CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature in this thesis focuses on exploring previous research related to the use and the purpose of hedging in academic writing, particularly among novice writers. By examining the existing literature, the researchers aim to gain insights into the strategies employed by novice writers in their academic writing. The literature review also aims to provide a foundation for understanding the significance of hedging in academic discourse and its implications for language learners and novice writers.

A.   Hedging in Academic Writing

When individuals, particularly students, aim to convey comprehension of a concept related to a phenomenon, they often articulate it through the medium of academic writing. Academic writing involves students delving into their knowledge and comprehension of materials acquired in an academic environment. This implies that in the realm of academic writing, students are afforded the opportunity to provide or articulate their perspectives and arguments Vandenhoek (2018). Academic writing should encompass three fundamental structures: an introduction that articulates the primary focus of the writer's assertions, a body that elucidates the development of these ideas, and a conclusion that provides a succinct summary of the claims presented Jones (2013). In essence, academic writing, as defined by its features and characteristics, can be succinctly described as any writing undertaken for

various purposes within an academic context and is expected to embody the qualities indicative of effective academic writing.

Academic writing is often viewed as a sequence of impersonal statements or factual presentations, marked by an objective and informative style. However, the most impactful contributions within the academic community occur when researchers, exemplified by Gherdan (2019), not only receive acknowledgment for their original input but also empower others to participate in the ongoing discourse. This empowerment involves various activities such as refining or interpreting the ideas put forth, scrutinizing or questioning assertions, and introducing fresh perspectives. By fostering an environment of active engagement and collaborative dialogue, researchers contribute to the dynamic nature of academic knowledge dissemination, allowing for the continuous evolution and enrichment of scholarly discussions.

Additionally, it is noteworthy that effective academic writing often involves the judicious use of hedging, a linguistic strategy that allows writers to express ideas with caution or to qualify statements. Hedging is one important type of interpersonal meta-discourse, and it is broadly studied in scientific research articles and academic writing Hyland (1998); Salichah et al. (2015); Samaie et al. (2014). Hedging functions like a set of rules in communication within the academic community. Therefore, using hedging inappropriately or incorrectly can hinder communication and lead to misunderstandings Zanina (2016). Moreover, hedges can show politeness and the possibility of claims Petchkij (2019). But Prasithrathsint (1994) says that "Hedging" refers to words that

soften the impact of an utterance and uses the term "hedges" to describe devices of indirectness, tentativeness, and understatement in statements. Disciplinary variations introduce an additional layer of complexity to the prevalence and types of hedging, with researchers examining these differences, as exemplified by Hyland (1998), noting that scientific writing often necessitates extensive hedging due to the inherent uncertainties in experimental outcomes. In contrast, disciplines like philosophy may involve a more assertive use of language. This divergence in hedging practices underscores the nuanced ways in which scholars navigate language to communicate certainty or uncertainty within their respective fields.

So, in the pedagogical realm, teaching and learning hedging become critical components of academic writing education. Novice writers need to grasp not only the linguistic intricacies of hedging but also the cultural and disciplinary norms that surround its usage for effective communication Crismore (1984); Hinkel (2005). Ethically, the consequences of misusing hedging are emphasized by Zanina (2016), who highlights that improper usage may impede communication and lead to misunderstandings within the academic community. Therefore, writers bear an ethical responsibility to use hedging judiciously to ensure their contributions align with established academic norms.

In conclusion, academic writing is a multifaceted and essential component of the academic journey, requiring students to articulate their understanding and perspectives through well-structured compositions. A comprehensive piece

of academic writing should include a clear introduction, a detailed body, and a concise conclusion. The use of hedging, an important aspect of this form of writing, allows writers to convey their arguments with the necessary caution and politeness, thereby facilitating effective communication and preventing misunderstandings. Understanding and employing hedging appropriately is crucial, as it reflects not only linguistic proficiency but also an awareness of the cultural and disciplinary norms inherent in academic discourse. As students navigate the complexities of academic writing, mastering the skill of hedging becomes integral to their success, ensuring their contributions are both impactful and ethically sound within the scholarly community.

B. Functions and Forms of Hedging

Hedging serves multiple functions in academic writing. It allows writers to present their claims with a sense of tentativeness, indicate uncertainty, and provide space for readers to make their own judgments or further investigate the topic. Salager-Meyer (1994) Hedging, which pertains to politeness strategies in the social interactions and negotiations between writers and readers, is classified into several categories. These include: Modal lexical verbs (e.g., seem, appear, believe, assume, tend), Modal auxiliary verbs (e.g., may, might, could, would, should), Approximators (e.g., about, roughly, often, generally), Introductory phrases (e.g., I believe, to our knowledge, it is somewhat), If clauses (e.g., if true, if anything), Compound hedges (e.g., seems reasonable, looks probable).

