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The Use of Hedging Devices in English Texts Written by English and Kurdish Academics: A Comparative Study

Shawan Saeed Haji

Dr. Karmand Hamad Abdulla

Soran University/ Faculty of Arts

English Department

Balaky92@gmail.com

karmand.hamad@soran.edu.iq

Abstract

This study is entitled The Use of Hedging Devices in English Texts Written by English and Kurdish Academics: A Comparative Study. It examines the application of hedging devices in English research articles (RA) produced by English and Kurdish writers of English in the field of linguistics. Therefore, 50 English RAs are chosen for the purpose of analysis. The three sections of introduction, discussion and conclusion are analyzed through the computer software (AntConc). Moreover, the study adopts Varttala's (2001) model for classifying hedging devices to analyze the data to elicit the differences and similarities in the frequency and types of hedges used by the two groups of writers. However, the main goal of the study is contributed to the study of hedging devices by adopting a practical examination and comparison of academic texts in a Kurdish and English setting. The most important finding is that native English writers employ much more hedges in RAs than the Kurdish writers. These results can have implications, particularly, to Kurdish writers of English to better conform to the standard style of academic writing in using hedges appropriately.

Keywords: hedging devices, academic writing, corpus-based study, cultural variations.

Introduction

Language is considered as the primary source of communication among human beings. It holds a profound role in understanding and comprehending the world around and beyond us. One of the essential factors helping in the process of successful communication, is language competence. The term “Competence” was first introduced by Chomsky when he made a crucial distinction between competence and performance. Chomsky defined competence as “Knowledge of language” meanwhile, performance has to do with the appropriateness of performed speech (Canale and Swain, 1980, p. 4).

However, Chomsky’s influential distinction was later reformulated by Hymes (1972) who presented the concept of communicative competence, a term used to cover both the speaker’s knowledge about language and the ability to use it. Since then, inter-language pragmatic researchers have been influenced by Hymes’s (1972) view, which in turn led to more interest in conducting many pragmatic studies, particularly in language learning in the last three decades (Schauer, 2009). Indeed, one of the essential components of communicative competence is known as “Pragmatic Competence”. Fraser (1983) defines pragmatic competence as “the knowledge of how addressee determines what a speaker is saying and recognizes the intended illocutionary force conveyed through subtle attitudes” (p. 30). That is, the ability to communicate the intended message between the participants in a specific context. However, Hyland (2000) asserts that gaining competency in productive skills of academic language is often seen to be a problematic aspect for some learners because when learners are not able to decode the writer’s intention, there will be a great chance for wrong interpretations.

Hence, one of the aspects of pragmatic competence is the ability to use vague language; a form of language used to function for several communicative purposes such as mitigation and tentativeness, marking politeness, indicating solidarity with other participants of the conversation, reducing the riskiness of what one says or softening the way a request is ordered. Yates (2010) maintains that one can simply produce vague language through the use of special devices known as “Hedges”, which is both studied in pragmatics and discourse analysis (p.38).

The term *hedge* or *hedging devices* have been part of the linguistic vocabulary for about forty years now. Although the earliest studies to deal with the concept of hedges were found in Zadeh’s (1965) work on fuzzy logic, in which he claims that in the natural world some objects do not easily fit into the existing linguistic categories for describing the universe. Later on, the first linguistically oriented treatment of hedges was made, when the American linguist and philosopher George Lakoff (1972) introduced it, in his paper entitled "Hedges: A study in meaning criteria and the logic of fuzzy concepts". That is, Lakoff wrote, “For me, some of the most interesting questions are raised by the study of words whose meaning implicitly involves fuzziness – words whose job it is to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy” (p. 195). By his description of hedges, Lakoff objected the dominant belief of that time that sentences of natural language are either true or false. He proposed that “natural language concepts have vague boundaries and fuzzy edges”; therefore, sentences can often be true or false to some extent. In this regard, Prince, Frader and Bosk (1982) note that this fuzziness can be manifested in two different ways: either as fuzziness within the propositional content or in the relationship between the speaker or writer and the propositional

content. In other words, hedging is a strategy used by speakers and writers to make sure that they are cautious about making propositions and claims which are not proven as true.

Moreover, Hyland (2004) defines hedges as devices employed by writers to convey a proposition as the writer's interpretation rather than an absolute fact. Hedges are primarily used to serve diverse functions ranging from tentativeness, politeness, uncertainty and help the writer gain acceptance from the audience and avoid criticism. Simply, hedges can be expressed through various syntactic realizations such as modal verbs, verbs, adjectives adverbs and nouns ... etc. Further, Yule (1996) highlights the importance of using hedging devices in communication as "An expression of caution expressed by speakers about how an utterance is interpreted" (p. 130). It means that the speaker has to explain the truth that applies if a statement is not actually appropriate. The occurrence of hedges in a statement indicates the speaker's lack of commitment to what s/he is saying. Consider the following example:

- I *think* it is a *little* odd.

