". However, Lakoff is commonly recognized as the scholar who introduced the term hedge into linguistics, Lakoff (1972:195) proposes that natural language concepts have vague boundaries fuzzy edges and sentences can often be false or true to some extent.

Also the theory of speech acts is used by Fraser (1974) in the study of hedging. In his study, Fraser (1974:1) investigates some sentences that he calls "hedged performatives". These sentences can be considered as the "performance of the illocutionary act" which are hedged through the main verbs, Fraser is mainly concerned with the illocutionary force of a statement. In his study, he draws a distinction between "strongly performative" such as (1a), (1b) and (1c) and weakly performative like (1d) and (1e).

(1a) I can promise you that we will be there on time.

(1b) I must advise you to remain quiet.

(1c) I have to admit that you have a point.

(1d) I have to promise you that we will be on time.

(1e) I must authorize you to leave now (ibid).

The concept of hedging has become wider when Hubler (1983:20) draws a distinction between understatement and hedges in order to gain more chance of getting the idea ratified by the hearer. Hedges affect the validity or the claim to the validity of the proposition a speaker makes, such as "you are tired, I suppose." Hubler is still using "hedge" in a very strict sense. It doesn't deal with the interpersonal and pragmatic aspects of hedges. Hyland (1998:5) defines hedges as "the means by which writers and speakers can present a proposition as an opinion rather than a fact in items are only hedges in their epistemic sense and only they make uncertainty". Zuck and Zuck (cited in Varttala, 2001:14) define "hedges" as "the process where by the author reduces the strength of what he is writing". Salager-Meyer (2002:3-4) mentions that "hedge" is a strategy of negative politeness, (i.e.) the speaker does not want to interfere with the hearer. Yule (1996:38-9) claims that negative politeness form that emphasizes the hearer's right to be free so it can be seen as a deference strategy.

By and large, hedges balance objective information and subjective evaluation as stated in Hyland (1998). They can be a powerful persuasive factor in gaining acceptance for claims. Instead of saying "I know", members of academia should rather "assume" or "suggest" even when addressing other scholars (Hyland 1996a:434). Hedges are a major contribution to the negotiation of social knowledge because writers must socially mediate their arguments, shaping their evidence, observations, data and knowledge valued by their community. He calls the 'disciplinary gatekeepers' (Hyland 1996b:252). Skelton (1988: 40) suggests that hedging language seems to be a subset of commentative language which serves the function of modulating propositions: By means of hedging, a user distinguishes between what s/he says and what s/he thinks about what s/he says.

2.1 Hedging as an expression of doubt

One definition of hedging is provided by Hyland(1994:240) who interprets Lakoff's (1972) definition saying that it implies being "less than fully committed to the certainty of the referential information given". Similarly Biber (1988:240) cited in Hinkel (1997:372) views hedges as "markers of possibility /probability and uncertainty". Tribble (1996: 159) defines hedging as "a process in which users reduce their commitment to particular idea or opinion through the use of lexical or grammatical devices.....". In addition, Thompson (2001:1) also views it as an expression of uncertainty. Shapin's (1984:495) account of Boyle's (1772) consideration of his own mitigation language (cited in Swales(1990:112), shows "I speak so doubtingly and use so often 'perhaps', 'it seems', 'it is not improbable', and other such expressions as argue a diffidence to the truth of the opinions I incline to"

2.2 The Significance of Hedging

It is clear from the different definitions given on hedging that it has a remarkable significance in language. Skelton (1988:38) makes rather a strong statement to express the vitality of hedging in language "language without hedging is language without life". This means hedging could be considered an essential mental attitude without which it would be impossible to discuss or describe the world.

Bloor and Bloor (1991: 7) explain that :-

In recent years, it has come to attention of linguistics that, contrary to the popular belief that academic learning is 'impersonal and factual,' a number of such genres in English are rich in hedged propositions

Moreover, Holmes (1988:23) stresses that learners need to know "the relative frequency of different devices in different contexts" and suggests that 'simplicity' and 'naturalness' are useful criteria for epistemic devices inclusion in materials of ESL textbooks.

Myers (1988:4) states that in some cases one researcher must always humble himself or herself before the community as a whole. He regards hedging as one of the strategies of negative politeness which creates social interaction between writers and their readers. Moreover, he thinks that by hedging and introducing one's thoughts politely, the writer allows readers' judgment and further work.

Hyland (1994:241) like Meyers (1989:12), considers hedging as a reflection of the relation between the writer and reader. Hyland (1994:241) also adds that hedges are of great importance because the use of hedges to temper the significance of statement and acknowledge the place of the work in the research literature, therefore, strengthens the effectiveness and credibility of argumentation.

The factor that stresses the importance of mastering the appropriate hedging usage is that the lack of awareness of the use of expressions of tentativeness and the need to mediate claims in academic text may possibly render or even distort comprehension.

Crompton (1997:271) believes that hedging has pragmatic, rhetorical, as well as cognitive roles. Furthermore, he sees that hedges reflect the degree of speaker's confidence in her/his proposition. Hedges meet a discourse feature in all disciplines except strophysics (Hyland, 1998:346)

2.3 Aspects of Hedging

Hedging can be broadly defined as a genre-specific, interactional, multi-functional phenomenon which integrates semantic, pragmatic, social and cognitive factors. To understand the pragmatic aspects of hedging, it seems better to start with its semantic aspects. Thus the researcher begins from a closer scrutiny of the semantics of hedges in order to lay the foundation for a discussion of how hedging has been characterized in pragmatic terms.

2.4. Hedging as a Semantic Phenomenon

Lakoff's semantic characterization of hedging portrays hedges as words that may realize two seemingly contradictory functions, namely these of making things fuzzier or less fuzzy. In fact it appears that most scholars have approached hedges as devices with the primary function of making things semantically fuzzier. It is possible to illustrate at the semantic level two dimensions.

2.5. Hedging as Pragmatic Phenomenon

In much of the more recent work relating to hedging, hedging has been analyzed with an eye on the communication situation, particularly the effect of the strategy on the relationship between sender and addressee in face - to- face communication. Addressing hedging in news writing, Zuck and Zuck(1985 cited in Varttala ,2001:172) define the hedging as " the process whereby the author reduce the strength of what he is writing". Furthermore, in a cross- linguistic treatment of hedges in philosophical text, Markkanen and Schroder (1998:48) define hedging as a strategy of " saying less than one means", the functions of strategy being to modify the writer's responsibility for the truthfulness of utterance, and to modify the definiteness of an utterance or its information.

Among the main pragmatic features which shape the research article as the principle vehicle for knowledge and which distinguish it from other forms of academic discourse are hedges(Hyland ,2000:245). Crystal (1997:182) declares that a hedge is an application in pragmatics and discourse analysis of a general sense of the word". In the same talk, Brown and Levinson (1987:50)state that " hedge is a particle word, phrase that modifies the degree of membership that is private ,or true than perhaps might be expected". However, Holmes(1984:4) demonstrates that there are a variety of linguistic means by which a speaker can signal a wish not to impose ,(i .e) hedges reduce the strength of the utterance.

Since hedging is closely related to the attitude a speaker has towards the proposition expressed and inferring the speaker's propositional attitude is in fact a pragmatic process: the speaker's attitude is set down entirely encoded in utterance and even if it is encoded as 'I suppose' used in (3) the teacher does not believe or even suppose that the capital of U.K. is Paris (Krifka , 1999:3):

A pupil to his teacher

Pupil : I *suppose* the capital of USA is Hong Kong, am I right?

Teacher : I *suppose* the capital of U.K. is Paris, am I right?

We can conclude that hedging is a pragmatic phenomenon. This is right way to view hedging since pragmatics can accommodate social factors as contextual assumptions and implications on particular occasions of utterance. Crismore and Kopple (1988:185), in turn, see hedges as items that "signal a tentative or cautious assessment of the truth of referential information".

Hubler (1983:10) starts from the presumption that in language use " there are opposition to all sentences" , and the use of hedging phenomenon provides an opportunity to prepare for possible opposition. This illustrates that Hubler takes the reasons underlying the use of hedges to be pragmatic by nature in so far as he emphasizes the interactional aspects underlying hedging.

The most thorough treatment of pragmatic features of hedging so far is to be found in literature related to politeness theories, mainly in work originating from Brown and Levinson's (1978,1987) well- known study of politeness phenomenon. It seems that the most earlier pragmatic portrayals of hedging may in one way or another be associated with the expression of linguistic politeness. Watts et al. (1992:1) explain that the notion of linguistic politeness has to do with the way in which human beings " successfully manage interpersonal relationships to achieve both individual and group goals".

The back bone of Brown and Levinson's (1987:13) modal is thus the idea that interlocutors are aware of two basic kinds of desire regarding their face ,namely, " the desire to be unimpeded in one's actions (negative face) and the desire to be approved of (positive face)". Brown and Levinson attempt to account for politeness as a systematic feature of linguistic interaction.

2.6. Hedging as a politeness device

Holmes(1988:2) says that hedging can be expressed through epistemic device. Also he speaks about epistemic modality as a politeness device which reflects "deference rather than uncertainty". Similarly, many writers (e.g. Myers1989; Hinkel 1997) consider hedging as one of the negative politeness strategies which implies distancing oneself and avoiding imposition on others, as a sign of politeness by Brown and Levinson (1987) in their unified model of politeness in spoken context.

Negative politeness , according to Brown and Levinson (1987:116), refers to addressee's " want to have his freedom of action unhindered and his attention unimpeded . It performs the function of minimizing the particular imposition that the face threatening act unavoidably effects."

(4) I wonder if you could help me with lifting this box.

Positive politeness is "redress directed to the addressee's positive face ,his perennial desire that his wants (or the actions, acquisitions /values resulting from them) should be thought of as desirable" (ibid:101).

(5) You really should sort of study harder.

Myers(1989:14) believes that hedging can be a requirement when naming something as well as when proposing something .He disagrees that all hedging expressions have the role of expressing probability ,for these are the ones that show the relation between the writer and reader in scientific articles can be interpreted as the politeness marker.

(6) The findings **suggest** a common origin of some unclear and mitochondrial introns and common elements in the mechanisms of their splicing .(ibid).

Hedging and politeness are not synonymous, however. As Myers points out hedging is a politeness strategy when it marks a claim, or any other statement, as being provisional, pending acceptance in the literature , acceptance by the community – in other words, acceptance by the readers(1989: 12).

2.7. Cognitive aspect of hedging

While there is no agreement as to the exact definition of hedging, what is clear is that any definition must take into consideration semantic as well as pragmatic and cognitive aspects of the phenomenon. Consequently, any comprehensive definition of hedging must strive to integrate these three factors, as it is not easy to draw clear boundaries between them.