In addition to Salager-Meyer (1994) theory of classifying hedging based on markers, Hyland (1998) offers an alternative taxonomy, dividing hedges into four classifications, which are:

1. Writer-oriented Hedges

    Writer-oriented hedges pertain to the relationship between a claim and the writer, rather than addressing the relationship between the claim and the propositional elements. Ayendi et al. (2022) claim that writer-oriented hedges hide the author's point of view and avoid personal responsibility. Writer-oriented hedges are usually shown by using impersonal active constructions and passive structures.

    a. Impersonal active constructions

        The subject of the sentence is often a general term or "it," which depersonalizes the statement and introduces a sense of generality or objectivity. This can be used to make statements more tentative or to avoid direct attribution.

        Words and phrases for Impersonal Active Construction include modal verbs, impersonal expressions, and generalizing expressions. Examples of modal verbs are can, could, might, may, and should. Impersonal expressions include it seems that, it appears that, it is likely that, it is possible that, and it is believed that. Generalizing expressions comprise some, many, several, a few, researchers, and experts.

Example:

"*It seems that* the experiment yielded inconclusive results."

Reason: The subject "it" is impersonal and vague, and the verb "seems" suggests a level of uncertainty or tentativeness.

b. Passive structures

The focus is often shifted away from the doer of the action, which introduces a sense of vagueness or lack of specificity. Passive voice is used to avoid directly attributing actions or responsibility.

Words and phrases for Passive Structure include modal verbs, auxiliary verbs, and passive voice. Examples of modal verbs are should be, could be, might be, may be, and must be. Auxiliary verbs include is considered, is believed, is thought, is assumed, and is regarded. Passive voice examples are is believed to, is thought to, is suggested that, is indicated that, and is known to.

Example:

"The method is considered effective by *many researchers*."

Reason: The sentence is passive because the focus is on the method being considered effective, rather than on who considers it effective. The doer of the action ("many researchers") is introduced by "by," but the emphasis remains on the method.

2. Attribute-oriented Hedges

Attribute-oriented hedges refer to strategies employed by the writer to express their claims with precision, ensuring that

interpretations and deductions remain closely aligned with the findings. This marker is used to indicate the degree to which a term accurately describes the reported phenomenon. Besides that, Madya (2018) states that attribute-oriented hedges refer to the words that have the capacity to depict an objective realm of non-verbal facts, but this is influenced and structured by cognitive processing and significantly relies on pertinent background knowledge. Attribute-oriented hedges are usually shown by:

a. Downgraders

Downgraders diminish the strength or intensity of a statement, making it less assertive. They serve to protect the speaker or writer from potential disagreement or criticism by presenting the information as less absolute or certain. Examples of downgraders include just few, a bit, a little.

Example in the sentence:

"The results are *a bit* inconclusive."

Reason: The word "a bit" downgrades the certainty of the results being conclusive. It suggests that there is some uncertainty or ambiguity in the results, making the statement less assertive.

b. Markers of intentional vagueness

Markers of intentional vagueness introduce ambiguity or uncertainty into a statement. They reduce the explicitness of the utterance, making it less direct and potentially less face-

threatening. Examples of markers of intentional vagueness include more, less, sort of, somehow.

Example in the sentence:

"The findings are *somehow* relevant to the discussion."

Reason: The word "somehow" introduces uncertainty about the relevance of the findings. It doesn't specify how the findings are relevant but suggests that there is a connection, albeit vague or indirect. This vagueness reduces the explicitness of the claim and allows for interpretation.

c. Intensifiers

Intensifiers emphasize the importance, intensity, or emotional significance of a statement. They aim to convince readers of the writer's conviction or to use politeness strategies to soften the impact of a potentially strong claim. Examples of intensifiers include extremely interesting, particularly, important.

Example in the sentence:

"The results are *extremely* interesting."

Reason: The word "extremely" intensifies the adjective "interesting." It emphasizes the high level of interest or significance of the results, adding emotional or emphatic weight to the statement.

3. Reliability Hedges

Reliability hedges are strategies used by writers to indicate their level of confidence in the truth of a proposition. They express the writer's tentativeness regarding their arguments or claims and are often conveyed through epistemic modality. These hedges show the writer's certainty and confidence in their claims and arguments. The function of modality here is to limit the writer's responsibility by acknowledging the limitations of their arguments or claims. In addition, Hyland (1996) states that the use of modals in reliability hedge is in active voice and not used in passive voice.

Types of reliability hedges:

a. Modal Auxiliary Verbs Expressing Possibility

These modal auxiliary verbs introduce a level of possibility or likelihood, indicating that something might happen or be true but is not certain. Examples of modal auxiliary verbs expressing possibility include may, might, can, will, would, should, etc.

Example in the sentence:

"The results *may* suggest a new approach."