The above statement consists of two hedges. First the verb *think* indicating the speaker's lack of commitment to the proposition. Second, the adjective *little* shows the lack of commitment by the same speaker to the quality of oddness (Prince et al., 1998).

Indeed, hedges have been approached and studied from different angles. For instance, Lakoff's treatment of hedges mainly focused on the semantic characterization of hedges as words or linguistic elements carrying two different functions having to do

with fuzziness, namely increasing and decreasing fuzziness. He emphasized this concept of fuzziness by stating that “ natural language sentences are not often entirely true, false or nonsensical but rather somewhat true and somewhat false, and that membership in conceptual categories is not a simple yes-no question but a matter of degree” (p. 458).

However, as a pragmatic phenomenon, hedges are mostly studied in relation to Brown and Levinson’s (1987) theory of politeness, in which politeness is defined as the practical application of good manners or etiquette in order to protect the speaker’s or the addressees’ face. In Brown and Levinson’s (1987) theory, face, as “an individual’s self-esteem”, is seen as a binary concept divided into the positive and negative face. On one hand, as Brown and Levinson (1987) indicate, hedging strategy can be seen as a negative politeness strategy used to protect negative face “assuming that anything involved in the FTA is desired or believed by the hearer” (p. 144). In other words, hedges can be used to show that the hearer’s desires or beliefs will not be imposed upon by the speaker. Consider the following example taken from (Myers, 1989: p. 14).

- The findings *suggest* a common origin of some nuclear and mitochondrial introns...

Here, Myers interprets the italicized verb 'suggest' as a hedge used by the writer to imply that the results of the study are tentative. In this case, the verb 'suggest' is regarded as a negative politeness strategy towards the readers, because through the use of this verb, the writer limits his/her responsibility towards the information presented in the result.

On the other hand, hedging strategy is, sometimes, seen as a positive politeness strategy when it signals intimacy and rapport between the speaker and the hearer. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), positive politeness can be achieved by stretching the scope of redress to appreciate the addressee's desires and wants to avoid disagreement. Such as the following example:

- In a way, that painting is beautiful.

Furthermore, hedges are related to the Cooperative Principles (CP). Cooperative principle is proposed by the British philosopher of language Paul Grice in 1975. In his principle, Grice wanted to emphasize on the cooperative nature of human beings when they interact with each other. As a result, they will achieve effective communication. Grice's cooperative principle consists of four rules of conversation referred to as 'Gricean Maxims' including, quantity, quality, relevance and manner. The description of cooperative principle above lays a foundation for identifying the connection between hedges and cooperative principle. For example, accuracy-oriented hedges, which are associated with the writer's will in presenting information as accurately and precisely as possible, conform to the requirements of the two maxims of quantity: "make your contribution as informative as is required" and "do not make your contribution more informative than is required", as well as to the maxim of manner "avoid obscurity of expression" and "avoid ambiguity" (ibid, p. 45).

As noted earlier, the notion of hedges has been accessed and studied from different angles by different scholars and linguists, each of them has adopted a specific list of realizations and taxonomy in identifying the concept from various perspectives of grammatical, semantic, pragmatic as well as discourse analysis.

However, along with the various functions associated with hedges, there are other classifications of hedges according to their taxonomy and form such as Prince et al.'s (1982) model of hedges, Hübler's (1983) model of hedges, Salager-Meyer's (1994) model of hedges, Hyland's (1998) model of hedges, Varttala's (2001) model of hedges and so on. For instance, in Hyland's model, hedging devices are divided according to their poly-pragmatic functions into content-oriented and reader-oriented hedges. On the one hand, content-oriented hedges are associated with the writer's will and effort for their claims to have the necessary conditions in order to be successfully accepted by the reader. Also they are sub-classified into accuracy-oriented and writer-oriented hedges. Reader-oriented hedges, on the other hand, are described by Hyland (1996) as those devices used to help readers involve in a dialogue as thoughtful individuals to respond and judge on the truth value of the proposition "addressing the reader as an intelligent colleague capable of participating in the discourse with an open mind" (p. 446).

In fact, hedges are recognized as a subcategory of interpersonal metadiscoursal. In this respect, Hyland (2004) contends that hedges are those communicative strategies used by writers to soften the force of their utterance to achieve an acceptable interpersonal relationship between the writer and the readers. It is noted that the term hedges have been widened mostly over the past thirty years to cover several unrelated concepts. Hence, as cited in (Varttala, 2001), different terms and labels have been used by different researchers to study and analyze the same phenomenon such as downgraders (House and Kasper 1981), tentativeness (Holmes 1983), understatement (Hübler 1983), compromisers (James 1983), downtoners (Quirk et al. 1985), evidentiality (Chafe 1987),

mitigation (Stubbs 1983), weakeners (Brown and Levinson 1987), stance markers (Atichson 1999), vagueness (Myers 1996) and so on.

