LEXICAL AND GRAMMATICAL HEDGING AS THE MEANS OF AUTHOR'S MODALITY

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The article examines the phenomenon of linguistic hedging related to the establishment of the author's responsibility limits for the statement and the mitigation of ultimacy.

In English texts, hedging tools are used to express politeness to readers and interlocutors, to avoid subjectivity in the information presentation and to protect themselves from possible criticism.

Hedging as a subjective method of influence has an objective reflection in reality and acts as a promising direction to a successful communication strategy of political, scientific, public discourse.

Non-ultimacy is realized through the use of so-called hedges, i.e. means belonging to different language levels. The article focuses on lexical and grammatical means: modal verbs, adjectives and nouns with the meaning of probability and possibility, quantitative nouns, adjectives and adverbs, as well as inversions that emphasize that the author distances himself from the formulated conclusions, refers to the authority of others, refers to the authority of others. as probable, emphasizes that the opinion or conclusion does not belong to him personally.

The article provides a structural, semantic and pragmatic analysis of hedge markers, as well as the classification of hedging instruments by both structural and functional criteria.

The study reviews the pragmatic causes and functional features of language tools marked by the perlocutionary intention of uncertainty. The study highlights basic lexical units belonging to the arsenal of hedging instruments. The results of the study can be seen as confirmation of the tendency to increase the category of uncertainty in modern linguistic consciousness.

Key words*: hedging, hedge, ultimacy, distancing, epistemic modality.*

ЛЕКСИЧНИЙ ТА ГРАМАТИЧНИЙ ХЕДЖИНГ ЯК ЗАСІБ ВИРАЖЕННЯ АВТОРСЬКОЇ МОДАЛЬНОСТІ

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У статті досліджено явище лінгвістичного хеджування, пов'язане з установленням меж відповідальності автора висловлювання та пом'якшенням категоричності.

В англомовних текстах засоби хеджингу використовують для вираження ввічливості стосовно до читачів і співрозмовників, для уникнення суб'єктивності під час викладу інформації та для захисту себе від можливої критики.

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Хеджинг як суб'єктивний метод впливу має об'єктивне відображення в реальності та є перспективним напрямком для успішної комунікативної стратегії політичного, наукового, публічного дискурсу.

Некатегоричність реалізується через використання так званих хедж-маркерів, тобто засобів різних рівнів мови. У статті увагу приділено лексичним та граматичним засобам: модальним дієсловам, прикметникам та іменникам зі значенням імовірності й можливості, кількісним іменникам, прикметникам і прислівникам, а також зворотам, які підкреслюють, що автор дистанціюється від сформульованих висновків, покликається на авторитет інших, позиціонує цей висновок як імовірний, робить акцент на тому, що така думка або висновок не належать йому особисто.

У статті здійснено структурний, семантичний та прагматичний аналіз хедж-маркерів, а також класифікацію засобів хеджування як за структурним, так і за функціональним критерієм.

У процесі дослідження було проведено огляд прагматичних причин виникнення та функціональних особливостей мовних засобів, маркованих перлокутивною інтенцією невизначеності. Розглянуто основні лексичні одиниці, що належать до арсеналу засобів хеджування. Результати дослідження можна вважати підтвердженням тенденції до посилення категорії невизначеності в сучасній мовній свідомості.

Ключові слова: хеджинг, хедж-маркер, категоричність, дистанціювання, епістемічна модальність.

Defining the problem. Neutral, formal, both public or private, tolerant and inoffensive speech suggests that the author of both oral and written statements has to be careful in producing them. Such caution makes it possible to distinguish between facts and statements, and also "softens" the ultimacy of the opinions expressed.