Reason: These sentences use modal auxiliary verbs "may" to express possibility. The use of these modal verbs indicates that the statements are not stated as absolute facts but rather as possibilities or likelihoods, introducing a level of uncertainty or tentativeness.

b. Semi-auxiliary Verbs

These semi-auxiliary verbs like "to look," "to seem," and "to appear" suggest a certain appearance or perception without stating it as a fact.

Example in the sentence:

"The data *looks* promising."

Reason: The sentences use semi-auxiliary verbs "looks" to describe the appearance or perception of the data or results. These verbs introduce a level of subjectivity and uncertainty, suggesting that the statements are based on observation or perception rather than definitive facts.

c. Epistemic Lexical Verbs

These lexical verbs express knowledge, belief, or speculation, adding a level of uncertainty or tentativeness to the statement. Examples of epistemic lexical verbs include suggest, tend, contribute, intend, propose, speculate, assume, etc.

Example in the sentence:

"The data *suggests* a correlation."

Reason: The sentences use epistemic lexical verbs like "suggest" to express knowledge, belief, or speculation. These verbs indicate the writer's interpretation or understanding of the data or findings, adding a level of uncertainty or tentativeness to the statements.

d. Modal Nouns

These nouns represent concepts related to possibility, belief, or speculation, introducing a level of abstraction and tentativeness. Examples of modal nouns include possibility, assumption, suggestion, tendency, etc.

Example in the sentence:

"There is a *possibility* of error in the measurements."

<u>Reason</u>: he sentences use modal nouns like "possibility" to discuss abstract concepts related to possibility or belief. These nouns allow the writer to discuss ideas at a higher level of abstraction, introducing a level of tentativeness or speculation.

e. Modal Adjectives

These adjectives modify the degree of possibility, indicating how likely or probable something is. Examples of modal adjectives include probably, likely, possible, etc.

Example in the sentence:

"It is *probably* the best approach."

<u>Reason</u>: The sentences use modal adjectives like "probably" to modify the degree of possibility. These adjectives indicate the likelihood or probability of something happening or being true, introducing a level of uncertainty or speculation.

4. Reader-oriented Hedges

Reader-oriented hedges involve engaging readers as thoughtful individuals who can respond to and evaluate the truth value of the proposition. The primary role of reader-oriented hedges is to reduce the writer's definitive stance by increasing the subjectivity of sentences.

Example in the sentence:

"*In my view*, direct method is the appropriate method to teach your students."

Reason: The phrase "In my view" serves as a reader-oriented hedge because it acknowledges the writer's perspective or opinion explicitly. By stating "In my view," the writer signals to the reader that what follows is their personal opinion or belief rather than an absolute or universally accepted fact.

In summary, Hyland (1998) taxonomy of hedge can be distilled into four main categories: attribute hedge, reliability hedge, writer-oriented hedge, and reader-oriented hedge. Attribute hedge serves to specify the accuracy of terms in describing reported phenomena. Reliability hedges convey the writer's assessment of the certainty of a proposition. Writer-oriented hedges conceal the writer's viewpoint and avoid personal responsibility. In contrast, reader-oriented hedges either acknowledge personal responsibility for the validity of the content or invite reader involvement. These categories provide a comprehensive framework for

understanding the nuanced ways in which writers navigate language to convey certainty or uncertainty in academic discourse.

C. Purpose of Hedging in Research Article

Hyland (1998), an expert in academic writing studies, identifies three main purposes for using hedging in research articles. First, hedging allows writers to present their arguments with greater precision. By using cautious and non-absolute language, writers can avoid overly general or definitive claims, which often do not align with the evolving nature of scientific knowledge. Hedging provides space for nuance and uncertainty, enabling authors to convey their findings more accurately and reliably.

Second, the use of hedging can anticipate possible negative consequences if the writers' arguments or claims are proven wrong. In the research world, findings can be questioned or contradicted by new discoveries in the future. By employing hedging, authors can protect themselves from future criticism or errors by acknowledging the inherent uncertainties in their research. This helps maintain scientific credibility and integrity by showing that they are aware of their study's limitations.

Third, hedging plays a role in building a relationship between the writer and the reader. By using less absolute language, writers demonstrate respect for alternative viewpoints and open the door for dialogue. This invites readers to engage in scientific discussion and feel valued for their understanding and interpretation. Thus, hedging strengthens social

interactions and collaboration within the academic community, fostering a more inclusive and respectful atmosphere.

In his articles, such as "Writing without conviction? Hedging in science research articles" (1996) and "Boosting, hedging and the negotiation of academic knowledge" (1998), Hyland explains that hedging is not just a linguistic tool but also an important rhetorical strategy in academic writing. Hedging enables writers to express uncertainty in a way that builds trust, avoids confrontation, and encourages constructive discussion. Therefore, hedging is a crucial element in effective scientific communication.