It is important to note that this study adopts Varttala's (2001) model of hedges due to the fact among the numerous scholars who have developed the study of hedges, Varttala is considered as a key figure in studying hedging devices because of his great contribution to the study of hedges. In his work on hedging devices, in the three disciplines of economics, medicine and technology, Varttala (2001) revised Hyland's (1998) taxonomy and put forward a specific model for the classification of hedges. That is to say, hedges in Varttala's model are often realized by two basic linguistic means, namely, lexical and non-lexical means. Lexical hedges are classified into five major categories associated with epistemological meaning including modal auxiliary verbs, lexical verbs, adverbs, adjectives and epistemic nouns along with three additional categories, namely clausal elements, questions and other hedges. Furthermore, this model depends on Hyland's (1998) poly-pragmatic model for the classification.

Apparently, the content of Varttala's (2001) model of lexical hedges is organized in the following: modal auxiliary verbs associated with hedges include (may, might, can, could, should, would, must). Lexical verbs are subdivided into non-factive reporting verbs (suggest, propose, argue, predicate...etc.), tentative cognition verbs (assume, think, estimate, evaluate...etc.) and tentative linking verbs (appear, seem, tend ...etc.). Adverbs are divided into probability adverbs (potentially, probably, possibly, perhaps...etc.), adverbs of indefinite frequency (often, typically, generally, usually...etc.), adverbs of indefinite degree (quite, somewhat, greatly, significantly...etc.) and approximate adverbs

(about, almost, approximately ...etc., adjectives are subdivided into probability adjectives (possible, likely, potential ...etc.), adjectives of indefinite frequency (Common, usual, typical ...etc.), adjectives of indefinite degree (significant, reasonable, slight ...etc.) and approximate adjectives (approximate, close, virtual...etc.). Finally, nouns are classified into the following three subcategories: non-factive assertive nouns (suggestion, allegation, proposal ...etc.), tentative cognition nouns (assumption, belief, guess ...etc.) and nouns of tentative likelihood (likelihood, possibility, tendency ...etc.). It is to be noted that this study is concerned with lexical hedges adopted from Varttala's (2001) model of hedging devices.

Literature Review

Hedging strategy has been a subject of ongoing interest by a large number of linguists, pragmatists and discourse analysts for many years. Mainly, hedges have been approached and tackled from various angles and perspectives such as the use of hedging devices in comparison with other metadiscoursal markers within the same discipline, the use of hedges across two or more disciplines within the same language, the use of hedges between two languages and cultures and so on. To take some examples of studies in hedges in English, Salager-Meyer (1994) conducted a study on hedges in medical English written discourse, in which she established a specific classification of hedges including five categories, namely shields, approximators, compound hedges, emotionally charged expressions along with authors' insufficiency and doubt. To achieve the main goal of the study, she analyzed a corpus consisting of 15 articles from five leading and professional medical journals and used a computer package to work out the frequency and percentages of hedges in the different rhetorical sections. The results showed that the three most frequently used

hedging devices in the data under scrutiny were shields, approximators, and compound hedges respectively and finally the discussion and comment sections were reported to be the most heavily hedged sections.

More importantly, Ken Hyland is considered as a critical figure in studying hedges due to his significant contribution to the concept of interpersonal metadiscourse in general, and hedges in particular for having a great number of research and studies in this respect. On the whole, Hyland (1998) emphasizes the critical role that hedges can play in academic and scientific writing by attempting to gain approval from readers for writers' claims. Thus, writers present the propositions with appropriate accuracy, caution and humility. In one of his studies on hedges, Hyland (1998) analyzed hedges and boosters in 56 RAs taken from seven leading journals in eight different disciplines including, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, marketing, sociology, philosophy, physics, microbiology and applied linguistics. The results indicated that there was a preference by writers to use more hedges than boosters. The most frequently used hedges found in the data were *may*, *would* and *possible*, respectively.

Evidently, Varttala (2001) has made a significant contribution to the study of hedging devices as well, as he conducted a study on hedges in the three disciplines of economics, medicine and technology. The results of his analysis revealed that economics was disciplined with the most incidence of hedges, whereas the overall number of hedges in both medicine and technology was reported to be about one third lower than economics. Thus, he concluded that several factors influence the use of hedges and their variations in different disciplines, such as the object of the study, different types of materials, the method utilized to study of these objects as well as

the general nature of the discipline. The study also showed that, among the sections investigated and analyzed, the discussion section was the most heavily hedged section in RAs.

