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PECULIAR FEATURES OF HEDGING WITHIN THE AREAS OF ENGLISH SCIENTIFIC AND ACADEMIC WRITING

Courses in academic communication are designed to develop and master the skills of academic communication in English in students. As the ways in which scientists or academics communicate must be trained, universities offer courses with the aim for teaching or improving these communication skills. Academic communication is viewed as a sphere of interpersonal skills focussing on appropriate use of the English language within higher educational settings. Thus, the goal of the course is to prepare students for successful scientific and academic activities. The students of such courses are taught advanced vocabulary, proper grammar, reading comprehension and verbal expression. They learn how to write in a formal register and politely address their readers, whether it is a professor or their peer. In addition to developing high-level communication skills, students also learn definite academia-specific topics, as well as become skilled at writing book and article reviews, research papers and laboratory reports. During the course, they practice an important element of academic communication such as preparing a thesis or an academic argument. All those scientific and academia-oriented activities encompass several potential pitfalls students may face. These difficulties include differentiation between informal and formal styles, strict adherence to certain logical progression of ideas, use of passive voice, nominalisation and specific use of hedge words.

The article aims to analyse hedging as a peculiar element within the areas of academic and scholarly communication, as well as to raise the issues concerning the importance and necessity for teachers to improve academic writing skills in their students.

Commonly, communication is the activity of conveying information through the exchange of ideas, intentions, attitudes, feelings, expectations, perceptions, or commands, by speech, gestures, writings, behaviour and possibly by other means. Communication is supposed to involve a sender, a message, a medium and a recipient. Even though the receiver does not have to be present or aware of the sender's desire to communicate, communication can take place remotely. The communication process is usually done when the receiver becomes aware of the sender's message. Consequently, efficient communication occurs only if the recipient comprehends the correct information or idea that the sender has aimed to convey. Among kinds of communication essential from the point of view of science and academic settings, they distinguish scientific communication, scholarly communication and academic communication. Scientific communication is a clear intercultural discourse that explains the significance of scientific research, the science nature, the science achievements, and the content of science. In general, scientific communication means open communication introducing, presenting and explaining science-related themes to non-scientists. Being opposed to scientific communication, scholarly communication is rooted in the context of the scholarly traditions of the disciplines and is shaped by the disciplinary rituals and perspectives. Scientists communicate to work together on research, to learn about new methods or theories, to hear about new results, to get advice, to co-author formal publications. The most widespread method of scholarly communication is by writing up the research findings into an article to be published in a scholarly journal. However, there are many other methods, such as publish-

ing a book, a book chapter, a conference paper, and multimedia formats such as sound and video recording. Academic communication is an area of interpersonal skills within higher education settings. Within the course of academic communication, instructors should focus on how students can effectively communicate complex ideas within their area of study and through a variety of modalities, including writing, presentation and conversation. Academic communication involves presenting ideas effectively, precisely and formal in a scholastic environment and refers to methods of communication that are highly structured [2, p. 118-119]. It presupposes the ability to follow scientific and academic discourse, the ability to make science personally relevant. Students should acquire the ability to conduct research, to find and retrieve information, to represent evidence-based conclusions, and to present the acquired knowledge. It is important for students to be aware that common meanings of such words "findings", "premises", "evidence", "variables" etc. differ from their precise meanings in the context of scientific discourse.

Academic use of English is marked with accuracy, precision and objective interpretation of facts and findings. Scientific style of speaking and writing represents universal truth and veritable research findings. The scientific use of language is totally devoid of any emotional expression. In its nature and function, scientific language is accurate and detached from an individual impulse. It aims to inform about a significant issue and particular approaches taken up to study that issue. Both scientific English and academic English share the common features of impersonalisation, nominalisation, and precision. In addition, hedge words are specific characteristics of scientific and academic English. Speaking about hedges, we should distinguish between using them in scientific communication and avoiding them in academic communication.

Hedging as the expression of tentativeness and possibility is often assumed an essential aspect of scientific discourse where the aim of hedging is to adjust scientific activities to the non-scientific, non-specialist audience. Thus, the use of hedges in expressing ideas is a crucial means of achieving a close fit between the scientist's statement and readers' perception. Nowadays, scientists are urged to use a writing style that projects both personal modesty as well as honesty. In order to reach the goal, scientists have a variety of linguistic devices available, which generally go under the rubric of hedges. The taxonomy of hedges as identified linguistically is as follows:

1. Epistemic main verbs such as *to indicate, to suggest, to propose, to tend, to seem, to appear* etc.

E.g. The previous research seems to indicate that...

2. Epistemic modal auxiliaries such as *may, might, can, could*, etc.

E.g. It might be suggested that G. Gardner rejected the traditional notion of a general intelligence.

3. Epistemic adverbs such as *hypothetically, probably, likely*, etc.

E.g. It is highly hypothetically that the findings are likely to support the hypothesis [3, p. 95].

Despite the importance and relevance of hedging in scientific communication, it may be the enemy of concise scientific writing within the area of academic communication. Students are expected to avoid hedging words and phrases in their works because verbal hedges no matter they are just a word or a phrase make statements less forceful or assertive. In other words, hedges are able to weaken the true value of an utterance. Comparison of the following sentences '*I don't think I am responsible*' and '*I am not responsible*' serves a vivid example. It is generally believed that academic writing is factual, simply to convey facts and information. Thus, students should not sound equivocal or unclear.

Here is just a part of common hedge words:

1. Introductory verbs: *seem, tend, look, like, appear, to be, think, believe, doubt, be sure, indicate, suggest*.

2. Certain lexical verbs: *believe, assume, suggest*
3. Certain modal verbs: *will, must, would, may, might, could*
4. Adverbs of frequency: *often, sometimes, usually*
5. Modal adverbs: *certainly, definitely, clearly, probably, possibly, perhaps, conceivably*
6. Modal adjectives: *certain, definite, clear, probable, possible*
7. Modal nouns: *assumption, possibility, probability*
8. THAT clauses: *It could be the case that...*

It might be suggested that...

There is every hope that...

9. To -clause + adjective: *It may be possible to obtain ...*

It is important to develop...

It is useful to study...

One of the most remarkable features of hedging is that it can present equal weight to opposing options:

* Both certainty and uncertainty: *I am sure/ I am not sure* these are the recent results.

* Attribution, including both personification (*I believe that she is true*) and depersonalisation (*The body of the evidence suggests that she is true*). The neutral unhedged statement is '*She is correct*'.

* Qualification, which can be defined as structures that blur distinctions of quantity and frequency. Examples of quantity hedges are '*approximately, almost, largely* etc'. Examples of frequency hedges are '*sometimes, rarely, on occasion* etc'.

Hedge words in statements can occur alone or in multiples, as it is shown in the following series of incremental hedges:

- * Prof. Prytt said
- * Someone said
- * Someone might have said
- * Someone might have possibly said
- * Someone might have possibly implied
- * It is probable that someone might have possibly implied
- * It is admittedly probable that someone might have possibly implied. [1]

Hedge words are not syntactically localised. They can be found anywhere in the sentence. Hedge words are always associated with weakening or deintensification. If students do decide to use hedge words or phrases, they need to be careful not to overdo them (as in '*It may seem to appear as rather likely...*'). Too many hedge words deplete the argument of its strength and meaning. That is why; students should be taught to use hedging properly in their scientific writing and to avoid all types of hedge words and phrases in their academic writing in order to make their works more effective.

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