This language phenomenon attracted the linguistic attention in the second part of the 20th century, however the current modern trends in public speaking and speech writing have reinforced the need to additionally study and analyze hedging [1; 3; 4] and its structural and semantic types as well as pragmatic aspects of its usage, which altogether constitute the **objectives of this paper.**

Previous research. The term "hedging" was borrowed from Economics. In this field, "hedging" means the insurance of possible risks, which is supposed to protect against a variety of adverse situations. In the linguistic field, the term itself has hardly changed its meaning but rather acquired additional traces of meaning. Thus in linguistics, hedging, or direct answer evasion, is a term introduced into scientific circulation by J. Lakoff in 1972 in "Hedges: A Study in Meaning Criteria and the Logic of Fuzzy Concepts" [2], in which he was first to define the notion. He suggested the name of the phenomenon – "hedge" [2: 21], metaphorically comparing it with a fence, i.e. by using hedges the speakers would separate themselves from the direct meaning of their message. Thus, according to J. Lakoff, "hedging is words or phrases whose function is to present things ambiguously, while individuals are completely confident in the accuracy of the information they present in the communication process or in their publications" [2: 195].

In the attempt to find the most suitable definition for the phenomenon we so far have come across two terms: "hedge" and "hedging". In the paper we will differentiate between them posing the latter as the phenomenon name and the former – as one of its realization types.

However, J. Lakoff is not the only scholar who studied this linguistic manifestation of uncertainty or evasion; the introduction of hedging to the linguistic analysis was aligned with the "fuzzy set theory" associated with the names of L. Zadeh and W. Weinreich [9;10] who studied the similar process a

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decade before Lakoff. The theory, as its name suggests stands on similar to Lakoff's grounds.

Not refusing from the traditional approach we will determine that hedging is constructioning a statement in a way, presenting the message as a relative rather than absolute truth. This can be achieved by a number of means, among which there is one which we will refer to as hedges.

The aim of the study is to analyze the structural, semantic and pragmatic features of hedging.

The research object is hedging and hedging units in modern oral and written speech.

Though hedging is associated primarily with lexical semantic, the use of hedging also finds its realization on a grammatical level. Therefore the survey matter is the semantic and structural features of grammatical and lexical hedging in present-day oral and written speech.

Presentation of the main research material. Hedging can be used in speech for one or several of the following reasons:

1. By using hedging, speakers soften statements to reduce the risk of objection. This occurs to avoid scientific inaccuracy and defines it as a linguistic hint of bias that prevents personal liability for the statement.

2. Speakers express the fact that they do not claim the "last word" on a particular topic. Expressing a lack of confidence does not necessarily mean embarrassment or uncertainty. Hedging can also be seen as a means of expressing greater accuracy in expressing results. In fact, speakers tend to soften the force of their assertion since a stronger statement may not be justified by available evidence and data.

3. Hedging can be used as a positive or negative politeness strategy, by using which the speaker tries to pose himself more modest than arrogant or omniscient. Hedging is a rational interpersonal strategy that supports the position of the speaker, builds the relationship between the recipient and the speaker and guarantees a certain level of acceptance in the community. Once a statement becomes generally accepted, it can be submitted without hedging.

4. A certain degree of separation from the message has become a norm in speech; hedging already functions as an integral part in the sphere of public speaking in English having coined such set vague expressions as "*address issues*", "*face challenges*" etc.

Based on this information, we can conclude that the implementation of various hedging strategies by the speaker can be accounted by ignorance, silence, doubt, elimination of redundant information, diplomatic moves, ambivalence of relations or lack of interest in the subject, limited semantic resources of language or inability to use them.

The most important and indicative criteria for hedging are:

• its potential variability, i.e. the presence of lexical units and inflections in it, which can be replaced or omitted without loss of meaning;

• reduction of its accuracy and specificity, which leads to its abstractness;

• its increased objectivity or, conversely, remoteness from the information presented.