As far as cross-cultural aspect of hedges is concerned, studies on the utilization of hedging devices among learners of English as a second or foreign language are relatively limited compared to studies on hedges in the speech and writing of native speakers and writers of English. For instance, Ventola and Mauranen (1990) conducted a study on the use of hedging devices by Finnish learners of English. The results revealed that Finnish learners of English used a relatively limited range of hedging devices in their academic writings. Later on, having chosen the three sections of research articles, namely introduction, discussion and conclusion, Vassileva (2001) conducted a study on hedges but he termed it as detachment in English, Bulgarian and Bulgarian English in order to catch the similarities and differences and came up with the result that the degree of hedges or detachment was remarkably higher in English than in Bulgarian. In the same vein, Falahati (2004) investigated hedging devices in medicine, chemistry, and psychology RAs written by native speakers of English and non-native speakers of English (Farsi). The findings of his study revealed that more hedges were used in English RAs compared to Farsi RAs. The results also showed that the discussion sections of RAs, in general, favour more hedges than the Introduction sections. The distribution of hedging elements was shown to be significantly different across the three examined disciplines. The most heavily hedged disciplines were reported to be English psychology and Farsi medicine RAs.

Concerning the use of hedging devices in academic contexts, this linguistic phenomenon is not well studied so far by

Kurdish scholars. To the researcher's knowledge, very few studies on hedges are found in a Kurdish setting. For example, Omer (2016) conducted a study on the use of modality in relation to hedging strategy by the Kurdish university learners, in which 20 university students received questionnaires asking about the awareness of the advanced Kurdish students of using modality in relation to hedging strategy in academic discourse and how they were taught modality and hedging in their discipline. Thus, he came to the conclusion that although Kurdish learners of English are taught modal auxiliaries explicitly, they are not familiar with the concept of hedges and their functions. However, another study about hedging was conducted by a Kurdish writer, Salih (2016), in which different from previously mentioned studies, she approached hedges from a literary point of view as she investigated the use of hedging devices in three modern English plays, namely 'Look Back in Anger', 'The Invention of Love' and 'Under the Blue Sky'. The findings revealed that hedges were used in all the three plays, but their forms and functions were different. Thus, having reviewed some literature relevant to hedging phenomenon, it can be inferred that the topic has been explored across various languages, disciplines and genres. However, due to the lack of studies on the use of hedging devices by English and Kurdish academic writers in English RAs, this study sets out to investigate the way Kurdish writers use such devices in academic writing and compare it to native English writers.

Methodology

Methods and Materials

In order to achieve the central goals of the study, a corpus of 50 published RAs written in the field of linguistics was used to

represent the body of data in the current study. In fact, one of the reasons underlying the choice of RAs as the subject of study is the widely acknowledged importance of the RAs as one of the critical means of communication among academics and scientists. Thus, the corpus compiled for this study is divided into two mini sub-corpora: a corpus comprising of 25 RAs written by native English writers (NW)s, whereas the other corpus consisted of 25 RAs by non-native (Kurdish) writers of English (NNW)s in the field of linguistics. In total, the average length of the selected RAs was ranging between (3000) and (5000) words in length which in turn made two corpora of 73,482 and 72,516 words of English and Kurdish texts, respectively. In order to conduct a comparative analysis to illustrate the differences and similarities in the use of hedges, since the size of RAs in each group and across the three rhetorical sections varied, the difference in word count was neutralized by normalizing the raw number of the frequency of each hedging device used in each corpus and calculated for every per 1000 words. Moreover, in order to avoid possible errors of identification and for achieving a uniform set of data, since much of the hedge identification is pragmatically-driven and context-dependent; therefore, the data have been double-checked, that is, an electronic search followed by a manual examination of the output and also each section of the RA was analyzed twice.

It is noteworthy that the present study selected the RAs based on convenience and accessibility. Hence, they were retrieved and downloaded from online journals. The RAs written by NWs were taken from international professional journals, and in order to make sure that the 25 RAs were written by native English-speaking writers, the researcher used Google Scholar, Science Direct and Research Gate to search for the writers' biographies and

nationalities. Meanwhile, the other group of RAs by Kurdish writers were taken from both national (local) and international journals. Moreover, all the published RAs from both sub-corpora were chosen to meet the following three criteria: the articles reported on empirical or experimental research. The selected articles were published over a period of 10 years, from 2010 up to now 2019, and only those RAs were included which had the three main sections, namely introduction, discussion as well as conclusion being regarded as the focus of study, and representing academic texts and all tables, figures, footnotes, as well as bibliography were eliminated from the data.

However, since hedges are perceived as an open-ended category, which have been classified differently by different scholars, this study adopts Varttala's (2001) model - a revised version of Hyland's (1998) taxonomy of classifying hedging devices.

