



HEDGES IN CLASSROOM SPEECHES
BY ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION STUDENTS
IN GRADUATE PROGRAM OF SEMARANG STATE UNIVERSITY

a Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Master's Degree Program
in English Language Education

by

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MOTTO AND DEDICATION

Students use various forms and functions in hedging their utterances

*This thesis is dedicated to Graduate Program,
Semarang State University*

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ABSTRACT

Arina Yulianti. 2016. *Hedges in Classroom Speeches by English Language Education Students in Graduate Program of Semarang State University*. A Thesis. Supervised by Prof. Dr. Warsono, Dip. TEFL, MA and Dr. Djoko Sutopo, M.Si.

Keywords: Hedges, Classroom Speech, Pragmatics

Learning English as a second language means to learn to communicate in it. Students are expected to be able to communicate using it correctly and properly so that what they want to express can be delivered smoothly. In certain situation, the utterances produced by the students need to be hedged in order to soften and weaken those utterances. For example, in classroom speech in which they are delivering materials in front of the class, the students' utterances need to be accepted by their fellow classmates.

This study was conducted to analyse the ways the students use hedges during their classroom speeches. This study aimed at analysing the forms and functions of the hedges, the way students use the forms and functions of the hedges, and the factors which might constrain the use of the hedges.

The subjects of this study were advanced learners. The subjects were 15 students of graduate program majoring in English language education in Semarang State University. Their classroom speeches were recorded to be the source of the data. The recordings were transcribed into text data so that the hedges in their utterances could be identified. There were three analyses in this study: form of hedges analysis, function of hedges analysis, and factor constraining the use of the hedges during their classroom speeches.

Based on the findings, it could be identified that the students hedged their sentences in classroom speeches frequently. In average, students hedged around 58% of entire sentences they created. Seven forms and four functions of hedges were used by the students effectively and significantly. The students mainly hedged their sentences using approximator, introductory phrase, and modal-auxiliary verb forms. The most often used function of the hedges was plausibility shields and followed by attributive shields in which they softened their attitude toward the sentences they created during classroom speeches. It could also be identified that there were five factors which might constrain the use of the hedges during their classroom speeches.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the introduction and background knowledge of the topic being studied. It consists of eight parts: background of the study, reasons for choosing the topic, statements of the problems, objectives of the study, significance of the study, limitation of the study, definitions of the terminologies, and the organization of the thesis.

1.1 Background of the Study

English is used by many people around the world to communicate to each other. English is used by them as an international language so that people from different countries are able to communicate. Thus, many people begin to learn English. They want to learn English in order to be able to use it to communicate and interact with people from many different countries who also speak English. They learn English in different learning settings. They can learn English formally in classroom instruction setting or they can possibly begin to learn English automatically since they live in an environment in which English is used as the daily language.

In Indonesia, students begin learning English formally in classroom instruction setting since elementary school up until they are in university as English is considered as the first foreign language to learn formally in schools. The main goal of their English learning is to be able to communicate using it. They start their learning by studying English vocabulary when they are in elementary school until they are able to formulate sentences grammatically and

meaningfully in high school or university. They develop their English skills step by step through various learning activities since they are expected to be able to use it to communicate.

Being able to communicate using English does not mean that they are able to ask and answer using English words only. Students have to understand what utterance they should produce in any certain condition so that the utterance is proper for the situation and suitable for their interlocutor. Many linguists call it as pragmatic aspect of language. Therefore, students should also learn pragmatics so that they are able to communicate using English correctly and properly. They can communicate in English appropriately with their interlocutor and the communication can flow well.

In the early study of pragmatics, Levinson (1987:9) states that pragmatics is the study of those relations between language and context that are grammaticalized or encoded in the structure of a language. Based on this Levinson's statement, pragmatics is related to how language is used by the users in certain context by utilizing the structure of that language itself. There is exact relationship between language and context. Language is used based on the existing context so that the aim of using the language can be achieved; pragmatics is the study of how the language is used in context.

Based on Thomas (2013:1), in the early 1980s when it first became common to discuss pragmatics, the definition of pragmatics was "meaning in use" or "meaning in context". In the more recent research and theory, pragmatics tends to be defined as speaker meaning. Nowadays, many experts also often define

pragmatics as language in use. It is also stated that pragmatics, as the study of meaning, is not generated by the linguistic system but as conveyed and manipulated by participants in a communicative situation. Therefore, situation is considered important in determining how language is used; for example, language used by learners toward their teachers would be different from the language they use toward their friends. Furthermore, pragmatics also deals with politeness in which the use of language by the speakers can show their attitude they convey.

