



Hedging in Selected Modern Drama: A Pragmatic Study

Jalal Sa'dullah Hassan

Department of English Language, College of Education, Garmian University, Kurdistan Region - Iraq

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Corresponding Author

jalal.sadullah@garmian.edu.krd

Abstract

Academics contend that hedges are an appropriate use of ambiguity in situations where precision may not be required. In this research, the use of hedging in three chosen plays is examined and the authors' use of hedges—both the types and the frequency—are studied. It is the fact that it stands for the primary elements of everyday communication. The study's hypothesis is that hedging occurs often in contemporary plays and that hedging methods have certain pragmatic purposes. The data are manually coded using Hyland's (1998) and Yu's (2009) taxonomy of hedges. Application of quantitative research techniques to data demonstrated that hedging expressions, including modal auxiliary, approximator, epistemic verbs, etc., can serve this purpose depending on the speaker's intent. Context dictates how a hedge should be interpreted.

1. Introduction

This study tackles a pragmatic study of hedging in three selected modern plays as *Look Back in Anger* (1957), *The Invention of Love* (1998) and *Under the Blue Sky* (2000) which are collected chronologically. The study has involved the merging of the two models; Hyland's model and Yu's model and applied them to literary texts. Then implemented this model in both qualitative and quantitative research because the basic premise of the mixed methodology is that such integration permits a more complete and synergistic utilization of data than do separate quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. Hence, the study shows the frequency, types and functions of hedging in the selected plays. 'Look Back in Anger' is written by John Osborn (1957) in London, which

deals with British contemporary problems, the second play is 'The Invention of Love' (1998) by Tom Stoppard, it is portraying the life of poet A. E. Housman and dealing with Housman's memories at the end of his life. While the third play is written by David Eldridge named 'Under the Blue Sky' in (2000). It is study in three scenes of romance and sexual frustrations among secondary school teachers.

2. Literature Review

Many linguists describe hedging in different ways. Hedging may be employed (not the write verbs) to convey uncertainty and "to avoid giving a promise or a direct answer" (Webster's Dictionary, 2015). Linguistically, the concept of hedging first emerged in the early 1970s,. Hedging is a concept that Lakoff coined in 1972 and defined it as "words whose job is to make

things fuzzy or less fuzzy" (p. 195). Moreover, Chafe (1986, p.271) has the same opinion as Lakoff. Hedging, according to Zuck & Zuck (1986), is the process through which an author lowers the caliber of a statement.. Hedging are described as "a particle, word, or phrase that qualifies the degree of membership of a predicate or a noun phrase in a set" (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.145). They state that membership is "more accurate and complete than perhaps might be expected, partial, or true only in certain respects". Lyon (1977a, p. 797) describes a hedge as: "a piece of language that a speaker uses to expressly disclaim belief in the veracity of a proposition they make". Meanwhile, Markkanen and Schroder (1997, p.9) have reached to the conclusion that Hedging are a textual phenomenon and a crucial component of content; nonetheless, material cannot naturally contain hedging; however, readers and authors work together to produce them. (interaction). Hübler (1983) defines Hedges as a textual phenomena and a crucial component of content; however, rather than being present in the material itself, readers and authors work together to convey hedging. Swales (1990, p.174) describes "hedging as to avoid any certainty or to temper the words to be able to head off potential criticism. It is used to distinguish not only facts from opinion, but honesty, modesty, and proper caution." In pragmatics, Schroder and Zimmer (1997, p.249) state that according to pragmatic phenomena hedging is a term that alludes to modality, courtesy, mitigation, and ambiguity. According to Riekkinen (2009, p.60) Hedge words are crucial components of language that may be used, for instance, to temper criticism and prevent communication issues or even breakdowns.. To Yule (1996, p.38), hedges mean "cautious," because the term that does not always mean what are

expressed is accurate. Besides, the concept of hedges in a discourse-oriented is defined by Biber (1988, p.240) as casual, less particular markers of the probability of likelihood or uncertainty.

According to Skelton (1997, p. 44), the term "hedge" is best utilized when it is limited to liability mitigations and clarity on the truth-value of a statement. Hyland (1998b, pp. 1–5) states that "hedges are language devices used to signify either (a) a lack of total commitment to the truth value of a firm proposition or (b) a wish not to convey that commitment definitively. Therefore, Hyland defines hedges as "the means used to present a proposition as an opinion rather than fact". However, Weinreich (1966) states that hedge words are described by Coates (2004, p.88) as "linguistic forms that express the speaker's certainty or uncertainty about the proposition under discussion such as "I think", "I'm sure", "you know", "sort of" and "perhaps". From the above definitions of the hedges, it can be concluded that hedges have broad definitions, it can be used to avoid and protect the speaker from an embarrassing situation, or it is used to convey information in a weak commitment form.