Primarily, Varttala's model focuses on examining the occurrence and functions of the five major lexical types of hedges, namely epistemic modal auxiliaries, full verbs, nouns, adjectives and adverbs. Hence, in order to offer insights into the possible contextual interpretations of hedging as a linguistic phenomenon, the main goal of such study is to determine whether any variations exist between the two groups of RAs, written by NWs and NNWs in the field of linguistics.

Data Collection Procedure

After downloading the selected number of RAs, from the aforementioned sources, the procedure for collecting data in this study underwent four successive stages. First, before the computer

software tool is used to carry out the corpus-based linguistic analysis, the need for converting the downloaded RAs from Microsoft Word or PDF format into Text Document Format was necessary, since all the articles were either in Microsoft Word or PDF format. Thus, Adobe Acrobat Reader DC software was used to convert the format of RAs into Text Document format in order to be compatible with concordance. Second, in order to identify hedging devices in the texts, a corpus analysis software known as AntConc 3.5.7 (Anthony 2018) is used, which is a free and practical computer program containing appropriate tools for quantitative analysis. This program retrieves the data from the corpus in question automatically and alphabetically by providing the raw frequency a specific item appears in the corpus.

The methodology applied in this study is a mixed method consisting of a qualitative and quantitative approach for both data collection and data analysis. That is, quantitatively, a significant part of similarities and differences are caught on the ground of frequency in the use of hedging devices. In this regard, the use of the most common found hedges according to Hyland's (1998) and Varttala's (2001) model was traced in each corpus separately and then compared in terms of the number of occurrences in both corpora. Qualitatively, on the other hand, identification of patterns along with an explanation of how and why such elements used for the signaling hedging devices are presented.

Research Questions

1- Is there any significant difference between the English research articles written by native and non-native (Kurdish) writers of English regarding the frequency of using hedging devices?

2- How hedging devices are distributed across the three sections of research articles, namely introduction, discussion and conclusion in the two comparable data of RAs?

3- What are the categorical differences and similarities between the English research articles written by native and non-native (Kurdish) writers of English?

Results and Discussion

Before going into the detail about the use of hedging devices in the two comparable corpora, it is necessary to note that this study adopts Varttala's (2001) model- a revised version of Hyland's (1998) taxonomy of classifying hedging devices in his analysis of the formal aspects of hedges. Admittedly, the rationale for employing Varttala's model is that his classification is organized, easy to detect in the body of texts and broader than others. However, the table below presents the overall usage of hedges in the two comparable corpora.

Table 1: The overall use of hedging devices in both native and non-native English RAs

Hedging Devices	Native English RAs		Non-native (Kurdish) RAs	
	Raw Number	F per ۱۰۰۰ W	Raw Number	F per ۱۰۰۰ W
	۲۷۸۲	۳۷.۸۵	۲۱۰۸	۲۹.۰۶

F= Frequency, W= Word

As seen, hedging devices were indeed used in the RAs data but with a substantial difference in degree by the two groups of writers as well as across the three rhetorical sections of RAs. The

frequency of hedging devices in English RAs by NWs was relatively higher 2782 (37.85 per 1000 words) compared to their Kurdish counterparts, NWW corpus, which consisted of 2108 hedging items (29.06 per 1000 words). Interestingly, the numerical result about the overall use of hedges reveals a significant difference in the frequency of employing hedging devices in English RAs by the two groups of writers from two discourse communities. That is, the deviation is too distinctive which is (8.79 per 1000 words). On average, a single English RA written by NWs contains 111 instances of hedging devices, whereas NNWs employ 84 instances of hedges from the five lexical types of hedges under scrutiny.

As far as the first question is concerned, the statistical results of analyzing the 50 English Ras, in the field of linguistics, by writers from two cultural backgrounds, namely English and Kurdish, reveal considerable differences concerning the frequency of employing hedging devices in their academic texts, i.e. RAs. That is, the data shows that NWs are found to be more tentative in putting forward their claims as they use more hedges than the NNWs. In other words, regarding the hedges, and using tendency traits by the two groups of writers, the results indicate that NWs are in favor of using more hedges in an attempt of weakening their statements or for other rhetorical purposes compared to NNWs. Hence, it is apparent that NNWs fall behind of NWs in respect to the overall frequency of hedge application, as the total number of hedges in NW corpus was 2782 counting (37.85 per 1000 words). On the contrary, the overall frequency of the hedging devices used in the NNW corpus was 2108 (29.06 per 1000 words), which is relatively lower compared to NW data. What this means is that Kurdish writers do not prefer to hedge their statements as much as

their English counterparts, and are relatively more assertive and confident in their claims. So, it is apparent that English and Kurdish writers have a different orientation towards the use of hedges in their academic Ras, and this finding, eventually, supports the assumption that Kurdish academic writers exhibit a higher degree of commitment for being more direct in making claims in comparison to their counterparts of English. In this sense, Wishnoff (2000) maintains that non-native writers can be easily distinguished from native counterparts for being direct in writing. Typically, to compare the findings of this study with relevant literature, it should be noted that this finding echoes the findings of some previously conducted studies. For example, many studies conducted before came to the same conclusion that non-English RAs included fewer hedges than English RAs written by native writers of English such as Mauranen, (1997), Vassileva (2001) and Yang (2003).

