

THE UNIVERSITY OF DANANG  
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**HEDGING DEVICES AS POLITENESS  
STRATEGIES IN THE OBSERVER NEWSPAPER:  
A CORPUS-BASED RESEARCH**

**Major: ENGLISH LINGUISTICS**

**Code: 822.02.01**

**MASTER THESIS  
FOREIGN LANGUAGES, LITERATURE AND CULTURE  
(A SUMMARY)**

**Da Nang, 2018**

This thesis has been completed at University of  
Foreign Language Studies, The University of Da Nang

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The thesis was orally defended at the Examining Committee

Time: October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Venue: University of Foreign Language Studies

- The University of Da Nang

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 RATIONALE**

Using hedging devices to express politeness is one of the most effective ways which has been applied in many situations, both in spoken and written discourses.

The Observer is Britain's oldest newspaper which has been reporting the best in arts, culture, politics, sport, review and business for over two hundred years. The articles in this newspaper are definitely the most relevant and authentic data for any linguistics study.

Obviously, identifying and comprehending politeness strategies in newspaper articles are extremely complicated. Moreover, searching and analyzing a large amount of data of linguistic expressions denoting politeness have to be conducted under the help of computer-assisted methods.

For the reasons mentioned above, I decided to conduct a study on "Hedging devices as politeness strategies in the Observer newspaper" under the umbrella of corpus-based method.

#### **1.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

##### **1.2.1 Aims**

The study aims at investigating hedging devices expressing politeness through the Observer newspaper's articles analysis towards corpus-based approach. It also targets for finding the differences and similarities in the use of hedging devices expressing politeness strategies between the two columns of the Observer newspaper.

##### **1.2.2 Objectives**

The research is conducted with its objectives to:

- Classify and describe lexical entries and syntactic structures of hedging devices expressing politeness strategies in the Observer newspaper's articles.
- Identify the differences and similarities between the use of hedging devices showing politeness strategies in Business column and Review column in the Observer newspaper.

### **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. What are the lexical entries and syntactic structures of hedging devices found in the research corpora of the Observer newspaper's articles?

2. What politeness strategies are identified from the analyses of hedging devices in the two research corpora?

3. What similarities and differences are found from the use of hedging devices in the Observer newspaper columns of Business and Review?

### **1.4 SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The study primarily focuses on the analysis of the linguistic features of hedging devices used to express politeness in the Observer newspaper columns of Business and Review published in the UK in 2007.

### **1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Theoretically, the study is expected to reflect the theory of politeness into the analyses of hedging devices and provide English learners with an essential reference for more effective ways to express politeness, particularly in the press discourse. Practically, the findings of the study can be the potential source of reference for the teaching and learning of hedging devices as politeness expressions in English formal writing.

## **1.6 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY**

Apart from the abstract, the appendix, the references, this research includes five chapters as follow:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Background

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Implications

## **CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW**

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), politeness has become a major concern in pragmatics, generating a wealth of theoretical and empirical studies.

Brown and Levinson (1987) sum up human politeness behavior in four strategies: *bald on record*, *negative politeness*, *positive politeness*, and *off-record-indirect strategy*.

Fraser (1990) proposes four significant models by which researchers can consider the term politeness more systematically and conduct their research based on the model of their taste. Fraser (1990) suggests four perspectives of politeness namely, *the social norm view*, *the conversational maxim view*, *the face-saving view*, and *the conversational-contract view*.

### **2.2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

#### **2.2.1 Definition of Politeness**

Politeness has been a major concern in pragmatics since Lakoff's (1973) work on "The logic of politeness". The issue has

been developed into a theory and used as a framework for studies in pragmatics since Brown and Levinson's first publication in 1978.

Márquez (2000) reproduces Fraser's (1990) research and points out 4 major views to approach politeness including *the social-norm view*, *the conversational maxim view*, *the conversational contract view* and *the face-saving view*.

### **2.2.2 Definition of face**

Brown and Levinson (1978, p.66) define 'face' as "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself". They then divide face into two separate, but related aspects: "negative face" - the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction, and "positive face" - the positive consistent of self-image or 'personality' (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants.

### **2.2.3 Face Threatening Acts (FTAs)**

"When an act of verbal or non-verbal communication runs contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or the writer" (Brown & Levinson, 1978, p.70), this is called a "face-threatening act" (FTA). Face-threatening acts (FTAs) are acts that infringe on the addressee's need to maintain his/her self-esteem, and be respected.

### **2.2.4 Politeness strategies for doing FTA**

Brown and Levinson (1987) then focus especially on acts threatening the addressee providing us with a taxonomy of strategies that the writer can follow when intending to do the FTA. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), the perspective of "face" is central of their theory. A set of five strategies to minimize risk of losing face is suggested by these two authors. The choice of the strategies will be made on the basis of the writer's assessment of the size of the face

threatening acts, which are certain illocutionary acts liable to damage or threaten another person's face.