2.1 Types of Hedging: According to Martin (2008, p. 136), since hedging can be viewed as a pragmatic phenomenon, linguists have an improved grasp of which language statements have to be and have not to be regarded as hedges. Furthermore, there is no restriction on the number of verbal phrases that may be regarded as hedges, according to Markkanen and Schroder (1997, p. 6), "almost any language element or statement will be perceived as hedge." As noted before, in the original work that is done by Lakoff (1972), hedging is first approached with reference to the generally restricted arrangement of the hedge, including lexical categories and expressions.

While Mathews (2007, p.173) suggests that there are innumerable types of hedging which any language tactic is used to prevent a speaker from being forced into making an incorrect remark, an unreasonable request, etc.

According to Yu, there are six types of hedging: epistemic verbs, approximators, modal auxiliaries, epistemic adverbs, adjectives and nouns because and all of the types of hedging bear a modulating connotation (Yu, 2009, p.77). In spite of having prototypical types of hedging, there are also peripheral types such as lexical expression that convey personal involvement, emotionally charged, intensifier, approximator (Salager-Meyer, 1994), personal attribution, hypothetical condition, direct questions (Hyland, 1998b), agentless constructions, parenthetical expression (Namsaraev, 1997), concessive conjunctive, conditional subordinator, metalinguistic comments (Fraser, 2010), pragmatic markers (Yu, 2009). Hedging consists of two categories, prototypical and peripheral. The prototypical category includes modal auxiliaries, adverbs, adjectives, and nouns. The peripheral category includes if clauses, pragmatic markers personal evaluation, empty subjects, metalinguistic comments, concessive, hypothetical conditions, conditional subordinators, a reference to sources, negative question, tag questions and interjections.

2.2 Prototypical categories

The prototypical categories have the following types"

2.2.1 Epistemic modal auxiliary

Epistemic modal auxiliary includes nine categories 'may, might, can, could, shall, should, must, will, would' which express possibility and tentativeness of a proposition. Coates (1983, pp. 5-6) provides a list of meanings that the modal conveys, a summary of the modal meaning is displayed in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Meaning modals

Modals	Meanings
Can	potential, cognitive potential, capacity, and power
Could	Root potential, cognitive potential, and consent
May	Root potential, cognitive potential, and willingness
Might	cognitive likelihood, authorization, and assumption
Must	Strong commitment, assured assumption
Shall	strong obligation, foresight, and resolve
Should	Strong duty, foresight, and resolve Low duty, a shaky assumption
Will	determination and forecasting
Would	anticipating, assertion,

Consider the following examples:

1. Although rooftop solar cells are currently widely used, certain scientists think that the method may be nearing its end.
2. He must know we're serious.

The above examples show that the modal auxiliaries could and must are used epistemically to show tentativeness towards the information the speaker passes. Therefore, both sentences have hedging meaning.

2.2.2 Epistemic Lexical Verb

The second core category is an epistemic lexical verb (full verb). According to Hyland (1998, pp.119-128), and Varttala (2001, pp.118-120), lexical verbs are used to decrease assertiveness that are expressed by writers such as think, indicate, predict, etc. Lexical verbs are divided into cognitive evidentiary verbs and semantic assessment verbs (Hyland, 1998, p. 120). The former are recognized by the level of trust in the proposition's accuracy that was expected in light of vagueness as in (we propose, I suggest, etc.). The lexical verb last subcategory can be defined as "the evidentiary justification, the evidence of the writer's sense, or the viability of linking proof to goal." Like such as (see, appear, etc.) as in the below example 3, propose as a verb of judgment conveys an opinion about increasing relationship between members (Hyland, 1998, p.182).

3. As a result, we propose that this insert is the main location of membrane contact.

2.2.3 Modal Adverbs

Modal adverbs are the third common category of hedging. Varttala (2001) introduces four types of modal adverbs such as probability adverb, adverb of undefined degree, indefinite frequency, and approximate adverb. Examples on these types include probably, possibly, perhaps, quite, sort of and relatively. Those adverbs function as hedges.

2.2.4 Modal Adjectives

Modal adjectives refer to the possibility of the propositions such as probable and possible which means what is said is possible, not accurate, as in the following example (4), the modal adjective likely is a hedging element because it conveys the probability of snowing tomorrow.

4. It is very likely that it will be snow tomorrow.

2.2.5 Nouns

Numerous types of nominal expressions can be connected with modality in English. There are various nouns that have epistemic meanings and hedging potentials, such as chance, trend, etc. In the example (5) below, it is anticipated that it is extremely low operating costs would be attained with frequent use (need revision because it is vague). Chance as a modal element, serves as a hedge against growing inflation..

5. There is a chance that inflation will not rise as high as the Bank has predicted (need a source, all examples need a source).

2.2.6 Approximators

Approximators demonstrate a reluctance to give the idea a precise and unwavering commitment (This sentence is unclear need revision and rewritten). Approximators consist of phrases for amount, occurrence, degree, and duration such as majority, typically, and approximately.

6. In a 300 ml bottle, we added about 30 g of the growing product from the previous step (Davoodifard, 2008, p.32).

In the above example, the adverb about with number is used to indicate that the given number is not certain and exact. Therefore it is considered as hedges.