In recent years, the concept of "hedging" has been developed primarily in pragmatics and discourse analysis, so the modern meaning of this term goes beyond the formal logic and semantics of frames, penetrating the field of metacommunication and linguistic strategies of mitigation and politeness. The difficulty of functionally defining lexical delimiters (hedges) is that almost any linguistic expression can be interpreted as a "hedge". Therefore we will distinguish between hedges proper and softeners. Hedges proper are those parts of sentences, which are nonobligatory for the grammatical structure of the sentence,

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that is presenting additional minor information. E.g: in the sentence *Maybe you're right,* the sentence structure could well go without *Maybe*. Whereas softeners are an indispensable part of a sentence, which can be replaced though by a more "direct" option. For example, in the sentence: *You need to study harder,* the verb is an obligatory part, though its semantics is less imposing than of the verb "*must*", which is most definitely the message of the sentence.

So, pragmatically hedging is associated with the expression of confidence, or more often with a lack thereof in the provided information veracity. However the uncertainty can be either of the two following types:

• ambiguity within the propositional content;

• ambiguity in the relationship between the propositional content and the speaker, i.e. According to the above types of uncertainty, we will define two types of hedges: a) approximators – hedges that affect the true value of the propositional content, for example: Her mood was sort of dreamy;

b) buffer hedges – lexical or grammatical units that do not affect the truth of the meaning, but reflect the degree of the speaker's commitment to the meaning of the truth of the whole sentence, for example: *I think her mood was dreamy.*

Morphologically hedges can belong to any part of speech and function like nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs and even articles.

The most significant concept associated with hedging is modality. If we consider epistemic modality where speaker expresses his attitude to the proposition validity this will provide an opportunity to draw a parallel with many definitions of hedging.

The degree of the speaker's confidence in the message can vary from absolute confidence to complete uncertainty. Epistemic expressions are often seen as markers that mark the meaning of a sentence on the "true-false" axis. Probability being a kind of epistemic modality, is a subjective assessment of the information veracity by the speaker, based on how much he is aware of the state of affairs at the time of speech. If the speaker is not sufficiently aware of this fact (or is not categoric to state anything), he reports it as something more or less probable. In fact, what he assumes may or may not be true.

Thus the inclusion of hedging in the epistemic modality is observed by three linguistic features which we can define as:

a) proposition entry;

b) relation to illocutionary force;

c) generation of individual lexical items.

The latter is implemented by using expressions such as *so-called, so to speak,* etc. This connection is clearly seen in the examples of modal verbs with epistemic meanings. In a sentence like "*It may be possible,*" we are dealing with hedging on the one hand and epistemic modality on the other.

Thus we can determine that in both written and oral discourse hedging acts as a language "insurance" and allows not only to individualize the statement, but also to establish limits of responsibility for the accuracy of information, propositions, to limit the degree of reality judgment reliability, to avoid absolute interpretation.

So, let's analyze the English lexical items belonging to the category of hedging and divide them into the following groups: set expressions that complete the list or enumeration, approximators; substitute words; performatives.

1. Set expressions that complete the list or enumeration. This group includes generalized list completers which are used at the end of the list, indicating that they can be easily extended, naming the same meaning of objects, phenomena and actions. That is, it is assumed that the addressee will easily deduce from the general context

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what can act as a completion (and things like that; and things; and all the rest of it; and all; and all that sort of thing; etc.; and something like that; and something of that nature; or something like that; or something; or anything; and/or stuff (like this / that), or what / where / whoever; or so; and everything; and everything (like that / else); and that kind of thing, and that (sort of thing, and so on and so forth).

2. Approximators. The veiling of negative or categorical message can be achieved with the help of approximators. Means of opposition, epistemic modality, as well as rhetorical questions reduce the ultimacy of the statement, taking into account alternative points of view. The reduction of the negative effect is also achieved through a gradual decrease in confidence in the truth of the statement, which occurs due to such units as: *on the one hand; (on) the flip side (of the coin); for one thing; although; though; albeit; however; (but) along the way; despite; in spite of; nonetheless; nevertheless; still; yet; while* etc. We undoubtedly can attribute to them various lexical means. Among them we can structurally distinguish two subgroups:

a) approximators containing a quantifier (*We'll see you at seven or thereabouts*);

b) approximators that do not contain a quantifier (*The quarrel caused loads of problems*). The first group, as a rule, includes adverbs of measure and degree (for example, *almost, around,* etc.).