Channell (1994:99) proposes that semantics plus pragmatics equals meaning .She defines ' meaning ' as any number of propositions which an addressee can derive from an utterance, taking into account two very important factors : context and background knowledge .It is not enough for the addressers to produce an utterance which is hedged .In derived meaning from an utterance ,the addressee must draw not only on lexico-grammatical background knowledge but also on pragmatic background knowledge about language and it's relationship with context .

This background knowledge would have to be common to both addresser and addressee , so that the later could " go beyond the information given and use principles of categorization which have been observed as a fundamental aspect of human cognition "(Chanell,1994: 199).

Interpretation of a hedge ,therefore, requires the ability to categorize. One commonly held view is that humans structure categories by first prototype and then schema (Taylor,1975:89).To categorize a hedge, then, the addressee must draw on the same concepts of prototypicality (i.e. the same cognitive reference points) as the addresser and engage a shared schema comprising extra-linguistic factors such as perception and encyclopedic knowledge (ibid) .

2-8 Social aspects of hedging

Not only semantic ,pragmatic and cognitive ,but also social aspects must be considered in comprehensive of hedging. Salager - Meyer (2000:180) postulates that hedging is socially constructed and thus a learned linguistic resource which makes linguistic behaviour more socially acceptable in accordance with certain social norms established by a given culture of a given moment. Hedging can be said to shape and guide linguistic behaviour among members of discourse community in order to meet certain conventionalized expectations by those communities which is regarded as a key factor in genre construction. Moreover, Wills'(1997:134) hedging competence ,which entails knowledge and understanding of the conventionalisms , is often considered an integral part of general linguistic competence which allows us to assume our place in a community.

Hedging is used to achieve certain specific intentions ,within certain limitation , as well .It is possible for a specialist to exploit the rules and conventions of a genre in order to achieve special effects or private intentions , as it were , but s/he cannot break away from

such constrains completely without being noticeably odd (Bhatia, 1993:14). Thus, hedging can operate on different levels of communication at the same time.

2.9 Classification of Hedging Devices

Hedging in academic learning can be expressed by means of various lexical, grammatical and syntactic devices depending on how broadly we understand the term. However, due to the fact that hedging is primarily viewed as a socio-pragmatic phenomenon there is little agreement among linguists about what linguistic devices should and should not be considered as hedges. There are some functionally-based approaches, such as Crompton's (1997, 271) that consider *hedge* as a concept reserved for expressions of epistemic modality with the sole function of avoiding commitment.

Most of the researchers on the notion of hedging are, however, unwilling to see form and function as inextricably linked, but prefer to read certain forms as hedges in certain contexts but not in others. One such researcher is Salager-Meyer (1994, 1998, 2000), who favours an eclectic approach which includes various manifestations of the concept. In her 1994 paper, she argues that many studies of hedging have not placed enough emphasis on the fact that hedges are primarily the product of a mental attitude and have looked for prototypical linguistic forms for their realization without considering that these linguistic forms may not always have a hedging function. Salager-Meyer (1998: 298) also suggests that "the only way to identify hedging devices is by means of introspection and contextual analysis with the help and advice of an expert in the discipline analyzed".

If hedging is the product of a mental attitude (as posited by Salager-Meyer, 1994; 1998; 2000), and therefore a subjective phenomenon which functions in a particular context, there is so little agreement on which lexical items, phrases or syntactic structures should be classed as hedges and which strategies can be used to convey a hedging function in a given context. Clemen (1997: 243), for example, provides a list of the most frequent hedging devices, such as epistemic qualifiers, certain personal pronouns, indirect constructions, parenthetical constructions, subjunctive / conditional, concessive conjuncts, negation. Hyland (1994: 240) includes "If"-clauses, questions and time references. The use of passive, agentless and impersonal constructions has also been classified as a hedging device by many authors (such as Markkanen & Schröder, 1997; Salager-Meyer, 1998; Clemen, 1997).

In addition to lexico-syntactic items, other authors such as Hyland (1996, 1998) have pointed to the existence of other discourse-based strategies that weaken scientific statements by limiting the confidence invested in the claims made for the research. Along with the same lines, Lewin (1998:453) claims that in the discourse stratum the realizations of certain optional genre structures (moves/steps) can be considered as hedge since their function is to protect the author from possible attack (e.g. "establishing the gap the present research is meant to fill" or "offering implications for future research"). Since the types of hedges are many, the writer of this research is going to discuss one of them. The type of hedges that she is going to present is the taxonomy of hedges by Salager - Meyer because the taxonomy of Salager - Meyer is more complete than others.

The taxonomy of hedges is based on Salager - Meyer classification (1997:152); typically hedging is expressed through the use of the following strategic stereotypes:-

1- Modal auxiliary verbs: the most tentative ones being : may, might, can, could, would, should, for example :

(7) Such a measure **might** be more sensitive to changes in health after specialist treatment.

(8) Concerns that naturally low cholesterol level **could** lead to increased mortality from other causes may well be unfounded.

2- Modal lexical verbs (or the so - called speech act verbs used to perform acts such as doubting and evaluating rather than merely describing) of varying degree of illocutionary force: to seem, to appear (epistemic verbs), to believe, to assume, to suggest, estimate, tend, think, to argue, indicate, propose, speculate. Although a wide range of verbs can be used in this way, there tends to be a heavy reliance on the above mentioned verbs especially in academic writing. The examples:

(9) Our analyses *suggest* that a high dose of the drug can lead to relevant blood pressure reduction.

(10) In spite of its limitations, the study *appears* to have a number of important strategies.

(11) Without specific training, medical students' communication skills

seem to decline during medical training.

3-Adjectival, adverbial and nominal modal phrases:

a- Probability adjectives e.g. possible, probable, un/likely. **b-**Nouns e.g. assumption, claim, possibility, estimate, suggestion. **c-**Adverbs (which could be considered as non-verbal modals) e.g.perhaps, possibly, probably, practically, likely, presumably, virtually, apparently. For examples:

(12)Septicemia is *likely* to result, which might threaten his life.

(13) *Possibly* the setting of the neural mechanisms responsible for this sensation is altered in patients with Chronic Fatigue syndrome.

(14) This is *probably* due to the fact that Greenland Eskimos consume diets with a high content of fish.

4-Approximators of degree, quantity, frequency and time e.g.

approximately, roughly, about, often, occasionally, generally, usually, somewhat, somehow, a lot of. For example:

(15) Fever is present in *about* a third of cases and sometimes there is neutropenia.

(16)Persistent subjective fatigue *generally* occurs in relative isolation.

5- Introductory phrases such as " I believe", to our knowledge, it is our view that, we feel that, which express the author's personal doubt

and direct involvement. For example :

(17) **We believe** that the chronic fatigue reflects a compiler interaction of several factors.

6-If clauses e.g. if true, if anything. For example:

(18) **If true**, then, the study contradicts the myth that fishing attracts the bravest and strongest men.

7- Compound hedges: These are phrases made up of several hedges, the commonest forms being:

a- A modal auxiliary combined with a lexical verb with a hedging content e.g., it would appear.

b- A lexical verb followed by a hedging adverb or adjective where the adverb (or adjective) reinforces the hedge already inherent in the lexical verb e.g., (it seems reasonable, probably). Such compound hedges can be **double hedges** (it may suggest that; it seems likely that; it would indicate that ; this probably indicates);**treble hedges**(it seems reasonable to assume that); **quadruple** hedges (it would seem somewhat unlikely that, it may appear somewhat speculative that).

As can be seen then, all the forms presented above imply that the statements in which the appear contain personal beliefs based on plausible reasoning. Without these strategic, the readers imply that the information conveyed pertains to universally established knowledge.

2.10. Hedging in Academic Writing

Hedging has received some attention in the literature as a feature of spoken discourse mostly in casual conversation as a way of " qualifying categorical commitment and facilitating discussion " (Hyland, 1996a:433)

In recent years research has also been concerned with the study of the use of hedging in different academic genres such as research articles (Hyland 1994,1998 ,1998; Salgar-Meyer 1994; Myer's 1989; Skelton1988); scientific letters (Hyland 2000) ; Medical case reports (Salgar-Meyer 1994) ; text books (Hyland 2000,1994, Meyer 1997) and book reviews (Hyland 2000). Studies also compare different academic genres written either by the same author or by different authors (Varttala 2001)

Hyland (1998,1994) has recently analysed the adequacy of a range ESP and EAP textbooks in providing students with information on hedging and arranges that there is a neglect in covering this topic. Hyland (1998: 230) comments :

Generally the presentation of hedges in published texts is poor, with information scattered ,explanations inadequate, practice material limited ,and alternatives to modal verbs omitted. This failure to adequately represent hedges therefore gives misleading information to students concerning both the importance of the concept and frequency of different devices.

Hedging appears to be an area which the students find problematic. (Hyland2000,1996,Hyland and Milton 1997) and often a neglected area in teaching.

Literature has also analysed how hedging could be used pedagogically for teaching academic writing .Hedging is seen as an important way of modulating the propositional content and expressing the writer-reader relationship it seems useful to raise learners' awareness of its presence in academic texts. A feature of academic writing is the need to be contains in one's claims or statements (Jordan, 1997: 240). In academic writing ,hedging is most appropriately described as " (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) .Writers are trying to advance either support for or repudiation of some theory or hypothesis .In doing so , hedges allow writers to express a perspective on their statements or the statements of others, to present –unproven claims with caution and to enter a dialogue with their audience (Hyland,1998:6). Hyland (2000:193) comments " A clear awareness of the pragmatic impact of hedges and an ability to recognize them in texts, in crucial – the acquisition of rhetorical competence in any discipline" .

2.11. Concepts related to Hedging

By the term " hedging research " we mean a complex research within the fields of pragmatic , linguistics, semantics , logic and philosophy.In each of these researches , the term "hedge/ hedging" is referred to in a different way. Due to the wide range of meaning expressed by hedging, in pragmatics ,the concept of hedge/hedging is linked to politeness phenomena , these mitigates vagueness, evidentiality and modality .These linguistic concepts which may come close to hedging, having the same functions and use.

2.11.1 Modality

The most important concept that cuts across the area of hedges is that of modality. Most linguistic approaches to modality differentiate two major subtypes: *deontic modality*, which, according to Lyons (1977a: 823) "is concerned with the necessity or possibility of acts performed by morally responsible agents", and *epistemic modality*; which is the subtype of modality which is associated with hedging. Epistemic modality, as defined by Lyons (1977b: 797), refers to "any utterance in which the speaker explicitly qualifies his commitment to the truth of the proposition expressed by the sentence he utters".

Hedging is associated with epistemic modality since both epistemic modality and hedging express the degree of speaker's confidence in the proposition expressed. Hyland (1998:2)emphasizes that the link between hedging and epistemic modality by stating that writer or speaker's judgments about statement and their possible effects on interlocutors is the essence of hedging, and this clearly places epistemic modality at the centre of our interest. The domain of modality has been defined differently.