2.2.7 Peripheral Categories

Peripheral Categories are additional categories of hedging that include the following types:

2.2.7.1 If clauses

The non-lexical categories relate to the circumstance that the speaker is speaking from. In example (7) below, if –clause is used as hedging because it refers to condition.

7. I need a ride back if you're heading in my direction.

2.2.7.2 Pragmatic Markers

Pragmatic markers are used as hedging devices which include diverse expressions such as personal reference or opinion and direct questioning that can help writers to make a dialogue with the readers. Consider the examples below:

8. As you probably know, the UK does not contribute to European's human spaceflight program, and its scientists and engineers are therefore normally shut out of any related activities.

9. I think the idea is controversial

In (8), the phrase As you know as a pragmatic marker indicates the social relation between the speaker and the hearer. Pragmatic markers express personal reference and attribution. While in example (9), I think is used to soften claims by leaving open (not clear please review it) to hearer's judgment.

2.2.7.3 Impersonal Expressions

Impersonal expressions embrace passive construction and impersonal subjects. Passivization expresses hedging, but impersonal

subjects almost express hedging too, consider the following two examples:

10. It is understood that he was fired because of his incompetence.

11. It is believed that the rumors are true.

In (10) and (11) the speaker wants to express the meaning in a way that he just doesn't want to state a reality categorically as he is not totally certain that it is true because he uses such words/expressions to 'protect' himself from the explanation.

2.2.7.4 Metalinguistic Comments

Metalinguistic comments include to put it more precisely, exactly, virtually, just, regarding.

12. He has just explored a theory for his new test.

2.2.7.5 Concessive Conjunctions

Concessive conjunctions such as although, yet, as opposed to, whilst, despite, regardless of, etc. conveys hedging. As shown in the below examples:

13. You ought to go for the vista even if you dislike the beach.

14. I apologize for interrupting you in this manner, but my wife requested one of her books in an email.

In examples (13) and (14), even if and but are used as concessive conjunctions that define hedging meaning.

2.2.7.6 Hypothetical Conditionals

These expressions are expressed by using if clause in combination with could or would which are recognized as the primary fictitious modal having logical significance. According to Clemen (2002), hedging is realized by conditional if which alludes to an improbable incident that marks the writer's epistemic stance, for instance:

15. If you prepare well to the race, you will certainly gain a great result.

In example (15) that the speaker bases his speech on the hypothetical situation by using conditional strategy.

2.2.7.7 Conditional Subordinators

Conditional subordinators refer to words or phrases that introduce dependent clauses in a sentence. The following subordination conjunctions are the most common ones that introduce conditional clauses as if, in case, unless, whether.. or not, even if. Consider the below example:

16. Unless my brother finishes his homework, he cannot go fishing.

In (16) above, unless as a subordinator is used to express a condition under which something will not happen.

2.2.7.8 Reference to Sources

Referring to a reliable source can be a useful way to express hedging in your statements. By citing a trustworthy source, you're acknowledging that distinctive viewpoints or translations may exist which your explanation may not be the one as it were substantial one.

17. According to the latest police figures, almost 100 people are known to have died in the demonstration.

By using according to the speaker wants to refer to a source to protect the speaker from a negative judgment of the hearer.

2.2.7.9 Negative Questions

Negative questions impart a favorable, hedged statement, such as:

18. Didn't Ali come? [I think Ali come].

2.2.7.10 Tag Questions

Tag questions can be considered as a device for forming a hedge. For instance, the speaker in the below example (19) asks someone directly and waits for a confirmation from the hearer.

19. There is no way to act, is it?

2.2.7.11 Progressive Form

Fraser (2010, p.24) introduces this type as one of the additional categories of hedges. Progressive forms express and relate to a situation or action that are still occurring. The form of a progressive verb consists of a form of the verb "be" followed by the main verb plus (ing.), For or example, using the continuous form in below sentence convey hedging meaning.

20. I am hoping you will come.

2.2.7.12 Vocalization and Interjections

According to Crystal (2003, p.493), vocalization is the phrase "utterance viewed solely as a sequence of sounds" such as oh and well, Moreover, interjections are sounds, spoken words, and phrases that someone suddenly expresses a strong feeling they can be used for expressing hedging that function as pragmatic markers in everyday language.

21. Oh, that's just Oxford.

In example (21), the speaker uses the interjection oh to express a happy feeling about Oxford.

2.3 Adopted Model

The researcher attempts to adopt a model that can be considered as an elicited version of Yu's and Hyland's models. Each model is clarified respectively. Hyland's model is applied to scientific articles, while Yu's model works on academic writings,, Hence, there is an interesting relationship between drama dialogue and real conversation. Moreover speech events in modern plays satisfy the role of a speaker and a hearer instead of a writer and a reader.