### **2.2.5 Politeness Strategies**

#### ***2.2.5.1 Bald-on record***

The bald on-record strategy does nothing to minimize threats to the addressee's "face" (Brown and Levinson, 1978, p.65). This strategy provides no effort by writers to reduce the impact of the FTAs. Writers will most likely shock the person to whom they are speaking, embarrass them, or make them feel a bit uncomfortable. There are different kinds of bald-on record usage in different circumstances. They are divided into two kinds: those where the face threat is not minimized and those where the face threat is minimized through implication.

#### ***2.2.5.2 Positive politeness***

Brown and Levinson (1987) list fifteen positive politeness strategies as follows:

Strategy 1: Notice, attend to H (his interests, wants, needs, goods)

Strategy 2: Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with H)

Strategy 3: Intensify interest to H

Strategy 4: Use in-group identity markers

Strategy 5: Seek agreement

Strategy 6: Avoid disagreement

Strategy 7: Presuppose/ raise/ assert common ground

Strategy 8: Joke

Strategy 9: Assert or presuppose S's knowledge of and concern for H's wants

Strategy 10: Offer and promise

Strategy 11: Be optimistic

Strategy 12: Include both S and H in the activity

Strategy 13: Give (or ask for) reasons

Strategy 14: Assume or assert reciprocity

Strategy 15: Give gifts to H (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation)

### ***2.2.5.3 Negative politeness***

Brown and Levinson (1987, p.131) list ten strategies for negative politeness as follows:

Strategy 1: Be conventionally indirect

Strategy 2: Question, hedge

Strategy 3: Be pessimistic

Strategy 5: Give deference

Strategy 6: Apologize

Strategy 7: Impersonalize S and H

Strategy 8: State the FTA as a general rule

Strategy 9: Nominalize

Strategy 10: Go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebted to H

### ***2.2.5.4 Off-record***

We have fifteen strategies of this type according to Brown and Levinson (1987).

Strategy 1: Give hints

Strategy 2: Give association clues

Strategy 3: Presuppose

Strategy 4: Understate

Strategy 5: Overstate

Strategy 6: Use tautologies

Strategy 7: Use contradictions

Strategy 8: Be ironic

- Strategy 9: Use metaphors
- Strategy 10: Use rhetorical questions
- Strategy 11: Be ambiguous
- Strategy 12: Be vague
- Strategy 13: Over-generalize
- Strategy 14: Displace H
- Strategy 15: Be incomplete, use ellipsis

### **2.2.6. Factors influencing the choice of Politeness**

#### **Strategies**

Formula account for politeness phenomena in all languages:

$$W_x = D(S, H) + P(H, S) + R_x$$

$W_x$  is the numerical value that measures the weightiness of the FTA  $x$ ,  $D(S,H)$  is the value that measures the social distance between  $S$  and  $H$ ,  $P(H,S)$  is a measure of the power that  $H$  has over  $S$ , and  $R_x$  is a value that measures the degree to which the FTA  $x$  is rated an imposition in that culture.

#### **2.2.7 Definition of hedge**

According to Brown and Levinson (1987, p.145), “A ‘hedge’ is a particle, word, or phrase that modifies the degree of membership of a predicate or noun phrase in a set; it says of that membership that it is partial, or true only in certain respects, or that it is more true and complete than perhaps might be expected (note that this latter sense is an extension of the colloquial sense of ‘hedge’).”

#### **2.2.8 An overview of modality**

##### ***2.2.8.1 Epistemic modality***

This category of modality is, as Lyon (1977: 793) claims, “concerned with matters of knowledge and belief” of the writer. According to Coates (1983: 18) epistemic modality is not only “concerned with the speaker’s assumptions or assessment of

possibilities” but also “indicates the speaker’s confidence (or lack of confidence) in the truth of the proposition expressed”.

#### ***2.2.8.2 Deontic modality***

Deontic modality can be seen to refer to “knowledge of possible situations relative to some system of moral, legal or social conventions” (Hengeveld, 1988: 234). Deontic MMs indicate the writer’s interest in the performance of actions such as obligations, commands and permission. Thus, the deontic sense of modality is basically performative since it is concerned with the performance of the action by the writer himself or by others.

#### ***2.2.8.3 Dynamic modality***

Dynamic modality, which is derived from the Greek dynamis for ‘strength or power’, is considered as modality of ability, volition, intention and willingness. The distinction between dynamic and deontic modality, as claimed in Palmer (1990: 69), “is far less easy to establish”. However, the major difference between these two categories of modality is that while deontic modality is “discourse oriented”, dynamic modality is “subject-oriented”. Deontic modality is “discourse oriented” since it involves both the writer and the reader in the performance of the act written. Dynamic modality is “subject-oriented” because it is used to express the ability of the grammatical subject of the sentence other than the writer.