Halliday (1980:336) uses the terms " modality " versus " modulation" which ,to some extent, correspond to epistemic and rout meaning, respectively .He defines modulation as linguistic devices which "express various types of modulation of the process expressed in the clause ;modulation in terms of permissions, obligations and the like". According to Studds (1986: 4) it is possible to indicate the degrees of commitment to the truth of a proposition (i.e modality) , by the use of three kinds of linguistic items; propositions, illocutionary forces and individual lexical items. Markkanen and Schroder (1997 : 6) propose that epistemic modality can be considered as one of the sub-functions of hedging .

Since hedging conveys a range of meaning such as modification of the commitment to the truth value of proposition and also interpersonal meanings, considering hedging as an umbrella term with regard to epistemic modality seems to have some support, Palmer(1986:2) identifies epistemic modality , which expresses the speaker's degree of commitment to the truth of proposition and closely linked to hedging. He identifies three types of epistemic modality : speculative expresses uncertainty , deductive indicates an inference from observable evidence, and assumptive indicates inference from what is generally known

.According to Palmer, the notion of modality is vague and leaves open a number of possible definitions .

Lyons' (1997b:797) definition of epistemic modality, " Any utterance in which the speaker explicitly qualifies his commitment to the truth of the proposition expressed by the sentence he utters , whether the qualification is made explicit in the verbal component in the prosodic or paralinguistic component, in an epistemically modal or modalized utterance".

The connection between modality and hedges is very clear in the case of modal verbs with epistemic meaning. When hedges are taken to be modification of the commitment to the truth –value of propositions, Preisler (1986: 92) actually points out that even when modal forms convey speaker-external meaning ,there are often given interpersonal significance by the particular context in which they appear, usually as part of a tentativeness strategy .It seems possible to see the relationship between modality and hedges in two ways: either modality is the wider concept and includes hedges or the other way round , hedging is wider term and modality a part of it .

In sum, epistemic modality serves to indicate how confident language users are about the truth of the ideational materials they convey; it is often subdivided into two types of markers: hedge and boosters. Hedges are linguistic devices like perhaps," I guess" speakers employ to reduce the degree of liability to responsibility they might face in expressing the ideational material .

2.11.2 Vagueness

Vagueness is another concept close to hedging , and it refers , among other things , to the use of expression like **about , sort of** ,i.e. expressions that denote the impreciseness of quantity ,quality , or identify , which is very much like Lakoff's " fuzziness " (Channell 1990; 1994; Zuck, Zuck 1985).Similarly, Hahn (1983: 99) uses the term "vaghiety "(vagueness) When referring to the false assumption that the language in scientific text is exact.

Vagueness can fulfill two communicative functions. First, it can provide a more accurate representation of reality.Secondly, it can describe the state of knowledge more precisely or present certain facts in areas which are characterized by constant reformulation and reinterpretation , such as those situated within the scientific field .Hyland (1996b:244) emphasizes the existence of this type of hedges which expresses vagueness and lack of precision, describing them as content –oriented. However, he also lists other functions of hedging such as the author's wish to anticipate the negative consequence of being proved wrong and the function of expressing difference and politeness towards the audience.

Vagueness can simply be more appropriate for the communicative situation which takes place at specific time. Banks (1994:8) includes amongst the functions of hedges that of deliberately providing inconclusive or incomplete data , simply because greater precision is not considered necessary or because the communicative situation is in a pre-informative stage

Some writers use the words hedging / hedged and vagueness interchangeably .For example, Krifla (1999: 1) calls hedges " markers of vagueness" and Lindemann & Mauranen (2001: 463) call them ' vagueness' 'indicators ' .Or sometimes writers define one of them in terms of the other , for example Schaffner :Some hedging devices are used to make a statement more vague.This occurs whenever politicians want to reduce their commitment to the truth of a proposition being conveyed or when they want to mitigate possible negative , perlocutionary effect on their utterance . (Schaffner,1998: 200) .

2.11.3 Evidentiality

Another concept that cuts across the area of hedges and epistemic modality is evidentiality , again depending on how broadly hedge is understood (Markanen & Schroder, 1989:32) .Chafe & Nichols (1986: 271) define evidentiality as " any linguistic expression of attitudes toward knowledge " i.e. . assessment of its reliability .Knowledge , according to Chafe and Nichols has various models, beliefs ,induction , hearsay and deduction, each of which is based on a different source .Most of the expressions that Chafe and Nichols give as examples of the realization of these different modes are expressions that have also been included in hedges by other linguists .They use the term ' hedge ' only for expressions that denote that " the match between a piece of knowledge and category may be less than perfect" (ibid) , thus agreeing with Lakoff's original idea of hedges.

2.11.4 Mitigation

Mitigation is an interesting pragmatic concept which has attracted some attention. Fraser (1980 : 342) defines mitigation as a strategy for softening or reducing the strength of a speech act whose effects are ' un-welcomed ' to the hearer .However , mitigation is only one of the strategies available for modifying the strength of illocutionary force of one particular group of speech acts.

In fact , mitigation involves weakening the force with which the illocutionary point of a particular speech is presented. Moreover , it does refer to " any weakening of the force of the act being performed" to the hearer ,(ibid).Mitigation is a strategy used to reduce the anticipated negative effect of a speech act. However ,modifying the illocutionary force of speech acts different categories involves the speaker in expressing degree of belief, desire , strength of feelings and commitment(ibid).Salager-Meyer(2002:3-5) observes that mitigation can be obtained through hedging. At the same point, Fraser (1980 : 344) argues that ' hedges ' may create a mitigating effect. One function of mitigation is related to the usage ' in which the hedge mitigates the possible unfriendliness or unkindness of a statement , that is, where it is used for the sake of politeness' (Brown and Livenson,1978: 1510) (26) Could you possibly take me home.

2.12 Hedging and Grice's Maxims.

The concept of cooperation and politeness pervades nearly all human communication encounters . According to Grice (1975: 45-6) , there is a set of assumptions by interact ants that guide the conduct of conversation. The assumptions arise from basic rational considerations and help in guiding the effective as well as the efficient use of language in a discourse to further cooperative ends .Grice further expresses the cooperative principles as follows: "Make your conversational contribution such as required , at the stage at which it occurs ,by accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchanging in which you are engaged" (Grice, 1975: 45-6).

Grice identifies four basic maxims of conversation which jointly express a general cooperative principle: quantity , quality , relevance and manner .These maxims are briefly explicated as follows:

Quantity: Make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purpose of the exchange , do not make your contribution more informative or less informative.

Quality : Try to make your contribution one that is true. This means that the speakers should be truthful. They should not say what they think is false or make statements for which they have no evidence.

Relevance : speakers' contributions should relate clearly to the purpose of the exchange.

Manner : speakers' contributions should be perspicuous, clear , orderly and brief, avoiding obscurity ambiguity.

Hedging strategies flout Grice's maxims by providing information which from the point of view of rational economical end efficient communication is a social vacuum , could be described as over- informative , irrelevant, vague or imprecise (Holmes,1984: 3,3) The important point about maxim hedge is that none of them add truth- value to the utterance to which they are attached .Grundy (2000: 79) points that when we talk we do not only convey message, but frequently like to tell each other how informative well found relevant and perspicuous these messages are.

Maxim hedges are used with great frequency in ordinary talk. They have in many cases straight forward politeness applications (Brown and Levinson ,1987: 171).

Quantity hedges may suggest that not as much or not as precise information is provided as might be expected (Brown and Levinson ,1987: 176) **Roughly , more or less , approximately , I should think .**

(27) I mean, you know, it's a long way (ibid:167)

The maxim of Quality would serve as a warning to the addressee that the speaker's information might not be well found as would normally be expected. The Quality hedges may suggest that the speaker is not taking full responsibility for the truth of his utterance.

(28) There is some evidence to the effect that(ibid: 184)

Relevance hedges are useful ways of redressing offers or suggestions.

(29) The point is that smoking damages your health.

The last type of hedging, in relation to Grice's maxims, is the one which hedges the maxim of manner to take Grundy's example (2000 :79)

(30) It was dead funny if you see what I mean.

Having said ' It was dead funny ', the speaker realizes that he had produced an unintended pun, and so added ' if you see what I mean ' to advise hearers of the obscurity of his utterance. So manner, hedges can be used to redress all kinds of F T A. For example :

(31) you're not exactly thrifty, if you see what I mean).

2.13 Cultural Influences On Hedging and Non-Native Speakers Proficiency

Foreign students find the expression of commitment and detachment to their propositions notoriously problematic and a failure to hedge statements adequately is a common feature of second language writers, even those who have a good control of English grammar and lexis. This can seriously hamper a student's participation in their academic study.

The main reason for this failing is that the discourse features of academic writing are culture specific. The cultural perception of the appropriateness and desirability of hedging is an important factor affecting the incidence of hedging. Bloor and Bloor (1991: 7) express this as " there are clearly identifiable differences in the degree of directness, and concession permitted (or encouraged) in academic writing in different languages".

Schrder and Zimmer(2002:67-8) state that " in addition to lacking a complete repertoire of hedges, the second language speakers in our study lacked a knowledge of their semantic function and distribution". Thomas (1997:58) refers to a problem of inadequate linguistic knowledge and essentially involves different interpretations of equivalent speech acts as ' pragmalinguistic failure '. In essence, students just do not have the language to say what they want to say. "Sociopragmatic failure" on the other stems from cross- culturally different perceptions of what constitute appropriate linguistic behaviour. Second language students may have false perceptions of appropriate formality, directness, difference and other pragmatic rules required simply because they leave to think and write differently in their own cultures. So non – native speakers may have : false expectations of the social relationships and concomitant social behaviour required within the discourse community because of the different rules which operate within parallel communities in their own culture(Bloor and Bloor, 1991:8).

Non – native speakers may hardly use the hedging device appropriately in academic discourse due to the constraints of language competence or cultural background. According to Hinkel (2004:314), " research has shown that non –native speakers have a restricted lexical repertoire that often leads to a shortage of hedging devices employed in L2 written text". So Hyland (1996a:433) claims that adopting the authentic data on the high frequency use of hedging can be feasible and instrumental for non –native speakers writers. Thus, hedging represents a major "rhetorical gap" that second language students have to cross before they can gain membership of a discourse community and pursue their careers. But being non – native speaker does not necessarily mean that you will be unable to hedge effectively in a foreign language.

3.Data Collection

3.1 Introduction

This section is devoted to the description of the test which is the a method of collecting the data of this work information. Moreover, it collects data about the subjects to whom the test is applied as well as material's selection. This chapter also provides a simplified explanation of basic characteristics of the test. Moreover, the present chapter also describes the pilot and the main administration of the test along with the scoring scheme adopted.