Comparing Hyland's and Yu's models are beneficial due to their resemblances. Furthermore, Hyland's model introduces the functions of the hedge which are content-oriented hedges and reader- oriented hedges. Content –oriented hedges comprise into

accuracy – oriented that related to "Writer's need to more precisely convey an argument." Correspondence to Yu's approximator strategy makes A proposition's words or phrases seem blurred and indeterminate, and writer- oriented in Hyland's model resembles shields in Yu's model. Hence, both categories refer to the speaker's evaluation and assessment of the proposition's credibility. Moreover Hyland's reader- oriented hedges deals with the interpersonal interaction between the reader and the writer. Reader- oriented refers to implicit hedges category in Yu's model that "functions on the spoken level or structural level" to monitor the "contact or dialogue process" and he involves pragmatic markers implicit hedges that are already considered to be a feature of spoken discourse in addition to most significant hedging forms like modal verbs, epistemic lexical verbs, epistemic adverbs, epistemic adjective, noun, and approximators (Yu, 2009, p. 105).

Hyland in his model considers a syntactic element of an impersonal construction and an agentless passive as hedge devices, on the contrary, Yu's model does not consider them as hedge devices. In a table below, there is a clear comparison of categorization that Hyland (1998) and Yu (2009) improve in their models:

Hyland's pragmatic hedging	Yu's categorization of hedging strategies
Content – oriented Accuracy- oriented hedge cite the author's intention to convey proposition with greater exactness.	-Approximator Locally work on a word or a phrase Within a proposition, making its meaning more vague and fuzzy.
Writer- oriented hedges targeted towards writers or writers' dedication	Shields Indicate that the debater is not totally devoted to the proposition's veracity.
Reader- oriented hedges Hedges assertiveness and interactional effects of statement	Implicit hedges To monitor the interaction or communication process.

Table1: General comparison of Hyland's and Yu's model in the classification of hedging

Hyland's poly-pragmatic of hedges connect hedging functions with grammatical model and

depends on broader social, pragmatic and discursal perspectives. However, Yu's categorization of hedging devices (2009) is based on three features of hedges such as grammatical, semantic and pragmatic. As an overview with regards to other researchers who classify hedges differently, Salager-Mayer's taxonomy of hedging is based on a mix of functional and grammatical standards. While Namsaraev (1997), Cabanes (2007) and Martin (2008) categorize it into their linguistic recognition, strategies, and functions.

The diverse classification of hedges show the absence of a set of common standards for classifying hedges. Therefore, the present study provides a combination of Hyland's model (1998) and Yu's model (2008), the aims for such combinations are that both categorization of hedges in Hyland's and Yu's models stick to the same function- based approach as shown in the table below:

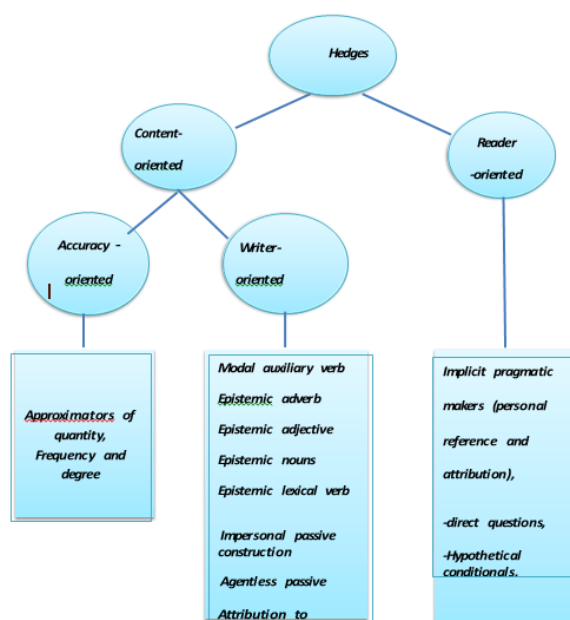


Chart (1) The adopted model

From the above chart (1), hedges can perform the following three pragmatic functions such as accuracy- oriented, writer- oriented and reader oriented.

2.4 Pragmatic Functions of Hedging

2.4.1 Accuracy- oriented hedge

There are many devices in this category of hedging that are realized as standard linguistic means such as nearly, quite, almost, kind of, sort of, some, to some extent, etc. As it is mentioned in chapter two, the primary function of this type is to gain accuracy and precision that signified a departure from an ideal, those devices that are used in this category of hedge display the writer's concern to express proposition with greater precision according to reality. Also, Coetzer (2002, p.48) states that hedges "focused on accuracy tried to present information as completely, truthfully, and impartially as feasible". Similarly, Prince et al.(1982) call those devices "rounder" that express the degree of exactness which means that a speaker states knowledge or information in a proposition that he/she is not exactly sure about it. Attribute hedge is proposed by Hyland (1998, p.165) that "acts as a "downtowner to weaken a quality's force and may be assessed according to how strong they are". Salager - Meyer (1994) and Yu(2009) name these devices as "approximators".