Dealing with pragmatic competence, hedging is one language competence that is related to it. Based on Hua (2011:562), the concept of hedge was first put forward by American linguist George Lakoff (1972:485) in his paper “A Study in Meaning Criteria and the Logic of Fuzzy Concept” in which hedges were defined as words whose job was to make fuzzier or less fuzzy. For the more present studies related to hedges, Hua in his paper also presents some definitions of hedges by some experts: a number of words showing uncertainty or limitation (Crystal, 1997), proposition modification (Verschueren, 1999), and cautious and annotative expression of words (Yule, 1996).

Another definition is presented by Wilamova (2005) in her study about pragmatics. She states that hedges are pragmatic markers that annotate or weaken the strength of an utterance. Thus, based on the above experts’ definitions, hedges are related to the way people weaken or soften their utterance. Therefore, students should improve their ability in communication by also studying and using hedges. They need to hedge their utterance so that their utterance will not be stiff and too strong. For example, instead of saying “your idea is wrong”, learners may hedge

their utterance and say “I think, your idea is quite wrong”. The adding of the words *I think* and the changing from *wrong* into *quite wrong* are the example of how hedging is done. Hedges make the utterances weaken and soften so that it seems more polite and accepted by their interlocutor.

For beginner learners, hedges might not be one of the main concerns for their learning since they are still in the stage of learning how to form sentences grammatically and meaningfully. However, for advanced learners, hedging may be used purposefully or spontaneously. In writing, most of advanced English learners will sometimes use hedges to weaken the force of their statements intentionally. Meanwhile, in speaking, advanced learners will sometimes purposefully or spontaneously use hedges to soften their utterances and to make them seem more polite so that their utterances are acceptable. They are expected to be able to hedge their utterances in their writing and speaking because they have already had skills and competences in English.

Therefore, based on the above explanation, this study takes hedging as its topic. The main concern of this study is hedges in speaking done by advanced learners of English. The advanced learners who are the subject of this study are the students of graduate program in Semarang State University, Indonesia. Their oral productions during classroom speeches are the data for this study. This study is conducted to identify hedges used by the advanced learners in their classroom speeches. The hedges that the students use during their speeches are identified and interpreted so that further explanation related to how they use the hedges could be created.

What makes this study worth conducting is that this study is concerned on identifying deeply the forms and functions of the hedges used by the students. The form and function classification used are based on the recent experts' study and theory. The result of this study also discusses the factors that constrain the use of hedges by the students in their classroom speeches.

1.2 Reasons for Choosing the Topic

The topic of this study is hedges used by the students during their classroom speeches. This topic is chosen because of several reasons. The first reason deals with the importance of the hedges in speaking; in this case, it is classroom speeches. Due to the fact that hedges are related to pragmatic aspect of language which can influence someone's communication skill, it can be considered that they are important. In classroom speeches, hedges are used to soften and weaken the utterance, so that hedges are supposed to be important in classroom speeches.

In the classroom speeches, the students deliver certain material or information orally to the other students in order to present comprehensive explanation for them. They learn those materials previously through books and experts' theories, so that what they present is not their own random opinion. They need to have exact references. Therefore, in delivering these materials, they need to weaken their opinion if they want to add it. Moreover, they also need to weaken their statements if those statements are not absolutely proven to be true. They also need to soften their utterance so that they can lessen the force of their statement or opinion. Thus, hedges are important and they are worth studying.

The second reason why this topic is selected is because the students who are the subject of this study are advanced English learners and they will probably be a lecturer or teacher in the future. The students are those of Graduate Program in English Language Education. They have already held a bachelor degree in English. Therefore, it is expected that they have already been able to soften and weaken their utterance in their speaking since they have possessed English skills and competences.

In addition, many researchers who do research about hedges tend to discuss form or function only. However, this study is determined to explain the forms and functions of the hedges created by the students at the same time. This study also presents deeper discussion regarding to the use of hedges in the classroom speeches including how appropriate the hedges are used and what factors that influence the use of hedges in the speeches. Therefore, the study of hedges used by students in their classroom speeches is selected as the topic of this study and this study is specified to the forms and functions of the hedges.

1.3 Statements of the Problems

The problems intended to be solved in this study are:

1. What is the percentage of the forms of hedges used by the students in their classroom speeches?
2. What is the percentage of the functions of hedges used by the students in their classroom speeches?
3. How are the forms of hedges used by the students in their classroom speeches?