3.2 Objectives of the test

Testing is intended to provide the tester with information about the learner's ability to perform in the target language .Davies (1968:5) states that " the good test is an obedient servant since it follows and apes the teaching". Alan(1990:30)points that a good test helps the teacher to diagnose his learners' difficulty .Language testing is used to test hypotheses in relation to our understanding of language and language learning.

According to Spolsks (1989:140 cited in Abi Samra,2003:6), Language tests involve measuring a subject's knowledge, and proficiency in the use of a language. For this reason the present test is constructed to investigate the university students' performance in use and knowledge of hedging devices. Also the goals of this testing is to explore the nature of The difficulty faced by Iraqi EFL university students , and to find out the causes that lie behind committing such errors so that adequate remedial recommendations can be proposed.

The test measures the learners' performance in using hedging devices at both the recognition and the production levels. It is important mentioning that the learners have not study these devices as a seperated one; rather they study these devices inclusively during the four- year period of EFL learning in linguistics.

3.3 The Subjects

The sample of the study comprises of (100) subjects of the fourth academic year (2008- 2009) of the Departments of English at the colleges of Education, Universities of Babylon and AL-Qadisiysa .Fifty students of the sample have been taken from University of Babylon while the other half has been taken from University of AL-Qadisiysa . The first half of the sample represents (48 %) of the total student population while the second half of the sample represents (42 %) of the total student population .They are native speakers of Arabic who have been studying EFL for eight years in general and four years at the Department of English •

The test has been applied to the fourth year students because they are the most advanced learners of English at the university level before graduation.

3.4 Material Selection

The majority of the items of the test have been selected from a number of papers, books and websites adopted in Chapter Two. The items have been selected in such away that they cover , as far as possible, the different forms of hedging devices. Appendix (1) shows the first version of the test.

The selection of the test items has been presented to a jury of experts. A jury committee of eleven experienced university instructors whose names are arranged according to their scientific ranks and alphabetical order. ⁽¹⁾Members of the jury were requested to give their opinions of the suitability of the technique and items used and to suggest any modification they might find necessary. For this reason, some items were deleted and others modified. Appendix (2) shows the final version of the test after the Jurors' suggestion for modification.

3.5 Test characteristics

One of the most significant features of tests is the development of the twin concepts of reliability and validity, " any test that we use must be appropriate in items of our objectives, dependable in the evidence it provides , and applicable to our particular situation " (Harris,1969: 13) • Reliability and validity are two technical properties of a test that indicate the quality and usefulness of the test. These are the two most important features of a test.

3.5.1 Validity

Validity is defined as " the degree to which a test measures what it claims or purports , to be measuring " (Brown ,1996: 231) .Validity is not only a characteristic of a test , but a feature of the inferences made on the basis of the test scores and the uses to which a test is put. One validates not a test , but " a principle for making inferences" (Abi Samra, 2003:7). Traditionally, testers distinguish different types of validity : Content, predictive, concurrent, construct and even face validity.

Hughes (1989: 30) remarks that language testing can be put on a scientific footing through construct validity and the test would have content validity only if it included a proper sample of the relevant structures.

Face validity , on the other hand , means the degree to which a test looks right to the testers, test administrators, educators , and other people concerned with learning (Harris, 1983: 21).

3.5.2 Reliability

Reliability is defined by Mousavi (1997: 117) as " consistency of measures across different items " .Reliability is concerned with the extent to which we can depend on the test

results. (Weir, 1990:78) Test reliability refers to the stability of test scores when administered on two different occasions under the same (not identical) circumstances (Lado, 1961:330).

Many linguists among whom Lado (1962 : 332), Harris (1969:15-16) and Gronlund (1976 : 102) affirm that the reliability of the test can be estimated by means of four methods. The first one is characterized by two administrations of the same test at the same testees with a reasonable time interval between them. In this way, the test is said to be reliable provided that the results of the two tests should be similar. This is known as a test- retest method.

The second method is related to the use of two different versions of the same test which are said to be equal in length, difficulty, time limits, format and other related aspects.

The third method consists two halves of the items, the procedure whereby two scores for each individual are obtained. This is known as split - half method.

The fourth method of estimating the reliability of the test is that of Kuder- Richardson whereby one form of the test requires a single administration.

The present test reliability is estimated by adopting the fourth method of which the following formula can be considered:

$$KR21 = \frac{K}{K-1} \left(1 - \frac{M(K-M)}{K(SD)^2}\right)$$

Where:

K = The number of the test items.

M = The mean of the test scores.

SD = The standard deviation of the test scores.

Reliability (R) = $\left[\frac{50}{49} \right] \left[1 - \frac{46(4)}{50 \times 9^2} \right] = 0.974$

This value is considered by Harrison(1983:126) a high positive correlation.

3.6 Pilot Administration

In order to estimate the time needed and to determine the reaction of the subjects to the material of the test. The pilot test served to identify those items which unclear , repetitive , and unnecessary . So ten students were chosen randomly from the fourth year students who are excluded from the main test administration . A pilot test has been applied during April,2009.The instructions are explained by the researcher and the students were motivated.At this point, Al Hamash and Younis (1980:12) say : " tests are reliable if the students are motivated to do their best".

The results of the pilot test have reflected that the time limit for answering all the items of the test is about one hour. All the results obtained from the pilot administration of this test have been incorporated into the final version of test .

3.7 The Test

The main test has been administrated at the 10th of May during the academic year (2008-2009) .The final version of the test has been conducted on fifty of the learners of the English Department at University of Al-Qadisiya , then on the next week on fifty of the learners of the Department of English at University of Babylon.

The researcher explained the hedging devices and she defined the concept of hedging . The subjects were asked to answer without writing their names since the test is purely devoted to research purposes .

Al-Hamash and Younis (1980: 205) remark that " a good test should be economic both in time and stationary." So the subjects were asked to give their responses on the test paper so as not to waste time and effort.

4.Data Analysis

4.1 Introduction

Data analysis requires organization of information and data reduction. Thus, the researcher is required to reorganize and select related information from disordered , unorganized and discursive data. After all, analysis is a process of successive approximation toward an accurate description and interpretation of the phenomena (Wiersma, 1995: 216 cited in Abi Samra,2003 :5) .This means data analysis is not a simple description of the data collected but a process by which the researcher can bring interpretation to the data . Due to this , the researcher discusses the results of the test through this chapter. Additionally, this

chapter surveys the responses of the subjects to each question as well as showing the analysis of the errors made by the subject.

4.2 Discussion of the Results

This section is devoted to show the results of the subjects' performance on each question of the test in particular and on the whole test in general. The types of the errors and their actual reasons will be shown.

4.2.1 Subjects' Performance of the First Question

The first question has been constructed to measure the subjects' performance at the recognition level. It tests the subjects' ability to identify hedges expressions that are used as a hedge in each item in this question. Table (4) summaries the results as follows :-

The total number and the percentage of the correct responses are (505, 50,5%) whereas the total number and the percentage of the incorrect responses are (495, 49,5%).

Table (4) :Subjects' Responses of Question 1

No of Item	No. of correct Responses	%	No of incorrect Responses	%
1	52	52	48	48
2	64	64	36	36
3	70	70	30	30
4	60	60	40	40
5	66	66	34	34
6	58	58	42	42
7	30	30	70	70
8	20	20	80	80
9	30	30	70	70
10	55	55	45	45
Total	505	50.5	495	49.5

It has been noticed that the subjects' performance of the first question is considered to be accepted since most of the subjects are able to identify most of the hedging devices in each sentence.

Incorrect responses which have been identified according to their types are ordered from the commonest type to the least one.

1. Wrong choice of the required devices

This error forms (410) with a percentage of (11.90 %). Here is a list including these errors as in items (1, 2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10) respectively in Q.1.

*1. She occasionally greets me but occasionally she does not .

* She occasionally greets me but occasionally she does not.

1- She occasionally greets me but occasionally she does not.

*2. It is supposed that all Arab countries would help Iraq.

2- It is supposed that all Arab countries would help Iraq.

*3. Gases may be changed into liquid .

3- Gases may be changed into liquid.

*4. Some suggestions enable the students to make considerable development.

4- Some suggestions enable the students to make considerable development.

*6 I have the impression that the solution of this issue needs more time.

6- I have the impression that the solution of this issue needs more time

*8. In some cultures , human life might not be important

8- In some cultures, human life might not be important.

*9. It looked as a sort of arts.

9- It looked as a sort of arts.

*10. The fire was probably caused by a fault in the engine temperature gauge.

10- The fire was probably caused by a fault in the engine temperature gauge.

2. Giving no response .

This type of errors is totaled (85) non-responses out of (100) responses, which constitutes (2.46%) as in items (4-7-10), which the students failed to give .

- *4.Some suggestions enable the students to make considerable development.
 *7.....The results are somewhat different from the results obtained.
 *10.....The fire was probably caused by a fault in the engine temperature gauge.

Table (5) :Errors Made in Responses to Question 1

Type of error	No.	%
1.Wrong choice of the required devices	410	11.90
2.Giving no response	85	2.46
Total	495	49.5

4.2.2 Subjects' performance of the Second Question

Question two is designed to measure the subjects' recognition of the sentences which are assertive from the rest which are tentative .The following table shows the results obtained from analyzing the subjects' responses of each item in this question

Table (6):Subjects' Responses of Question (2)

No. of Item	No. of correct Responses	%	No. of incorrect Responses	%
1	34	34	66	66
2	46	46	54	54
3	46	46	54	54
4	32	32	68	68
5	39	39	61	61
6	24	24	76	76
7	32	32	68	68
8	38	38	62	62
9	37	37	63	63
10	67	67	33	33
11	31	31	69	69
12	50	50	50	50
13	45	45	55	55
14	40	40	60	60
15	39	39	61	61
Total	600	40	900	60

The results presented on Table (6) show that the total number and the percentage of the correct responses are (600, 40%)while the total number and the percentage of the incorrect responses are (900, 60%) .

Thus it has been noticed that the subjects' performance on the second question is considered to be low since most of the subjects which are unable to identify most of the sentences which have hedging devices.

Incorrect responses are classified into two groups:-

1.Failure to tick the required sentences

This error forms (772) with a percentage of (51.47%).Here is a list including these errors as in items (2,6,7,8,10,12,13,14,15) respectively in Q.2.

*2. Insects will be the first victims of climate. (**hedged**)

2-Insects will be the first victims of climate change. **Not hedged**

*6.Average IQ scores do not differ between pupils from different regions (hedged)

6-Average IQ scores do not differ between pupils from different regions. **Not hedged**

*7.The message is a kind of a test.(not hedged)

7-This message is a kind of a test. **hedged**

*8.Tom is a technically accomplished musician . (not hedged)

8-Tom is a technically accomplished musician. **hedged**

*10.It is possible that students have relatives in English –speaking countries. (not hedged)

10-It is possible that students have relatives in English-speaking countries. **hedged**

*12. Poly U students are predominantly Cantonese speakers(not hedged).