2.4.1.1 Writer –oriented hedging

According to Hyland (1998, p.158), both accuracy-oriented and writer-oriented are two types of content- hedge that involve the propositional content, but the main distinction between these two kinds are a writer- by reducing personal involvement, remain concentrated, and shield the author from the negotiability outcome. Hyland refers to Prince et al. (1982) "shield device". Furthermore, Yu (2009, p.105) uses the notion "shield" and states " devices that reveal the speaker's opinion or appraisal of the statement's veracity in its entirety, and in particular, show that "the

speaker lacks a complete commitment to the truthfulness of the argument conveyed".

2.4.1.2 Reader- Oriented Hedging

What distinguishes reader-oriented hedge from other types of the hedge is that reader-oriented hedge focuses on readers and writers' interactions with one another. Hence, Hyland asserts that it is not suitable to neglect readers. According to Falahati (2004, p.38), readers involve in discourse or dialogue, and they are sought by a thoughtful individual because they can judge and reply to the truth value of the state of affair. In addition, Coetzer (2002, p.75) comments on the reader's role and states that the writer's desire is not only convey a message but also he/she wants to be accepted. Furthermore, Yu (2009, p.96) concentrates on pragmatic markers, and prefers three kinds of pragmatic markers of hedging; textual, propositional and interpersonal.

Yu illustrates how and why each type function might be used as a hedge. Using textual or strictly structural pragmatic cues can function as hedges under particular circumstances because textual does not inherently function as hedges. As Brinton (1996, p. 38) argues that textual functions can be connected to "dialogue structure, message organization, or speech coherence". However, when modifying the proposition content in a subtle way they become pragmatic markers, hence Nikula (1997, 191-192) calls them "implicit" such as if when it becomes hedges which changes from textual into interpersonal used to provide alternatives to be moderate or to increase interlocutor's unity. Some other examples include but, or, so, by the way, if you like, etc. Hedges can be expressed through using a pragmatic marker with implicit propositional function when it "modifies utterance proposition by the propositional content's modification, clarification, growth, or shift. The

propositional function is usually shown in an indirect way;. This type can be called propositional pragmatic marker hedge (PPM) such as *actually, in fact, obviously*, etc. These expressions reveal the actual content or the correction of some vague idea when the speaker considers the listener might hold.

There are various pragmatic markers that "moderate, clarify, explain, exemplify, or offer ground, or limit the range of the claim made. Hence, it can be stated that propositional pragmatic-marker hedges work on the propositional content.(ibid). Moreover, Yu (2009, p.97) adds interpersonal pragmatic – markers (IPM), as they can operate on an interpersonal level that help maintain conversational flow and foster effective communication between performers and listeners. They "may generate an impression of shared efforts, closeness or empathy between participants, indicated by a modest and respectful manner or a diminished and softened tone" Yu (2009, p.100) according to that statement. Such markers aim at addressing the reader directly, using expressions such as *you see, of course. as you recently indicated* Parenthetical is another example of pragmatic interpersonal markers like, *I assume that, I am terrified , in my opinion—and as each of us know—personally*, etc. According to Brinton (1996, p.38), parenthetical can "In addition to communicating an epistemic opinion and "speaker's tentativeness," they may also help to build relationships between people. Meanwhile, Yu (2009, p.99) suggests that integration of both interpersonal and propositional pragmatic markers offer hedging their abilities to serve several purposes at once. To illustrate, phrases like "to be honest, to be frank," "I'm afraid" and similar expressions can be employed to demonstrate "a hearer-friendly attitude, a logical ground for reasoning, suggest the advent

of something reasonable, initiate little modification, or adjust forthcoming statements. Pragmatic markers implicit hedges introduced by Yu (2009) identify recommendation or suggestion, asking questions, taking personal responsibility or addressing readers directly.

Vocalizations and interjections as categories of hedges are not the main interest of Hyland's and Yu's models. Both scholars have not elaborated the pragmatic functions of interjections such as *hmm*, *oh*, *uh*, *ouch*, etc. These expressions may be used in the beginning, middle or ending of the sentences and they can function as pragmatic markers to express politeness or tentativeness. Furthermore, the pragmatic functions of these expressions may be certain in all contexts. Furthermore, Taavisainen (1995) states that interjections "can also be targeted at a specific individual to elicit the wanted response, such as to halt an action, or they may serve communications more generally". Therefore, they can only be interpreted as relative to context. Vocalizations and interjections are not grammatically related to the sentence as Norrick (2009) claims that interjections can be used as pragmatic markers of hedging devices.

3. Methodology

One problem that can arise with hedging in drama is the potential for miscommunication or misunderstanding. When characters constantly hedge their statements, it can lead to confusion among the audience or between characters, as the intended meaning may not be clear. This can result in a loss of dramatic tension or impact. Hedging can also limit how a play's conflict and resolution are developed. The suspense and forward motion of the plot may suffer if decisive actions or direct confrontations are avoided by hedging.