One could suggest possible explanations for the significant difference emerged between the two groups of writers. On the one hand, this variation is associated with specific cultures; as it illustrates cross-cultural variations between English and Kurdish writers' contexts. Kaplan (1966) points out that culture should be taken into consideration when studying the rhetorical features of academic texts since the conventions of writing vary from culture to culture. In case of Kurdish writers, culture, to some extent, may influence the writer's tendency towards employing hedging devices when they write RAs in English as a foreign language, and as they may have their own understanding of the pragmatic rules of academic writing.

On the other hand, the significant difference found between the academic RAs written by NWs and NNWs in utilizing hedging devices could be possibly attributed to the proficiency level of

Kurdish writers and the insufficient awareness of the critical role that hedges play in academic discourse. Actually, in academic writing, academic environment plays a critical role, because if non-native writers have not been appropriately trained, they would find it difficult to conform to the standard academic writing style. To put it in other words, unfamiliarity and lack of instruction will result in the non-native writer's use of fewer hedges compared to native English writers and sometimes they may use them inappropriately. In short, the statistical differences recorded in this study between specific rhetorical sections of RAs may partially support the idea that the employment of pragmatic markers in general and hedging devices, in particular, vary from culture to culture, connecting to the writer's awareness or proficiency level and also is discipline dependent. Thus, these findings may pave the way to a better understanding of how culture, proficiency level, and discipline can direct the writers to project themselves within academic texts.

Regarding the second question, the comparable data revealed significant similarities concerning the distribution of hedging devices across the three rhetorical sections of RAs, namely introduction, discussion as well as conclusion between the two comparable corpora. Therefore, it should be borne in mind that it is possible for hedges not to occur to the same degree throughout the sections of RAs. In other words, certain sections may be more heavily hedged than others. This claim is more emphasized in Salager-Meyer's (1994) findings of her study in which, among the various sections of RAs such as introduction, method, results, discussion and conclusion, discussion section was found to be the most heavily hedged section. Hence, the table below presents rhetorical distribution of hedges by NWs and NNWs across the

three sections in the 50 selected RAs as well as their frequency per 1000 words and percentage in the total number of hedges in the whole data.

Table 2: Frequency and distribution of hedges across the three sections of RAs in NW and NNW corpora

Total Words	English RAs			Total	Non-native (Kurdish) RAs			Total
	Introduction	Discussion	Conclusion		Introduction	Discussion	Conclusion	
	۱۷۴۲۹	۴۷۱۵۹	۸۸۹۴	۷۳۴۸۲	۱۵۰۰۹	۴۹۱۱۰	۸۳۹۷	۷۲۵۱۶
Raw Number	۷۶۸	۱۷۱۰	۳۰۴	۲۷۸۲	۴۶۵	۱۳۶۸	۲۷۵	۲۱۰۸
F per ۱,۰۰۰ W	۴۴.۰۶	۳۶.۲۶	۳۴.۱۸	۳۷.۸۵	۳۰.۹۸	۲۷.۸۵	۳۰.۶۰	۲۹.۰۶
Percentage	۲۷.۶۰	۶۱.۴۱	۱۰.۹۲	۱۰۰%	۲۲.۰۵	۶۴.۸۹	۱۳.۰۴	۱۰۰%

Apparently, despite the similarities by the two groups of writers in distributing hedging devices across the three sections of RAs, it is clear from the table above that a striking variation exists in terms of the number of hedges in each section by the two groups of writers. That is, introduction section in the NW data used hedging devices more than 760 times, nearly twice as the NNW data, which had only 465 instances of hedges, and this means that NWs are more prone to the application of hedging devices in the introduction section of their RAs. Meanwhile, discussion which is found to be the section in which both writer groups used hedging the most; 1710 occurrences in NW and 1368 occurrences in NNW

corpus. Being parallel to the introduction, this indicates comparatively disposition of NWs in employing hedging devices in discussion section compared to their Kurdish counterparts. Finally, the difference in using hedges in the conclusion section is slight, although ,again the number of hedges in NW is over NNW having 304 and 275 instances, respectively, this time the difference is not as significant as it is in other sections.

As for the third question concerning the categorical differences and similarities between the English research articles written by native and non-native (Kurdish) writers of English are presented in the table below.