12-Poly U students are predominantly Cantonese speakers. **hedged**

*13. It is an iron law that nothing can go faster than light .(hedged)

13-It is an iron law that nothing can go faster than light. **Not hedged**

*14. On the evidence of the findings presented in a study , it would appear that students in Iraq generally have little need to speak in English outside the classroom. (not hedged)

14-On the evidence of the findings presented in a study, it would appear that students in Iraq generally have little need to speak in English outside the classroom. **hedged**

*15.The results , if valid, would indicate a need for additional regulation on sure equality .(not hedged).

15-The results, if valid, would indicate a need for additional regulation ensure equality. **hedged**

2.Giving no response

This type of error is totaled (128) non-responses out of (1500) responses, which constitutes (8.53) as in items (1-3-4-5-7-8-9-11), which the subjects failed to give.

Table (7):Errors Made in Responses to Question (2)

Type of Error		%
1.Failure to tick the required sentence	772	51.47
2.Giving no response	128	8.53
Total	900	60

The subjects' total performance in the first and second questions can be summed up in the following table.

Table (8):Subjects' Total performance at the Recognition Level of Questions (1 and 2)

No of Question	No. of correct responses	%	No. of incorrect Responses	%
1	505	50.5	495	49.5
2	600	40	900	60
Total	1105	44.2	1395	55.8

The results in Table (8) reveals that the subjects' performance is inefficient at the recognition level since the highest rate of their responses is incorrect (1395) with a percentage of (55.8%). It is hypothesized that the level of Iraqi EFL college students in recognizing hedging devices is below the average .The results obtained from Table (8) validate this hypothesis .

4.2.3 Subjects' Performance of the Third Question

This question assesses the subjects' ability to use hedging devices according to what is required in brackets. Table (9) shows the responses to each item. The total number and the percentage of the correct responses are (120,12 %) whereas that of the incorrect ones are (880) with a percentage of (88%)

Table (9):Subjects' Responses of Question(3)

No. of Item	No. of correct Responses	%	No. Of incorrect Responses	%
1	11	11	89	89
2	14	14	86	86
3	13	13	87	87
4	15	15	85	85
5	15	15	85	85
6	13	13	87	87
7	11	11	89	89
8	9	9	91	91
9	12	12	88	88
10	7	7	93	93
Total	120	12	880	88

Incorrect responses have been ordered from the commonest type to the least common one. They are as follows: See Table (10)

Table (10)Errors Made in Responses to Question (3)

Type of Error	No	%
1. Using irrelevant words	373	37.3
2.Wrong choice of the required responses	228	22.8
3.Mixing between adverbs and adjectives	102	10.2
4.Mixing between kinds of adverbs.	75	7.5
5.Using modal auxiliary instead of using modal lexical verbs.	54	5.4
6.Giving no responses.	48	4.8
Total	880	88

1- Using irrelevant words

This error appears in (373) answers which constitutes (37.3%) when examining this error, it can be noticed that some subjects use wrong devices which are not used as hedging , items (1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10) reflect this type of error.

*1- In fact there is no simple explanation.

* It is clear that there is no simple explanation.

1) We believe that there is no simple explanation. (Introductory phrases)

*2-It will be wrong, if our study contracts the myth that men make better managers than women.

2)If true our study contradicts the myth that men make better managers than women. (If clauses)

*3- In many cases that one in five marriages end in divorce.

* The person that one in five marriages end in divorce .

* Ali and Suha that one in five marriages end in divorce .

* Think that one in five marriages end in divorce .

* The result that one in five marriages end in divorce .

3)We estimate that one in five marriages end in divorce. (Nouns)

4* There is confidently a good reason why she chose to write in this style.

* There is statistics a good reason why she chose to write in this style.

2) There is perhaps a good reason why she chose to write in this style. (Probability adverbs)

5-* In spite of it's limitations , the study does have a number of important strengths .

* In spite of it's limitations, the study was have a number of important strengths.

* In spite of it's limitations , the study needs a number of important strengths .

3) In spite of it's limitations, the study appears to have a number of important strengths. (Modals lexical verbs)

* 6- Water shortages do trigger conflict between nations.

* Water shortages was trigger conflict between nations .

4) Water shortages may trigger conflict between nations. (Modals auxiliary)

7-* Large temperature spread, over result from combustions problems.

* Large temperature spread , may result from combustions problems .

* Large temperature spread among results from combustions problems.

* Large temperature spread always results from combustions problems .

* Large temperature spread increasingly results from combustions problems.

5) Large temperature spreads usually result from combustions problems.(Frequency adverbs)

* 8- It could be that I will go. * It seems that I will go.

6) It is possible that I will go . (Probability adjectives)

* 9 –The subjects retained , it was between 45 and 54 .

* The subjects retained , sizes between 45 and 54 .

* The subjects retained , more of between 45 and 54 .

* The subjects retained , that 45 and 54 .

* The subjects nicely between 45 and 54 .

7) The subjects retained, approximately between 45 and 54. (Approximators of degree quantity)

* 10 – Would you think that the result is true ? * I guess that the result is true .

* So that the result is true .

8) **It seems reasonable** that the result is true. (Compound hedges)

2-Wrong Choice of the required devices

This type of error form, (228) i.e.(22.8). It can be described as filling the blanks with incorrect responses which do not complete the sentences in spite of their use as hedging expressions. Items(1,3,4,6,9,10) reflect this type of error.

*1- I suggest there is no simple explanation.

* May be there is no simple explanation.

* Approximately there is no simple explanation.

* According to the fact that , there is no simple explanation.

1- We believe that there is no simple explanation. (Introductory phrases)

*3-Generally that one in five marriages end in divorce.

3-We estimate that one in five marriages end in divorce. (Nouns)

*4-There is a chance a good reason why she chose to write in this style.

* = may a good reason why she chose to write in this style.

4-There is perhaps a good reason why she chose to write in this style. (Probability adverbs)

*6-Water shortages it seems trigger conflict between nations.

6-Water shortages may trigger conflict between nations. (Modals auxiliary)

*9-The subjects retained about between 45 and 54.

9-The subjects retained, approximately between 45 and 54.(Approximators of degree quantity)

*10-Somewhat that the result is true. * Possible that the result is true.

10-It seems reasonable that the result is true. (Compound hedges)

3-Mixing between adverbs and adjectives

This type of error is made in (102) answers which constitutes(10.2%). When examining this error , it can be noticed that some of the subjects use adverbs instead of adjectives .Items (4,8,9) reflect this type of error.

*4- There is possible a good reason why she chose to write in this style.

4-There is perhaps a good reason why she chose to write in this style. (Probability adverbs)

*8- Perhaps that I will go .

* Probably that I will go.

8- **It is possible** that I will go . (Probability adjective

*9- The subjects retained , acceptable between 45 and 54.

The subjects retained , approximately between 45 and 54.(Approximators of degree quantity)

4- Mixing between types of Adverbs

This type of error is made in (75) answers which constitutes(7.5%).It can be noticed that some of the subjects mix between adverbs , for example they use adverbs of frequency instead of probability adverbs. Here is a list including these errors as in items(4,7,9) respectively in Q.3

4- There is occasionally a good reason why she chose to write in this style.

* There is some what a good reason why she chose to write in this style.

4-There is perhaps a good reason why she chose to write in this style. (Probability adverbs)

* 7-Large temperature spreads greatly result from combustions problems.

* Large temperature spreads certainly result from combustions problems .

* Large temperature spreads consequently from combustions problems.

7-Large temperature spreads usually result from combustions problems. (Frequency adverbs)

*9- The subjects retained , somewhat between 45 and 54.

9-The subjects retained,approximately between 45 and 54.(Approximators of degree quantity)

5- Using Modal auxiliary instead of Modal lexical verbs

This type of error appeared in (54) with a percentage of (5.4%). This type of error is illustrated in item (5) Q.3

*In spite of it's limitations , the study could have a number of important strengths.

*In spite of it's limitations , the study may have a number of important strengths.

* In spite of it's limitations , the study might have a number of important strengths.

5-In spite of it's limitations, the study appears to have a number of important strengths.
(Modals lexical verbs)

6-Giving no response

This type of error is totaled (48) non-responses out of (100) responses, which constitutes (4.8%) as in items (1,3,8,10)

4.3.4 Subjects' Performance of the Fourth Question

This question measures the subjects' performance at the production level. The subjects' responses are illustrated in table (11).the total number of the correct response is (330, 22%) whereas the total number and percentage of the incorrect responses are (1170,78%)

Table (11):Subjects' Responses of Question (4)

No. of Item	No. of correct Responses	%	No. of incorrect Responses	%
1	9	9	91	91
2	34	34	66	66
3	30	30	70	70
4	32	32	68	68
5	19	19	81	81
6	32	32	68	68
7	2	2	98	98
8	25	25	75	75
9	30	30	70	70
10	32	32	68	68
11	6	6	94	94
12	6	6	94	94
13	28	28	72	72
14	15	15	85	85
15	30	30	70	70
Total	330	22	1170	78

The following table presents the classification of errors which are arranged according to their types from the commonest to the least common.

Table (12):Errors Made in Responses to Question (4)

	No.	%
1-Random use of hedging expression	630	42
2-Repetition of the items without any addition or change.	352	23.47
3-Failure to use the required devices.	113	7.53
4-Giving no response.	75	5
Total	1170	78

1-Random use of hedging expressions

This type of error appeared in (630) answers, i .e, (42%).When examining this error, it can be noticed that some of the subjects use modal auxiliary and modal lexical verbs in their responses . These verbs, in spite of their use as hedging expressions, they do not complete the meaning of the sentence. This confirms the third hypothesis which says that most Iraqi EFL learners show greater tendency towards using particular hedging devices such as modals auxiliary , lexical verbs and they neglect other devices. This type of error is illustrated in items(1-3-5-9-10-11-13-14)

*1- It seems to me the same.

1-The evidence shows that many allergy sufferers benefit from histamine medication.

*2- US scientists show they have developed a new vaccine against malaria.

2- US scientists claim that they have developed a new vaccine against malaria.

*3-He seems to smoking causes cancer.

* Smoking might cancer.

1-Smoking tends to cause cancer.

* 4-The earth could flat.

* The earth may flat

4-**They report that** the earth is flat

*5- It seem you ask again.

5-**It might suggest that** you ask again.

*6- Britain's economy predict improve

6- **They say that** Britain's economy will improve

*9- Politeness seem theories constitute the most interesting area of pragmatics.

9- **I think that** politeness theories constitute the most interesting area of pragmatics.

*10- Seems to me the grammatical errors have an impact on the performance of the student.

10-**It appears that** the grammatical errors have an impact on the performance of the student.

*11- Women appear shop between 9am and 3pm, whereas men only shop between 2pm and 5pm.

11-**Most** women **prefer to** shop between 9am and 3pm, whereas **most** men **prefer to** shop between 2pm and 5pm.