Hedging in drama refers to the use of various literary and dramatic techniques to create

ambiguity, or uncertainty in storytelling. It enables playwrights to challenge audience expectations, add depth to characters, and explore complex themes. This methodology aims to provide a structured approach for incorporating hedging and analysis of dramatic works namely *Look Back in Anger* by John Osborn (1957), *The Invention of Love* by Tom Stoppard (1998) and *Under the Blue Sky* in (2000) by applying the selected model to understand and analyze the concept of hedging and assess the effectiveness of hedging when analyzing the selected plays.

Hedging as social and universal phenomena has attracted a lot of interest in linguistics especially pragmatics, as it is felt that hedging is still not applied in modern play works among Iraq universities.

So this piece of study is attempting to answer the following questions:

- 1- Are hedges frequently used in modern plays and which types are more frequent?
- 2- What are the pragmatic functions of hedges in modern plays?
- 3- Do the selected plays (*Look Back in Anger*, *The Invention of Love*, and *Under the Blue Sky*) differ in terms of the frequency, type and function of hedges?

It is a quantitative study because it collects numerical data and analyzes it using statistical methods. Hedging, which is frequently employed to imply ambiguity or avoid making a definite commitment, is the technique of softening or qualifying remarks in drama. Hedging may be viewed as a strategy for preserving societal peace or different perspectives on an issue.

4- Data Analysis:.

4.1-Overall distribution of hedging forms in the three selected modern plays

The total proportion of hedging by types is shown in Table (2). *Look Back in Anger*, *The Invention of Love* and *Under the Blue Sky* Along with the overall quantity of hedging types in „*Look Back in Anger*“ in the first column. The third one clarifies the relative percentage of each category. The fourth column shows the numbers of hedging items in *The Invention of Love*, while the fifth column reveals the percentage of hedges category in this play. The sixth column is presented as the number of occurrence in *Under the Blue Sky*, the seventh column displays the percentage of each category that is used in this play. The last column shows the total of each category in selected plays.

Table 2: Distribution of hedging forms across three selected modern plays

No.	Category	Look Back in Anger	%	The Invention of Love	%	Under the Blue Sky	%	Total
1	Epistemic Modal auxiliary Verbs	78	% 9.38	76	% 11.28	36	% 8	190
2	Epistemic adverbs	50	% 6	19	% 2.81	17	% 3.78	86
3	Epistemic adjectives	10	% 1.20	10	% 1.48	4	% 0.89	24
4	Epistemic nouns	26	% 3.13	24	% 3.56	14	% 3.11	64
5	Epistemic lexical verbs	68	% 8.17	26	% 3.85	10	% 2.22	104
6	Approximators	183	% 21.99	80	% 11.87	66	% 14.67	329
7	Impersonal passive construction			1	% 0.14			1
8	Agentless passive constructions	1	% 0.12	10	% 1.48	4	% 0.89	15
9	Attribution to the source	7	% 0.85	24	% 3.56	16	% 3.55	47
10	Implicit pragmatic markers	409	% 48.16	404	% 59.95	283	% 62.89	1096
	Total	832	% 100	674	% 100	450	% 100	1956

In modern play *Look Back in Anger*, eight modal auxiliaries are used that have epistemic meaning and are utilized as hedges, some of them include *will*, *must*, *could*, *might*, *may*. The most common modal auxiliaries are *will* and *must*, each one carries (12) instances of a total amount of 78 instances of a modal of hedges. It can be said that *will* and *must* are considered to be the prototypical hedging forms in *Look back*

in Anger. *Can* is the second frequent modal auxiliaries that is used (11) times, *could* (10) and *might* (10) which are the third the common modal. The fourth most frequent modal auxiliary are *should* and *would*, each one is used (7) times while *may* occurs (5) times in this play. The modal auxiliary *ought* is used only (4) times. In *the Invention of Love*, eight different modal auxiliaries are identified. *Would* is the most frequent modal auxiliary that functions as hedging and is found in (19) instances among a total of 76 examples. The second modal is *may* that is repeated (16) times, while *can* is used (12) times and *might* is the fourth frequent modal that occurs in (9) examples, *will* and *must* come in the fourth position, each one (7) times. The two modal auxiliaries *should* and *could* are used as hedges, the former occurs (4) times and the latter occurs (2) times. These two modal auxiliaries are less prominent in this play.

Similarly, *Under the Blue Sky*, eight different modal auxiliaries are distinguished as hedging devices with a total of 36 items. The most prominent modal auxiliaries are *may* (10) times and *might* (10) times. Followed by *will* (7) times, Then *should* (4) times, *can* is used twice; whereas the less common modal items are *could*, *would* and *must* that are used ones....