4. How are the functions of hedges used by the students in their classroom speeches?
5. What factors constrain the use of hedges by students during their classroom speeches?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

1. To present the percentage of the forms of hedges used by the students in their classroom speeches;
2. To present the percentage of the forms of hedges used by the students in their classroom speeches
3. To explain the ways in which the forms of hedges are used by the students during their classroom speeches;
4. To explain the ways in which the functions of hedges are used by the students during their classroom speeches;
5. To identify factors which constrain the use of hedges by students during their classroom speeches.

1.5 Significance of the Study

It is expected that this thesis can contribute improvement in the education field, especially in English language education. Theoretically, analysing the percentage of the forms and functions of the hedges can present explanation of the tendency of the hedges used by each students. The study of the forms and functions of the hedges in their classroom speeches can also present understanding about how the hedges are actually used by the students in the sentences they create during their

classroom speeches. The result of the study hopefully can provide further description and explanation related to the use of hedges and how the use of the hedges can help them to soften and weaken their utterances.

Practically, the results of the study can be a reference for English Language Education students in State University of Semarang about the use of hedges in classroom speeches. The identification and explanation of the use of the hedges in the classroom in this study can facilitate them to understand deeply about the forms and functions of the hedges in their classroom speeches. Identifying the factors constraining the use of the hedges can also provide the information about the reasons why they should hedge their statements. Therefore, it can encourage them to use hedges in their classroom speeches.

Pedagogically, the understanding about hedges can help the students of English Language Education program who will be a lecture of teacher in the future. Hedging can be one of the important competences they have to master. In teaching English, they will use hedges in certain text such as in argumentative or explanatory text. Hedging competence may also improve their speaking skill. Using and understanding hedges in speaking can be really helpful for them who will often speak in front of many people. Hedging can help them to be good communicators or material presenters.

1.6 Limitation of the Study

The scope of this study is limited to the analysis of the hedges during classroom speeches created by the English students of Graduate Program in State University of Semarang. The video recordings of their classroom speeches are analysed to

identify hedges they use. Then, the findings of those hedges are analysed to describe how they use them. Finally, some factors that might constrain their use of hedges are interpreted. Therefore, this study is limited to analysing the hedges in their oral production during classroom speeches and the factors that constrain the process of creating them.

1.7 Definitions of Terms

Some terms are used in this study. In order to give related basic knowledge, here are the definitions of the terminologies used.

a. Hedges

Salager-Meyer (1997) defines hedging as a linguistic resource which conveys the fundamental characteristics of science of doubt and scepticism. Wilamova (2005) defines hedges as pragmatic markers that annotate (or weaken) the strength of an utterance. Salager-Meyer also affirms hedges as a means of threat minimizing strategies used to deal with certainty of knowledge that include politeness strategies in the social interactions and negotiations between writers (speakers) and readers (listeners).

b. Pragmatics

Thomas (2013) states that pragmatics was defined as meaning in use or meaning in context. Pragmatics refers to the meaning which is created during communication based on the context existed. Words does not mean their literal meaning only, they create another meaning which is beyond them. The words are associated with the context in which they are created. Based on Thomas (2013), the more recent definition is stated that pragmatics is related

to speaker meaning or it is about utterance interpretation. The concern moves from the created meaning in context to the interpretation of utterances created by the speakers. It is about the speakers' intention and how it is interpreted by the interlocutors.

c. Classroom Speech

Classroom speech in this study refers to the activity done by students inside the classroom in which a group of students orally present certain material that they have already prepared before in the form of individual speech. All the students use Power Point slide as the media while presenting the material. The speech is done by the students in front of the class.

1.8 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is systematically organized as follows:

Chapter I provides the introduction. It includes background of the study, reasons for choosing the topic, statements of the problems, objectives of the study, significance of the study, limitation of the study, definitions of the terminologies, and the organization of the thesis.

Chapter II discusses the theoretical review and framework as well as the reviews of some previous studies related to the topic of the study. It consists of three parts: review of previous studies, theoretical review, and theoretical framework.

Chapter III presents the method of investigation in conducting the research. It presents the assumption, setting, object of the study, source of the

data, role of the researcher, unit of analysis, and the methods of collecting and analysing the data.

Chapter IV presents the findings of data analysis and discussion. The findings are divided into five parts: the percentage of the forms of hedges, the percentage of the function of hedges, the use of the forms of hedges, the use of the functions of hedges, and the factors constraining the use of the hedges.

Chapter V presents some conclusions based on the study that has been done and recommendations or suggestions which are relevant to the topic and the findings of the study for further improvement in the future.