*13- Children who miss more probably then two weeks of school a year will not achieve their expected grades in an exam.

13- **The evidence suggest that** children who miss more than two weeks of school a year may achieve their expected grades in an exam.

*14- There are cases seem would have been the only possible method of transmissions.

14- There are **certainly** cases where it would have been the only possible method of transmissions.

*15- Car passengers report who do not wear seatbelts will suffer more serious injuries than passengers who do wear their seatbelts.

15-**It seems that** car passengers who do not wear seatbelts will suffer more serious injuries than passengers who do wear their seatbelts.

2- Repetition of the items without any addition or change

This type of errors amounts to (352), i.e (23.47%). When examining this error, it can be noticed that the subjects write the given items as they are without any changes as a result of their lack of linguistic knowledge as in items (2-6-7-10-11-12-13-14-15)

*2- scientists have developed a new vaccine against malaria.

10- The grammatical errors have an impact on the performance of the students.

6- Britain's economy will improve.

7- Penguins are birds.

11- Women only shop between 9am and 3 pm., whereas men only shop between 2p.m and 5p.m.

12- Office workers always suffer from more back problems then construction workers.

*13- Children who miss more than two weeks of school a year will not achieve their expected grades in an exam.

14- There are cases where it would have been the only possible method of transmissions.

15- Car passengers who do not wear seatbelts will suffer serious injuries than passengers who do not wear their seatbelts.

3- Failure to use the required devices

This type of error is made in (113) answers which constitute (7.53%) when examining this error, it can be noticed that some of the subjects use wrong devices which are not used as hedging. Items (3-4-5-7-10-11).

*3- It is clear that smoking causes cancer.

3- Smoking **tends to** cause cancer

*4- It is true that the earth is flat.

* of course the earth is flat.

4- **They report that** the earth is flat.

*5- You always ask again.

5- **It might suggest that** you ask again.

*7- It is true that the penguins are birds.

7- Penguins are **sort of** birds.

*10- It is a fact that the grammatical errors have an impact on the performance of pragmatics.

10- **It appears that** the grammatical errors have an impact on the performance of the student.

*11- It is not necessary that women only shop between 9pm. and 3pm, Whereas men only shop between 2pm and 5pm.

11-Most women **prefer to** shop between 9am and 3pm, whereas **most** men **prefer to** shop between 2pm and 5pm.

4- Giving no responses

This type of errors reflects the subjects' carelessness in the items are left without answers. This type of error amounts to (75) i.e, (5%) as in items (2-6-7-8-and 11)

The subjects' total performance in the third and fourth questions can be summed up in the following table

Table (13):Subjects' performance at the production level

No. of Question	No. of correct responses	%	No. of incorrect Responses	%
3	120	12	880	89
4	330	22	1170	79
Total	450	18	2050	82

The results in table (13) reveals that the subjects' performance is inefficient at the production level since the highest rate of their incorrect responses is (2050) with a percentage of (82%) .It is hypothesized that the level of Iraqi EFL college students in producing hedging devices is below the average . The results obtained from table (13) validate this hypothesis.

4.2.5 Subjects' Performance in the Whole Test

The results of the subjects' performance in the whole test is presented in table (14) with regard to the recognition and production levels.

Table (14):Subjects' Performance at the Recognition and production levels of the Whole Test .

Level	No. of correct Responses	%	No. of Incorrect Responses	%
Recognition	1105	22.1	1395	27.9
Production	450	9	2050	41
Total	1555	31.1	3445	68.9

It is clear from table (14) that the correct responses in the whole test are (1555, 31.1%) whereas the incorrect responses are (3445, 68.9%) The highest rate of the subjects' incorrect responses is (2050) i.e, (41%)at the production level whereas the total number of the incorrect responses is (1395) , i.e, (27.9%) at the recognition one. This reflects that the Iraqi EFL college students face difficulty in mastering hedging devices at both levels. The subjects' correct performance at the production level is lower than at the recognition one. The subjects face more difficulties at the production level since the total number of their correct responses (450) which is (9%) is lower than correct responses at the recognition one which is (1105, 22.1%)

4.3 Sources of Errors

Error analysis is a type of linguistic analysis that focuses on the errors learners make .It consists of a comparison between the error made in the target language and that Target Language itself.

(Corder 1973:259) refers to errors as " a breaches of the code".Using error analysis has become a much more influential field for linguists as a diagnostic tool to help identify the causes of errors. The term " error " itself is redefined in recognition that many mistakes in spontaneous speaking or writing could be attributed to a simple pause , met analysis , or a slip of the brain'(Crystal,1992,135).

Errors begin to help describe and explain the way in which learners learn a language rather than their progress towards conforming to a set of real or imagined standards of expression (Crystal, 1980:134) and thus , have more positive role.

Researchers are interested in errors because they are believed to contain valuable information on the strategies that people use to acquire a language (Taylor,1975: 74) .Moreover , according to Richards (1974:15) " At the level of pragmatic classroom experience , error analysis will continue to provide one means by which the teacher assesses learning and teaching and determines priorities for future effect."

Errors are indispensable, since the making of errors can be regarded as a device the learner uses in order to learn. Error analysis emphasizes " the significance of errors in learners' inter language system" (Brown, 2000: 204).

Error analysis is used with a variety of techniques for identifying , classifying and systematically interpreting the mistakes made by language learners as well as identify the weaknesses of process of language acquisition .

Corder (1973:262) classifies the errors in terms of the difference between the learners' utterance and reconstructed version .According to him , error analysis has two objectives: one theoretical and another applied .The theoretical object serves to " elucidate what and how a learner learns when he studies a second language ". While the applied object serves to enable the learner" to learn more efficiently by exploiting our knowledge of his dialect for pedagogical purposes".

Error analysis enables teachers to find out the sources of errors and take pedagogical precautions towards them. Thus, the analysis of learner's language has become an essential need to overcome some questions and propose solutions regarding different aspects. Errors provide feedback about the effectiveness of teaching techniques and show needs further attention.

In the field of error analysis , it has been understood that the nature of errors implicates the existence of other reasons for errors to occur. Then , the sources of errors can be categorized within four domains interlingual transfer, intra lingual transfer , context of learning , and communication strategies .

4-3-1 Interlingual Transfer

Interlingual transfer is a significant source for language learning or language learners errors. Interlingual errors are those errors which are attributed to the native language. There are interlingual errors when the learner's L1 habits interfere or prevent him / her to some extent, from acquiring the patterns and rules of the second language (Corder, 1973:66-7).

Ellis (1994:48) states that the term " interlingual transfer" refers to the differences and similarities between the native language of the learner and the target language. Many errors of foreign language learners can be ascribed to the influence of the mother tongue resulting from the negative interference of the rules of the native language. At this point, Lasnik and Long (1991:53) claim that "where two languages were similar, positive transfer would occur, where they were different, negative transfer would result". Also Lado (1962:2) claims that "those elements that are similar to his native language will be simple for him, and those elements that are different will be difficult".

Falk (1978: 360), terms the result of such errors as an "approximative system" which indicates that the learners construct a system different from their native language but not identical to the system of the foreign language they are learning.

In the present study, errors that reflect interlingual transfer are obvious at the production level. Here are some examples of the subjects' responses which may clarify such errors in the questions below:

Q3:Item (1) It has been said that there is no simple explanation.

يقال أنه لا يوجد شرح بسيط.

Q4:Item (9) Politeness theories constitute partial interesting area of pragmatic.

Item (7) It has been said that penguins are birds.

Item (6) Britain's economy implicitly will improve.

Item (10) The grammatical errors have marginal impact on the performance of the students.

The responses to item (1) in Q3 and items (6), (7), (9), (10) in Q4 show clear interference between Arabic and English. The expressions (It has been said: يقال , partial : هامشي , implicitly : ضمنا , marginal : هامشي). All these expressions are used as hedging in Arabic.

There are (56) errors that may be attributed to interlingual transfer, i.e. (1.63%) of the total number of incorrect responses at the production level. According to Brown (1987: 178),

the influence of the native language may be decreased as the learner progress in the pross of learning the foreign language.

4.3.2 Intralingual Transfer

Intralingual transfer errors are those due to the language being learned, independent of the native language. An intralingual error is "one which results from faulty or partial learning of the target language"(Richards *et al.*,1997:187).

According to Richards (1974:6) there are items produced by the learner which reflects not the structure of the mother tongue, but generalizations based on partial exposure to the target language. The learner tries to "derive the rules behind the data to which he / she has been exposed, and may develop hypotheses that correspond neither to mother tongue nor to the target language". These errors may be caused by the influence of one target language item upon another.

Errors attributed to intralingual transfer may be due to one of the factors:(a)overgeneralization, Taylor (1975: 74) views overgeneralization in language as "a process in which a language learner uses a syntactic rule of the target language inappropriately when he attempts to generate a novel target language utterance". (b) Other factors include processes like **incomplete applications of rules** which involves the inability to learn more complex types of structures because the learner thinks that he can achieve effective communication by using relatively simple rules (Brown, 1987:3-8).(c) False concept hypothesized, i.e. errors that may derive from faulty comprehension of a distinction in the target language (Chanier et al., 1992:134).

First: These errors refer to the unaccepted extension of an acquired rule to items which cannot be covered by that rule, i.e., the inappropriate application of a rule causes deviant forms of the L2(Richards, 1974:199). The errors that may be attributed to overgeneralization have been noticed in the subjects' responses in the items (1),(2), (3) in QIV

-Item (1) it seems to me the same.

1) The evidence shows that many allergy sufferers benefit from anti-histamine medication.

-Item (4) Of course, the earth is flat.

(4) **They report that** the earth is flat.

-Item (5) Certainly, you can ask again.

5) **It might suggest that** you ask again.

The total number of errors that related to this strategy and their percentage are (465, 34.44%) of the total number of the subjects' errors.

Second: The other factor that leads to commit these error is the incomplete applications of rules. Such errors can be noticed in items (1), (2), (5), (10) in QIII

Item (1) They play there is no simple explanation.

1) We believe that there is no simple explanation. (Introductory phrases)

Item (2) There is possible good reason why she chose to write in this style.

2) **If true** our study contradicts the myth that men make better managers than women. (If clauses)

Item (10) It seems good that the result.

10) **It seems reasonable** that the result is true. (Compound hedges)

Also this factor can be noticed in items (9) and (15) in QIV.

Item (9) We believe politeness theories constitute the most interesting area of pragmatics.

9) **I think that** politeness theories constitute the most interesting area of pragmatics.

Item (15) It seems passengers who do not wear seat belts will suffer

serious injuries than passengers who do wear their seat belts.

15) **It seems that** car passengers who do not wear seatbelts will suffer more serious injuries than passengers who do wear their seatbelts.

The total number of errors that related to this factor and their percentages are (270 , 20%) of the total number of the subjects' errors.