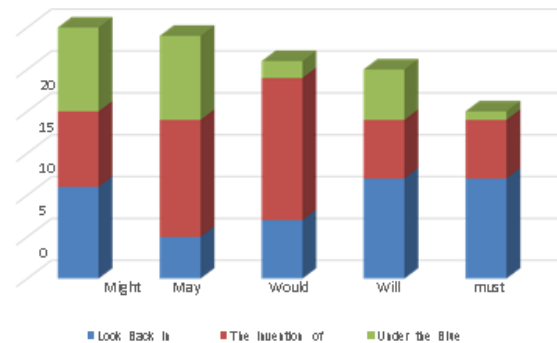
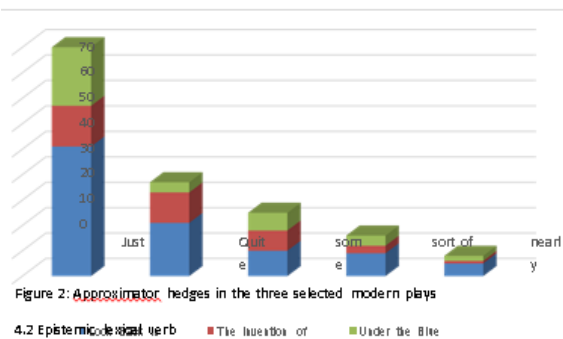


Figure 1: The top five modal verbs with epistemic meaning in the selected plays

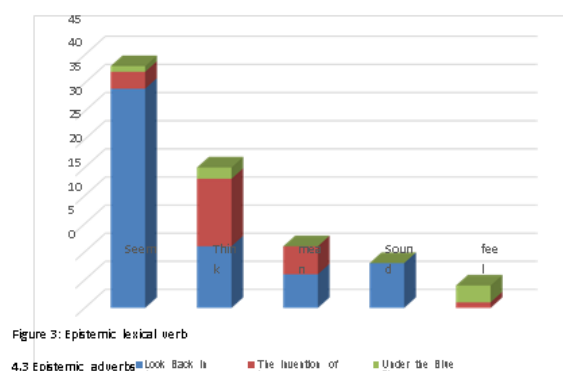
4.1 Approximators of quantity, frequency and degree

This kind of hedging devices is the prominent category in the selected modern plays.

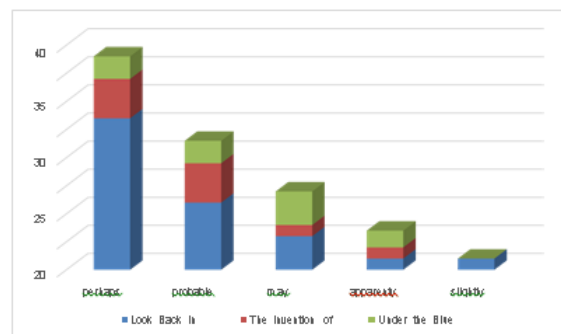
Approximators are found in *Look Back in Anger* (183) in *The Invention of Love* (80), and in *Under the Blue Sky* (66). Figure (2) demonstrates the frequency of different samples of approximators in the selected plays.



In the below Figure (3) demonstrates the samples of frequency of the lexical verbs that occur as hedges in the selected plays. In *Look Back in Anger*, (7) different lexical verbs are used with a total of 68 occurrences, the verb *seem* is utilized (36) times as hedges, then *think* (11) times, followed by *sound* (8) times which makes it the third common device, while *mean* as the fourth lexical verb is identified (6) times and *believe* occurs only four times.



There are various ways to express epistemic modality besides modal auxiliaries, approximators and epistemic lexical verbs. Hence, epistemic adverbs frequently express hedging in a way that can introduce some degrees of ambiguous knowledge or absence of credibility. It is clear that all the epistemic adverbs show doubts about a statement.



4.4 Epistemic adjectives

The finding of the recent study reveals that only (21) instances of epistemic adjectives are found. The frequency of epistemic adjectives is shown in Figure (5) in the selected modern play.

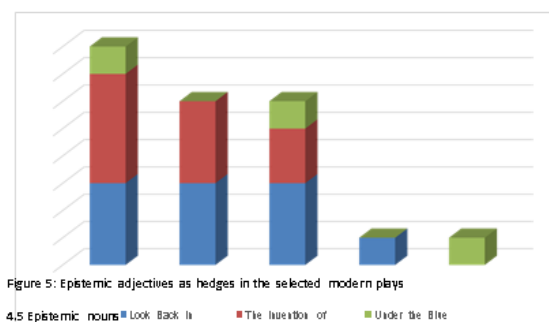
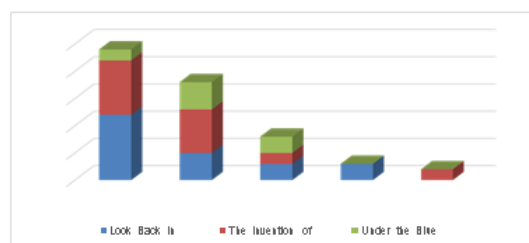


Figure (6) below reveals that in *Look back in Anger*, the nouns that are found as hedging devices in this play are mostly tentative cognition nouns. Among 26 items, the most common noun is *idea* that occurs (12) times, thought (5) followed by *thinking*, *thought*, and *belief* each occur three times.