Table 3: Overall frequency of the categories of hedges in NW and NNW English RAs

Categories of Hedge	NW Corpus		NNW Corpus	
	Raw Number	Percentage	Raw Number	Percentage
Modal verbs	۹۲۳	۳۳.۱	۷۲۳	۳۴.۲
Adverbs	۶۰۹	۲۱.۸	۴۸۲	۲۲.۸
Lexical Verbs	۴۵۶	۱۶.۳	۳۶۲	۱۷.۱
Nouns	۴۴۷	۱۶	۲۶۰	۱۲.۳
Adjectives	۳۴۷	۱۲.۴	۲۸۱	۱۳.۳
Total	۲۷۸۲	۱۰۰٪	۲۱۰۸	۱۰۰٪

As the breakdown of the results illustrates, regardless of the apparent diversity in the number of hedges used by the two groups of writers in their Ras, it is important to highlight the fact that there seems to be a mutual tendency towards choosing types of hedging strategies as it is found in the following categories. To begin with,

the most definitely favored category of hedging devices in both types of RAs is occupied by epistemic modal auxiliary verbs, as they occurred 932 times covering 33% of the total number of hedges used in the NW data. Although this number is markedly higher than the frequency of the same category of modal auxiliaries, in the NNW data with 723 occurrences (34%), they are still the most applied category. Besides, the selection of these modal verbs is at some points in harmony by the two groups of writers as *may* was employed as the most preferred and *must* as the least favored subcategory of modal auxiliary verbs in both corpora. More specifically, the occurrence of the modal auxiliary *may* as the most prominent modal in both corpora corresponds to Hyland's (1998) findings by pointing out to *may* as "the only modal which figures significantly more often in academic than other genres" (p. 116). Additionally, as the results reveal, the second highest frequently used category of hedges in the NW data was recorded to be lexical verbs with an incidence of 609 examples (21%), whereas, the ranking of lexical verbs, following modal auxiliary verbs and adverbs, were found in the NNW data to be the third most commonly used category for occurring 362 times (17%). This result indicates that NWs outnumber NNWs in employing epistemic lexical verbs in their RAs. Moreover, adverbs come as the third most employed category by NWs with a total of 456 instances (16%) and the second highest used category by the NNWs occurring 482 times (22%). Unlike modal auxiliary and lexical verbs, the numerical results turn out to present a different picture from other categories, as NNWs are slightly ahead of NWs in using adverbs. Even though, the difference is only a matter of 26 examples occurred in favor of NNWs, but it can be concluded that the two groups of writers are approximately similar in the frequency of using adverbs in their RAs. Moreover, NW data

consists of 447 examples of noun hedges (16%), which is relatively higher than the number of nouns used in the NNW data for including 260 instances (12%). More specifically, the results reveal a striking difference between the two groups of writers because there exists a difference of 187 instances of noun hedges in favor of NWs. Finally, the difference between the two RAs data proceeds to include adjectives as well, as they can be foreseen, adjectives are the least utilized category by NWs 347 (12%) and 281 (13%) times by NNWs, concluding again that NWs are ahead of NNW in terms of number of adjective hedges they employ in their RAs. One possible explanation underlying this diversity in the frequency and choice of specific categories for expressing hedging strategy is explained by Hyland (1998) and Varttala (2001) to be influenced by sex, culture, level of education and language itself.

Conclusion

This current study explored the concept of hedges in academic discourse and was implemented from the cross-cultural perspective towards the application of hedging strategy by English and Kurdish writers in the field of linguistics. It is concluded that hedging devices were applied in the two types of RAs but in different degrees confirming some other scholars' opinion about the application of hedging devices as associated with discipline nature and specificity. Overall, the results revealed that NWs employ more hedging devices (37.85 per 1000 words) in their RAs compared to their Kurdish counterparts (29.06 per 1000 words). The reason for NNWs underusing this crucial element in academic writing may be attributed to certain factors; Firstly, the influence of cultural background since culture has impact upon writers to have their own perspective towards their discourse community and conventional rules. Secondly, this result could be attributed to the

proficiency level and the insufficient awareness of Kurdish writers of the importance of hedges and their role in academic discourse leading them to find it difficult to conform to the standard academic writing style. In other words, the result of unfamiliarity and lack of systematic instruction to the study of hedging devices in the Kurdish academic environment is found in the Kurdish writers' use of relatively fewer hedges compared to native English writers. However, the results reveal a significant resemblance regarding the distribution of hedging devices across the three rhetorical sections of RAs including introduction, discussion and conclusion. Indeed, the discussion section was identified as the most heavily hedged section followed by introduction and conclusion as the least hedged section in both corpora with considerable variations in frequency. Moreover, among the categories of hedges, epistemic modal auxiliary verbs took the first rank as hedging category used by both groups of writers to hedge their propositions. However, they differ in the frequency of using these categories for achieving the same aim. Ultimately, this study proved that hedges could assist writers to avoid personal responsibility for claims and statements in order to protect their reputations as scholars and reduce the adverse consequences of inappropriate use of hedging devices.