Third: Some of the subjects' incorrect responses can be due to false concepts hypothesized as in items (5), (6) in QIII and items (2), (3),(4),(6),(7),(10) in QIV.

Item (2) It seems to have developed.

1) US scientists **claim that** they have developed a new vaccine against malaria.

Item (3) He seems to smoking cause cancer.

2) Smoking **tends to** cause cancer.

Item (4) You seem ask again.

4) They report that the earth is flat

Item (5) In spite of it's limitation, the study need have a number of important strengths.

5) In spite of it's limitations, the study **appears to** have a number of important strengths. (Modals lexical verbs)

Item (6) Water shortages was trigger conflict between nations.

6) Water shortages **may** trigger conflict between nations. (Modals auxiliary)

Item (7) It seems to birds.

7) Penguins are **sort of** birds.

Item (10) The grammatical seem errors have an important on the performance of the student.

10) It appears that the grammatical errors have an impact on the performance of the student.

The total number of errors that are related to this factor and their percentages are (615, 45.55 %) of the total number of the subjects' errors.

4.3.3 Context of Learning

Some errors exhibited by foreign language learners are due to context of learning. The word "context" refers to the classroom with its teacher and its material. There is a logical relationship between what goes on in the classroom and the preparation of syllabuses and teaching material. The ease or difficulty of learning is not simply related to the nature of the task but has components of motivation, intelligence, aptitude and quality of teachers and teaching materials (Corder, 1973:140). They largely depend on the linguistic context where in the produced appear. Certain linguistic environments have a facilitative effect.

Errors may come from the influence of the situation of learning (the classroom), the misleading explanation by the teacher, or the textbook writer who emphasizes some aspects of the target language. All these factors can negatively influence the learning of the target language in that they can create gaps in the learners' knowledge of this language (Brown, 1987:179).

The total number of errors that are possibly attributed to this strategy and their percentages are (900,26.13%) of the total number of the subjects' error. The most obvious cases which reveal the influence of the context of learning on the subjects' responses are shown in item (6), (8), (9), and (10) in Q1.

*Item (6) I have the impression that the solution of this issue needs more time.

* I have the impression that the solution of this issue needs more time.

6- I have the impression that the solution of this issue needs more time.

*Item (8) In some cultures, human life might not important.

8-In some cultures, human life might not be important

*Item (9) It looked at a sort of arts

9-It looked as a sort of arts.

*Item (10) The fire was probably caused by a fault in the engine temperature gauge.

10-The fire was probably caused by a fault in the engine temperature gauge.

In the items mentioned above, the underlined expressions in each have been chosen by some subjects which indicate the inadequate knowledge about such expressions. Also items (2), (12), (13), (15) in QII indicate the influence of the context of learning on the subjects' responses. The responses written in bold type in the following items express insufficient knowledge of the subjects about the meaning and use of hedging devices due to the fact that syllabuses do not cover a good deal of such topic.

Item (2) Insects will be the first victims of climate change. (hedged)

2) Insects will be the first victims of climate change. **Not hedged**

Item (12) Poly --- students are predominantly Cantonese speakers (not hedged).

12-Poly U students are predominantly Cantonese speakers. **hedged**

Item (13) It is an iron law that nothing can go faster than light. (hedged)

13-It is an iron law that nothing can go faster than light. **Not hedged**

Item (15) The results, if valid, would indicate a need for additional regulation ensure equality.(not hedged)

15-The results, if valid, would indicate a need for additional regulation ensure equality.
hedged

In addition, subjects' responses to items (3), (4), (5), (10) in QIII and (3), (4), (7), (9) in QIV reflect the influence of the context of learning.

*Item (3) George that one in five marriages end in divorce. (nouns)

3) **We estimate** that one in five marriages end in divorce. (Nouns)

*Item (4) There is possible a good reason why she chose to write in this style.(probability adverbs)

4) There is **perhaps** a good reason why she chose to write in this style. (Probability adverbs)

*Item (5) In spite of its limitations, the study need have a number of important strengths. (modals lexical verbs)

5) In spite of it's limitations, the study **appears to** have a number of important strengths. (Modals lexical verbs)

*Item (10) I know that the result is true. (compound hedges)

10) t seems reasonable that the result is true. (Compound hedges)

QIV, Item (3) It is clear that smoking.

3) Smoking **tends to** cause cancer.

*Item (4) It is true that the earth is flat.

4) They report that the earth is flat

*Item (7) That is right the penguins are birds.

7)Penguins are **sort of** birds.

*Item (9) It is true that politeness theories constitute the most interesting area of pragmatic.

9) I think that politeness theories constitute the most interesting area of pragmatics.

4.3.4 Communication Strategies

A communication strategy is defined as "potentially conscious plans for solving what to an individual presents itself as a problem in reaching a particular communicative goal"(Faerch and Kasper,1983:36).

Littelwood (1987:82-3) refers to this strategy as "borrowing where the process involves the learner either translates word for word from the L1 to express his meaning, or using the L1 to convey his meaning without bothering to translate.

Faerch and Kasper (1983:37) go on to explain that a communication strategy can only lead to learning if it is governed by achievement rather than avoidance behaviour. If a learner avoids communicating his intention, hypothesis, formation and automatization do not occur. His interlanguage system remains unaffected which means learning cannot occur.

There are some communication strategies that the learners use: Avoidance:the learner tries to avoid the item which represents difficulty because he has no influence to solve it (Littlewood,1984:83-4). Guessing is another communication strategy which the learner uses. Learners can begin to guess when they are in doubt about the correct answer. Learners can use guessing to their advantage to guess the meaning of a word, guess a discourse relationship, infer implied meaning or guess about the cultural reference (Brown, 2001:309).

The strategy of avoidance has been adopted by the subjects in all questions. The subjects have used this strategy to respond to items (1), (8), (10) in QIII, Item (7), (8), (9) in QII, (2), (6), (7) in QIV and item (4) in QI.

Item (4) in QI:----- some suggestions enable students to make considerable development.

QII:

Item (7) This message is kind of a test.

Item (8) Tom is technically accomplished musician.

Item (9) It seems that football team manager will be replaced soon.

QIII:

Item (1) ----- There is no simple explanation. (introductory phrase)

Item (3) -----that one in five marriages and in divorce.(nouns)

Item (8) -----that I will go. (probability adjectives)

Item (10) ----- that the result is true. (compound hedges)

QIV:

Item (2) -----US scientists have developed a new vaccine against malaria.

Item (6) Britain's economy will improve.

Item (7) Penguins are birds.

Item (8) The house is old.

Such errors are caused by learners' failure to interpret the hedging devices. The total number of errors that are possibly attributed to this strategy and their percentages are (336,29.49%) of the total number of the subjects' errors.

Guessing:- This strategy has been used in the subjects' responses to item (5) in QIII.

Item (5) In spite of its limitations, the study could have a number of important strengths.

5) In spite of its limitations, the study appears to have a number of important strengths. (Modal lexical verbs)

It has been noticed that most of the subjects who commit such errors have responded to the items randomly and without thinking. Such errors as putting (modal auxiliary) in a blank followed by base verb or putting proper noun at the beginning of the sentence as in item (3) in QIII.

Item (3) Ahmed that one is five marriages end in divorce.

3 We estimate that one in five marriages end in divorce. (Nouns)

The total number of errors that may be related to using such strategy and their percentages are (140,12.29%) of the total number of the subjects' errors.

Message- Abandonments: This error occurs when L2 learner begins to answer but suddenly he stops because it is too difficult for him to continue, i.e., "trying but giving up" (Brown, 1987:183). Thus, the subjects write only the same given words without any changes. Items (2), (6), (7), (10), (11), (12), (13), (14), (15) in QIV and item (2) in QIII. The total number of errors related to this strategy and their percentages are (442,38.80%) of the total number of the subjects' errors.

Approximation: The use of a single target language vocabulary item or structure, which the learner knows is not correct, shares enough semantic features in common with the desired item to satisfy the speaker". (Brown, 1987:183).

The subjects have used this strategy to respond to items (4), (6), (7) and (9) in QIII.

Item (4) There is probably a good reason why she chose to write in this style.

4) There is perhaps a good reason why she chose to write in this style. (Probability adverbs)

Item (6) Water storages can -----.

6) Water shortages may trigger conflict between nations. (Modals auxiliary)

Item (7) Large temperature spread, frequency result from-----

7) Large temperature spreads usually result from combustions problems. (Frequency adverbs)

Item (9) The subjects retained, about between (45) and (54).

9) The subjects retained , approximately between 45 and 54. (Approximators of degree quantity)

The total number of errors and their percentages are (221, 19.40%) from the total errors.

4-4 Summary

The final results of errors sources are presented in Table (15) below:

Table (15) Results of Errors Sources

Errors Sources	No. of Incorrect Answers	Percentage %
1-Interlingual Transfer	56	1.63
2-Intralingual Transfer	1350	39.19
3-Context of Learning	900	26.13
4-Communcation Strategies	1139	33.05
Total	3445	100

The following points are concluded from the table above:

- 1- The highest cause of errors in the test is intralingual transfer since the percentage of this error is (39.19%).
- 2- The second highest rate of errors cause is the communicative strategies (33.05%).
- 3- The context of learning is the cause of (26.13%) of all the subjects' errors. Such errors can be related to the subjects' unfamiliarity with hedging devices.
- 4- The least frequent error source is the interlingual transfer. It represents (1.63%) of all the subjects' errors.

5. Conclusions

5-1 Practical Conclusions

The study has come up with some significant conclusions. These conclusions are related to EFL undergraduates' performance in using hedging devices at recognition and production levels. These are as follows:

A- Recognition level

The majority of Iraqi EFL College Students in the fourth year have been found to face difficulties in identifying hedging devices at the recognition level. This can be confirmed by the low rate of their correct responses throughout the test (1105, 22.1%), which are quite unsatisfactory, in comparison with the total rate of their incorrect ones (1395, 27.9%). This reflects the fact that the achievement of most Iraqi EFL College Students in the fourth year throughout a four-year period is not satisfactory enough to make them attain the advanced level they are supposed to and they encounter difficulties in recognizing hedging devices. This verifies the first hypothesis of the study that reads " The level of EFL college students in recognizing hedges is below the average" .

Furthermore (184) of the correct responses at the recognition level have been expressed by modal and lexical verbs. This validate the third hypothesis which reads:

" Iraqi EFL learners show greater tendency towards using particular devices such as modal and lexical verbs and they neglect other devices".

B- Production

The subjects' performance at the production level has revealed that EFL college students face difficulties in producing hedging devices. Learners violate norms and rules of writing by using norms of their native language. In general, learners' performance of this level is very poor or weak since the frequency and the rate of the incorrect responses (2050, 41%) whereas the correct ones (450, 9%). This confirms the second hypothesis which says that The level of EFL college students in producing hedges is below the average .