To this category of approximators we also attribute units, that have postpositions *-ish; -odd; -something (-Are you sure the suspect's car was green? - Well, it was greenish).*

A separate attention needs to be paid to approximators, which have merely lost their obscurity meaning and are used in speech as filler words or phrases: *(… you know or eh* – both at the end of phrases).

3. Substitute words. This group includes lexical units that name substitutional generalized nouns or placeholders – polysemantic words that can be used to replace a meaningful specific word in a certain position in the structure of an expression. This can happen either to avoid tautology (in this case it is quite doubtful, if this is the case of hedging) or periphrasis, which can be done for euphemistic or sublime reasons.

The sentence *I bought some kitchen utensils and some cleaning stuff illustrates* the use of a generalized noun *stuff* instead of a tautological unpronounced word – possibly *utensils.*

In *I no longer want to quarrel about the salary <u>thing</u>* the underlined word is euphemistic and used to substitute a contextually tabooed word which might involve emotional burden (*problem, increase, decrease* etc). A word can be tabooed either permanently (*death, sex, kill* etc.) or made so by the social and emotional background of the interlocutors (*money, extra weight, love,* etc.)

Sentence *I need a thing for unscrewing the tap* illustrates the use of a generalized thing instead of the name of the tool, which the speaker might not know the name of, and not willing to make the ignorance obvious, thus tries to sublime (raise) him/herself in the eyes of the listener or at least trying not to lose the positions.

It must be noted that the substitution can be made with just one word, as well as with an infinite number of words, thus producing new lexical units, which remind the units from polysynthetic languages (*He-who-shall-not-be-named, you-know-who, for whom it may concern* etc.).

4. Performatives. Performative verbs in linguistic study take position between lexical and grammatical semantics. Therefore its manifestation in hedging structures can be attributed to both lexical and grammatical means. These structures can be:

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- parenthetic (I imply, that; we mean; they suggest etc.) where the use of a performative verb removes from the speaker any responsibility for the statement;
- modal, in which the meaning of necessity is softened by other hedges really, surely, definitely, for example: It should be really stressed..., it should be surely noted....

Considering the performative hedging it must be noted that such units have certain pragmatic and semantic features, namely they are devoid of evaluative semantics. By using a performative, the speaker is doing an action, and not describing it.

Grammatical hedging includes a variety of means, both morphological and syntactic as well as those which utilize both grammatical and lexical semantics.

The main types of grammatical hedging is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1

Type	Formal presentation	Example
Modal verbs (used instead of notional or link vebs)	*May, might, can, could, would, should etc.*	*Such a measure <u>might be</u> (instead of is) more sensitive to changes in health after specialist treatment*
Parenthetic phrases	*believe, to our knowledge, it is our view that, we feel that*	*[We believe that] there is no simple explanation*
Additional clause (thus making the statement the object clause)	*It could be the case that; It might be suggested that; It is possible that, It shall be noted that, etc.*	*[It is possible that] you are wrong.*
«if» clauses	*if true, if anything, if…, etc.*	*[If true,] our study contradicts the myth that men make better managers than women.*
«if» sentences	Simple sentences - requests, which begin with *if*	*[If we can] move on to the next point for discussion.* *If you will follow me, please.*
Complex hedges (double, tripple)	*seems reasonable, looks probable*	*[It ~~is~~ seems likely that] we will finish in time;* *[It is seems reasonable [to assume] that] the situation is critical.*
The use of passive voice	*It has been noted; It was decided; It is known to be*	*[It was concluded that] sleep deprivation has three effects on cognitive performance.*
Transposition of the tense form	The use of past tense form instead of the present tense form	*I ~~think~~ thought you might want to rest for a while.*
Transposition of the tense aspect	The use of continuous / progressive instead of simple / indefinite tense forms	*I will ~~complete~~ be completing my task soon*
Two-step questions-	Adding additional leading-in questions before asking the target one	*[A: Is this your pen? B:Yes, that's mine.] A: Do you mind if I borrow it for a minute?*