Appendices

Appendix A: List of native English RAs used as the data for analysis in the study

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پوخته:

ناونیشانی ئەم تووژینه وهیه بریتیه له به کارهینانی ئامرازهکانی په رژینگویی له دهقی ئەکادیمی ئینگلیزی نوسراو له لایه ن نوسه ری ئینگلیز و کورد: لیکۆلینه وهیه کی به راوردکاری. ئەم تووژینه وهیه له به کارهینانی ئامرازهکانی په رژینگویی دهکۆلته وه له دهقی نووسراوی ئینگلیزی له لایه ن نووسه رانی بواری زمانه وانی ئینگلیز و کورد، بۆ ئەم مه به سته ۵۰ تووژینه وهی ئینگلیزی کۆکراونه ته وه و مه تنیکیان لئ به رهه م هاتوه به مه به سستی شیکردنه وه. له پێگای به رنامه یه کی کۆمپیوته ری به ناوی (AntConc 2018) هه ر سێ به شه کانی تووژینه وه پێشه کی، گفتوگو و ده رئه نجام بۆ لیکۆلینه وه هه لژیردراون. جگه له مه ش، ئەم تووژینه وهیه پشت به پۆلینکردنی (Varttala) ده به سستیت بۆ شیکردنه وهی داتا که بۆ گه یشتن به ده رئه نجامی کی راست و پوخت سه باره ت به جیاوازی و لیکچوونه کانی نیوان هه ردوو گرووی نووسه ران له به کارهینانی ئەم ئامرازانه له تووژینه وه کانیاندا. له گه ل ئەمه شدا ئامانجی سه ره کی ئەم تووژینه وهیه بریتیه له ئەنجامدانی تووژینه وهیه کی کرداره کی له دهقی نووسراوی په سه نی ئەکادیمی له لایه ن نووسه رانی کورد و به راودکردنیان به و ده قانه ی که له لایه ن ئینگلیزه کانه وه نووسراون. یه کی که له گرینگترین ده رئه نجامه کان ئەوه یه که نووسه ره ئینگلیزه کان زیاتر له کورده کان ئامرازه کانی په رژینگویی به کارده یتن له نووسینه کانیان دا. ئەم ده رئه نجامانه ده کری له لایه ن نووسه ره کورده کان سوودیان لئ وه ربگیرئ بۆ ئەوه ی بگه نه ئاستی ستاندارد له نووسینی ئەکادیمی و به کارهینانی ئەم ئامرازانه به شیوه یه کی راست و دروست .

وشه کلیلیه کان: ئامرازه کانی په رژینگویی، نووسینی ئەکادیمی، تووژینه وهی پشت به ستوو به مه تن، جیاوازیه کلتوریه کان.

ملخص:

هذه الدراسة هي بعنوان "استخدام أجهزة التحوط في النصوص الإنجليزية التي كُتبت من قبل الأكاديميين الإنجليز والكرد: دراسة مقارنة". إنها تحدد التحقيق في تطبيق أجهزة التحوط في المقالات البحثية الإنجليزية التي كُتبت من قبل كُتّاب الإنجليز والكرد باللغة الإنجليزية في مجال اللغويات. ولتحقيق هذا الهدف، تحت مظلة دراسة مقارنة للمتون، تم اختيار ٥٠ مقالة إنجليزية لغرض التحليل، والأقسام البيانية الثلاثة (المقدمة، والمناقشة، والاستنتاج) يتم تحليلها من خلال برنامج الكمبيوتر (AntConc ٢٠١٨)، علاوةً على ذلك، استنادًا إلى نموذج (Varttala ٢٠٠١) لتصنيف أجهزة التحوط لتحليل البيانات و للحصول على شرح دقيق للاختلافات والتشابهات في عدد أو كمية وأنواع التحوطات المستخدمة من قبل مجموعتي الكُتّاب. ومع ذلك، فإن الغرض من هذه الدراسة تهدف إلى المساهمة في دراسة أجهزة التحوط من خلال اعتماد بحث عملي للنصوص الأكاديمية الأصلية في بيئة كردية مقارنة بنظرائهم في البيئة الإنجليزية. النتائج تظهر أن الكُتّاب الإنجليز الأصليين يستخدمون تحوطات في الكتابة أكثر من الكُتّاب الأكراد. يمكن أن يكون لهذه النتائج آثار، خاصة على الكُتّاب الأكراد باللغة الإنجليزية للتوافق بشكل أفضل مع الأسلوب القياسي للكتابة الأكاديمية في استخدام التحوطات بشكل مناسب.

الكلمات المفتاحية: أجهزة التحوط، الكتابة الأكاديمية، الدراسة القائمة على المتون، التغيرات الثقافية.