Furthermore (90) of the correct responses at the production level have been expressed by modal and lexical verbs. This validate the third hypothesis which reads:

" Iraqi EFL learners show greater tendency towards using particular devices such as modal and lexical verbs and they neglect other devices".

The highest rate of the subjects' incorrect responses is (2050) i.e, (41%) at the production level whereas the total number of the incorrect responses is (1395) , i.e, (27.9%) at the recognition one.

The results of the test at the recognition and production levels denote that the subjects' performance at both level is poor or weak . This validate the fourth hypothesis which reads:

"Iraqi EFL college students face difficulty in mastering hedging devices at both levels."

The reason behind such an unsatisfactory achievement can be attributed to the fact that textbooks studied during the four-year period do not tackle the subject 'hedging' directly; i.e., as a separate topic.

The subjects' poor performance may be attributed to the following errors sources arranged according to the frequency and rate of each :-

- 1- The major error source in using hedging devices is the intralingual transfer since it constitutes (1350, 39.19%) of total errors. The subjects reliance on the prior knowledge of the target language rules to recognize or produce hedging devices regardless of their acceptability is due to the incomplete understanding of such devices which encourages overgeneralization, simplification, incomplete application of a rule and false hypothesis.
- 2- Communication strategies which the subjects resort to in their

attempt to structure what they mean. The rate of pertaining to such factors is (33.05%) of all the subjects' errors.

3-Context of learning is the cause behind (900,26.13%) of the incorrect responses. Such errors reveal the unfamiliarity of the subjects with hedging devices. The reason behind making such errors is that hedging devices may not be given due attention in the textbooks nor by the teachers themselves.

4- Interlingual transfer whereby the subjects use the rules of their native language in the production of hedging devices. The reliance on direct translation from Arabic into English is the main reason behind making such error. The rate of errors can be attributed to interlingual transfer (56, 1.63%).

The following types of errors are committed by the sample of this study:

a-Failure to use hedging devices in grammatical sentences. b-Using irrelevant words.

c-Wrong choice of the required responses. d-Giving no responses.

e- Random use of hedging expressions. f-Repetition of the items without any addition.

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Appendices

Appendix(1)

University of Babylon/College of Education

Department of Educational and Psychological Sciences /

Higher studies

The initial form of the Test

Q1\Underline the hedging expressions in the following sentences.

- 1-There is no difficulty in explaining how a structure such as an eye or a feather contributes to survival and reproduction; the difficulty is in thinking of a series of steps by which it could have arisen.
- 2- It is possible to see that in January this person weighed 60.8 kg for eight days.
- 3- It may be necessary for the spider to leave the branch on which it is standing, climb up the stem, and walk out along another branch.
- 4-Escherichia coli , when found in conjunction with urethritis, often indicate infection higher in the urinary tract.
- 5-There is experimental work to show that a week or ten days may not be long enough and a fortnight to three weeks is probably the best theoretical period.
- 6-Conceivably, different forms, changing at different rates and showing contrasting combinations of characteristics, were present in different areas.
- 7-One possibility is that generalized latent inhibition is likely to be weaker than that produced by pre-exposure to the CS itself and thus is more likely to be susceptible to the effect of the long interval.
- 8-It is useful to distinguish two kinds of chemical reaction, according to whether the reaction releases energy or requires it.
- 9-It appears to establish three categories: the first contains wordings generally agreed to be acceptable, the second wordings which appear to have been at some time problematic but are now acceptable, and the third wordings which remain inadmissible.
- 10-The fire could have been caused by a fault in the engine temperature gauge.

Q2\Read the sentences below and decide whether the language in each sentence is tentative or assertive.

- 1-Excessive use of a mobile phone during pregnancy may lead to foetal damage.
- 2 -Insects will be the first victims of climate change.
- 3-It is may be easier to give up smoking if you use nicotine patches.
- 4 -A cure for MRSA seems to be possible after new findings.
- 5- It was probably caused by the earlier landslide.
- 6- Average IQ scores do not differ between pupils from different regions.
- 7-This appears to be the most important factor.
- 8-By analogy, it may be possible to walk from one point in hilly country to another by a path which is always level or uphill, and yet a straight line between the points would cross a valley.
- 9-The commitment to some of the social and economic concepts was less strong than it is now.
- 10-There are cases where this would have been the only possible method of transmissions.

Q3\Study the following sentences and decide whether they are correctly hedged or not by ticking the required answer:

- 1- On the evidence of the findings presented in a study , it would appear that tertiary students in Hong Kong generally have little need to speak in English outside the classroom.[Correct-Wrong]
- 2-The evidence proves that undergraduates rarely communicate with their parents or grandparents in English.[Correct-Wrong]
- 3-This is undoubtedly because Hong Kong students' family members are Cantonese speakers.[Correct-Wrong]
- 4-Hong Kong offers the best Chinese food in the world.[Correct-Wrong]
- 5-PolyU students probably go on an exchange at least once in their university life. [Correct-Wrong]
- 6-It is possible that students have relatives in English-speaking countries.[Correct-Wrong]
- 7-There is strong evidence that academic exchanges improve the language skills of students.[Correct-Wrong]
- 8-PolyU students are predominantly Cantonese speakers.[Correct-Wrong]
- 9-It is an iron law that nothing can go faster than light.[Correct-Wrong]

10-The lack of solar power stations in HK proves that HK is not suitable for solar power.[Correct-Wrong]

Q4\Make the sentences below more cautious ,by filling each blank with what is required in brackets.

- 1- there is no simple explanation.(Introductory phrases)
- 2-.....,our study contradicts the myth that men make better managers than women.(If clauses)
- 3-.....that one in five marriages end in divorce.(Nouns)
- 4-There is ,....., a good reason why she chose to write in this style.(Probability adverbs)
- 5-In spite of it's limitations , the study.....have a number of important strengths.(Modals lexical verbs)
- 6-Water shortages.....trigger conflict between nations.(Modals auxiliary)
- 7-Large temperature spreads result from combustion problems.(Frequency adverbs)
- 8-that I will go.(Probability adjectives)
- 9-The subjects retained,.....between 45 and 54.(Approximators of degree quantity)
- 10-.....that the result is true.(Compound hedges)

Q5\ Rewrite the following assertive sentences using hedging devices

- 1-The evidence shows that all allergy sufferers benefit from anti-histamine medication.
- 2-Women only shop between 9am and 3pm, whereas men only shop between 2 and 5pm.
- 3-Office workers always suffer from more back problems than construction workers
- 4-Children who miss more than two weeks of school a year will not achieve their expected grades in an exam.
- 5-Car passengers who do not wear seatbelts will suffer more serious injuries than passengers who do wear their seatbelts.
- 6-Smoking causes cancer.
- 7-The grammatical errors have an impact on the performance of the student.
- 8-The earth is flat.
- 9-penguins are birds.
- 10-Us scientists have developed a new vaccine against malaria.

Appendix(3):The Final form of the Test

Note: Answer All Questions

Q1 \ Underline the hedging expressions in the following sentences.

Example: It now seems possible that the oxygen carrier function may be feasible if because the hemoglobin root were mainly in the tip.

It now seems possible that the oxygen carrier function may be feasible if because the hemoglobin root were mainly in the tip. (Compound hedge, if clauses)

- 1- She occasionally greets me but occasionally she does not.
- 2-It is supposed that all Arab countries would help Iraq.
- 3-Gases may be changed into liquid.
- 4-Some suggestions enable the students to make considerable development.
- 5-I believe that we need to farther explore the causes behind abuse.
- 6- I have the impression that the solution of this issue needs more time.
- 7-The results are somewhat different from the results obtained.
- 8-In some cultures, human life might not be important.
- 9-It looked as a sort of arts.
- 10-The fire was probably caused by a fault in the engine temperature gauge.

Q2 // Read the sentences below and decide whether they are hedged or not by writing the required answer.

Example : △;1 The lack of solar power stations in Hong Kong proves that Hong Kong is not suitable for solar power. **Not hedged.**

△;2 This appears to be the most important factor. **hedged**

- 1- Excessive use of a mobile phone during pregnancy may lead to foetal damage.(hedged, unhedged)
- 2- Insects will be the first victims of climate change.

- 3- It may be easier to give up smoking if you use nicotine patches. (hedged ,unhedged
- 4- A cure for cancer seems to be possible after new findings.
- 5- They are probably at home.
- 6- Average IQ scores do not differ between pupils from different regions.
- 7- This message is a kind of a test.
- 8- Tom is a technically accomplished musician.
- 9-It seems that the football team manager will be replaced soon.
- 10-It is possible that students have relatives in English-speaking countries.
- 11-There is strong evidence that academic exchanges improve the language skills of students.
- 12-Poly U students are predominantly Cantonese speakers.
- 13-It is an iron law that nothing can go faster than light.
- 14-On the evidence of the findings presented in a study, it would appear that students in Iraq generally have little need to speak in English outside the classroom.
- 15-The results, if valid, would indicate a need for additional regulation ensure equality.

Q3// Make the sentences below more cautious, by filling each blank with what is required in brackets.

Example: _____ you phone him tomorrow. (Modal auxiliary)

would you phone him tomorrow

- 1)there is no simple explanation. (Introductory phrases)
- 2) our study contradicts the myth that men make better managers than women. (If clauses)
- 3)that one in five marriages end in divorce. (Nouns)
- 4) There is a good reason why she chose to write in this style. (Probability adverbs)
- 5) In spite of it's limitations, the studyhave a number of important strengths. (Modals lexical verbs)
- 6) Water shortages trigger conflict between nations. (Modals auxiliary)
- 7) Large temperature spreads result from combustions problems. (Frequency adverbs)
- 8) that I will go . (Probability adjectives)
- 9) The subjects retained , between 45 and 54. (Approximators of degree quantity)
- 10) that the result is true. (Compound hedges)

Q4// Rewrite the following assertive sentences using hedging devices which make these sentences more acceptable.

Example: your opinion is vague → It seems to me your opinion is vague.

- 1) The evidence shows that all allergy sufferers benefit from anti-histamine medication.
- 2) Us scientists have developed a new vaccine against malaria.
- 3) Smoking causes cancer.
- 4) The earth is flat.
- 5) You ask again.
- 6) Britain's economy will improve.
- 7) Penguins are birds.
- 8) The house is old.
- 9) Politeness theories constitute the most interesting area of pragmatics.
- 10) The grammatical errors have an impact on the performance of the student.
- 11) Women only shop between 9am and 3pm, whereas men only shop between 2pm and 5pm.
- 12) Office workers always suffer from more back problems than construction workers.
- 13) Children who miss more than two weeks of school a year will not achieve their expected grades in an exam.
- 14) There are cases where it would have been the only possible method of transmissions.
- 15) Car passengers who do not wear seatbelts will suffer more serious injuries than passengers who do wear their seatbelts.