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Transposition of the sentence communicative type	The use of declarative, or interrogative sentences instead of the imperative	*It's cold in here.* *Could you close the window, please?* *(both meaning: Close the window!)*

In the list, presented in Table 1, the most productive hedging pattern is modal words and expressions. With the help of these words, the ultimacy of the statement is reduced with the meaning of assumptions, uncertainties, doubts, which are inherent to the modal verbs semantics. In addition to the modal verbs, a set of lexical units is used, which shares the capacity to denote epistemic modality of a statement. These words are *probably, apparently, definitely, obviously* etc. We will refer to them as modal words. Indirect statements with modal words often have a pragmatic meaning of motivation to action. It can be argued that these modal words express the intention, the implementation of which depends on the will of the addressee. However the range of modal words is quite large, which causes the need of classifying them into separate classes:

1. modal verbs and their equivalents (*may, might, be going to,* etc);
2. adverbs (*eventually, possibly,* etc);
3. nouns (*feeling, guess,* etc);
4. adjectives (*possible, probable,* etc);
5. numeral *one.*

It should be noted that one of the most numerous hedging patterns are modal expressions with verbs of mental activity (*think, believe, suppose, imagine,* etc), verb-noun combinations (*I'm afraid, I fear,* etc.), set expressions (*I dare say, I must say, I must confess,* etc).

Depending on the lexical meaning, modal expressions with verbs denote the subjective evaluation of the utterance, softening its ultimacy by narrowing the objectivity of the expressed thought, limiting its boundaries to the personal experience of the speaker.

Speaking about tense form transposition, it becomes possible to assume that hedging is not the invention of the 20th century tolerant speakers. This hedging strategy has left its traces in all Germanic languages as the majority of present-day Germanic modal verbs come from preterit-present verbs, where the present tense form was a re-considered past tense form, i.e. the initially past tense form of the verbs was used by the speakers in present-time context. It's quite similar to modern tendencies e.g.: *I ~~want~~ wanted to tell you now something really important, preference to could, might, should would* instead of their present tense forms in present-time contexts in requests, suppositions, advice etc.

Conclusion. Thus, hedging can be defined as a set of lexical and grammatical means of expressing probability, which is often used to soften the statement in case of the speaker's uncertainty. The phenomenon of hedging is extremely relevant in the study of the culture of the country whose language is being studied, because the development of hedging helps to express or, conversely, to recognize the true intentions or thoughts.

Hedging performs important etiquette functions and is updated through multilevel language tools. It is aimed at softening the ultimacy of thought, criticism, avoidance of absolutism, in order to preserve the "face" of the addressee, reduce the impact on the addressee, improve the effectiveness of scientific communication, transfer the features of the political picture of the world. Hedging in speech is realized via a set of lexical and grammatical means: set expressions that complete the list or enumeration, approximators; substitute words; performatives on the one hand and modal words, change of tense forms and syntactic structure of the initial categorical sentence.

Thus, we are convinced that different types of hedging allow speakers to demonstrate their personal feelings and attitudes towards the subject of discussion and their interlocutor.

Further research and discussion points. The scope of the hedging means, highlighted in the article, can in no way be considered exhaustive. Thus phonetic hedging means definitely deserve separate consideration. In addition to that, relations between epistemic modality and hedging present a wide field for scientific research. Hedging presents numerous possible research objectives while analyzing various types of discourse thus bridging the gap between theoretical and applied research. The study of communication strategies would be incomplete without defining and detailed description of the phenomenon opposite to hedging – bridging, which is aimed at presenting a statement as final and indisputable.

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