4.6 Agentless passive constructions

Figure (7) shows that in *Look Back in Anger*, the incidence of this category of hedging is found only once. Below is an example of agentless passive constructions that convey hedging meaning. Figure (7) shows that in *Look Back in*

Anger, the incidence of this category of the hedge is found only once.

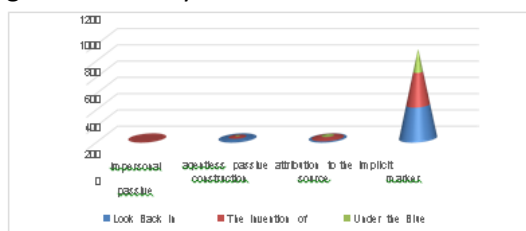


Figure 7: Non-lexical categories of hedges in the selected modern plays

As shown in Figure (8), significant numbers of implicit pragmatic markers are identified. Implicit pragmatic markers encompass personal references and attributions, direct questions and hypothetical conditionals. Implicit pragmatic markers can help the writer to create a dialogue with readers, hence facilitating effective communication and relationship between writers/ speakers and readers/ hearers. For example, *you know, as you can see, of course, as you mentioned just now*. The Figure below shows the frequency of implicit pragmatic markers:

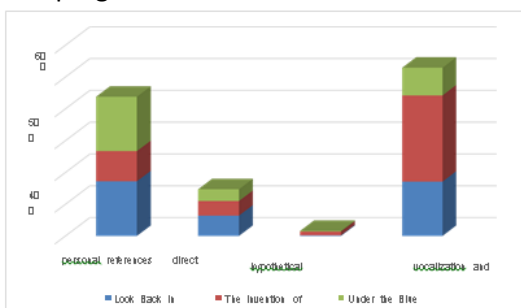


Figure 8: Implicit pragmatic markers in the selected modern plays

4.7. Functions of Hedging in the selected modern plays

Hyland (1998b: p156) develops the poly-pragmatic model of hedges. He divides the functions of hedges into two groups, including content – oriented, and reader- oriented hedges. Content- oriented is even more split into accuracy- oriented hedges and reader-oriented hedges.

Coetzer (2002:48) states that content-oriented hedges "help minimize the causal connection between what the writer claims about the

world and what the world is believed to be like,". While accuracy- oriented hedges present information as fully, accurately, and objectively as possible. The function of accuracy-oriented hedges can be realized by approximators of quantity, frequency and degree. Moreover, according to Hyland (1998b, p.170), writer-oriented hedges are "writer's minimizing personal involvement, targeted and designed to shield from the consequences of mistake. Varttala (2001, p.99) states that hedging in this type is considered as a function by which the writer's or the speaker's face may be protected from audience opposition. Reader- oriented hedges are the final class of functional hedges including the readers/ hearer as a part of a dialogue which involved in the dialogue. Implicit pragmatic markers such as personal attributions, direct questions, and hypothetical conditions are employed in this type of hedges. Figure (9) below shows the frequency distribution of hedging categories according to their functions in three selected modern plays.

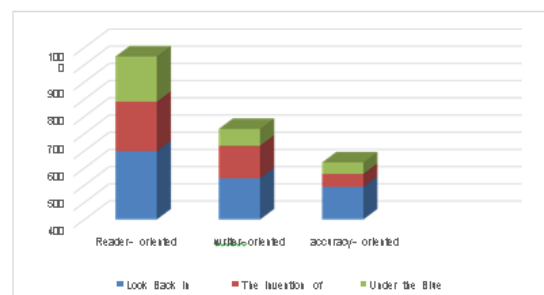


Figure 9: Distribution of hedging functions in the selected modern plays

5. Conclusion and Results

In this paper, the pragmatic features of hedging in three modern selected plays, namely John Osborn's *Look Back in Anger*, Tom Stoppard's *The Invention of Love* and David Elldridge's *Under the Blue Sky*. Hedging interpretation is context-dependent. Hedging is a pragmatic phenomenon, not a semantic one. The classifications of hedging devices has a variety of forms. These are modal auxiliary verbs,

modal adverbs, modal adjectives, epistemic nouns, approximators, lexical verbs, attribution to the source, agentless passive constructions, impersonal passive constructions, personal references and attributions, hypothetical conditions, direct questions, vocalizations, and interjections.

It is concluded that hedging devices are differently distributed across the selected modern plays; it is found that implicit pragmatic markers, as one of the devices are the most common category. Approximators of quantity, frequency and degree are the second important category in selected modern plays. A common hedging category in *Look Back in Anger* and *The Invention of Love* is modal auxiliary verbs whereas *Under the Blue Sky* is a category of direct questions.

It is also concluded that all reader-oriented functions, writer-oriented functions and accuracy-oriented functions are found in modern plays but the reader-oriented function is the most common rate to % 56.04 of repeated in the plays. Finally, in each selected plays, the frequency of hedging devices is different while the types and the functions are similar in general except impersonal passive constructions type that has not occurred in the selected texts, namely *Look Back in Anger* and *Under the Blue Sky*.

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