### **2.2.9 An overview of corpus linguistics**

Corpus linguistics is “the study of language based on examples of real life language use” (McEnery & Wilson, 1996). However, unlike purely qualitative approaches to research, corpus linguistics utilizes bodies of electronically encoded text, implementing a more quantitative methodology. Biber (1998: 4)

points out, corpus-based research actually depends on both quantitative and qualitative techniques:

Baker (2013: 10) suggests some advantages of the corpus-based approach to discourse analysis: *Reducing researcher bias, The incremental effect of discourse, Resistant and changing discourses, Triangulation.*

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 CORPUS-BASED ANALYSIS**

A corpus-based method, as claimed in Biber et al. (1998: 4), consists of four essential characteristics:

- (i) it is empirical, analyzing the actual patterns of use in natural texts;
- (ii) it utilizes a large and principled collection of natural texts, known as a “corpus”, as the basis for analysis;
- (iii) it makes extensive use of computers for analysis, using both automatic and interactive techniques;
- (iv) it depends on both quantitative and qualitative analytical techniques.

#### **3.2 CRITERIA FOR A RESEARCH CORPUS DESIGN**

According to Hunston (2002: 25-31), the criteria for the design of research corpora are size, content, balance and representativeness.

#### **3.3 DATA COLLECTION**

The data source used for the study is taken from The Observer Newspaper published in the UK in the whole year of 2007. The text files are the articles collected from 2 columns of the Observer newspaper namely Business and Review and transcribed into electronic format. The corpus of Business articles is hereby

named as the Observer Business Corpus (OBC) and that of Review articles the Observer Review Corpus (ORC).

### **3.4 DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE**

- Collecting expressions of hedging devices in the Review columns and Business column of the Observer.
- Categorizing the data of the use of hedging devices in the research corpora.
- Identifying the politeness strategies expressed through the use of those hedging devices.
- Making comparative analysis to find out similarities and differences in the use of hedging devices as Politeness strategies between the two columns.

### **3.5 THE SOFTWARE PACKAGE USED IN THE RESEARCH**

The software package used for this corpus-based analysis of hedging devices is Wordsmith 5.0.

#### **3.5.1 Wordlist**

The tool of wordlist (or frequency list) is used to collect statistical data on the frequency of words used in a research corpus, the number of running words counted (tokens) and distinct words occurring in the corpus (types). The researcher can find the frequency of the use of words in inverted alphabetical order; identify the keyword; analyse the concordance lines of keywords in a text; compare the pragmatics and semantics of the same word in different text types.

#### **3.5.2 Concordance lines**

With the support of Wordsmith 5.0, the researcher can investigate the context and concordance lines of any keyword in the discourse. This tool provides the statistical data of MMs identified in each research corpus. Data collected by the use of concordance

lines are the authentic reflection of the collocation of the keyword which helps the researcher undertake any specific analysis of the research corpus.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

#### **4.1 HEDGING DEVICES IN MODAL FORMS**

##### **4.1.1 Hedging devices in forms of modal auxiliaries**

###### ***4.1.1.1 Hedging devices in forms of modal may***

There are 139 instances of *may not* found in the OBC and 119 instances in the ORC and markedly, only 2 instances of *may not* in the deontic sense are found in the OBC and 5 instances of *may not* in the deontic sense are found in the ORC. This may lead to an argument that in the business articles *may not* is preferred in the epistemic to the deontic sense. This is because the deontic sense of *may not* is to show the writer's authority over the addressee such as giving or declining permission and may thus be avoided.

###### ***4.1.1.2 Hedging devices in forms of modal might***

It is interesting to find in the research corpus that epistemic *may* is more frequently used than epistemic *might*, with 252 instances (at 34.5%) as opposed to 133 instances (at 18.2%) in the ORC and 165 instances (at 45.7%) compared with 56 instances (at 15.5%) in the OBC, (see table 4.1).

As found from instances of epistemic *may* and *might* in the research corpora of the two columns of the Observer newspaper, it can be claimed that *may* is used in patterns of hedges or comment clauses in the sentence as a formal way of expressing the writer's view, whereas *might* is combined with the main verb in the sentence to express the writer's attitude of low level commitment to the

proposition presented in the sentence.

#### **4.1.1.3 Hedging devices in forms of modal *could***

As observed in the research corpora, epistemic *could* exists with much higher frequencies in the ORC than in the OBC (see table 4.1), accounting for 298 out of 731, at 40.8% instances of *could* in the ORC and 112 out of 361, at 31% of those in the OBC. It can be explained that epistemic *could* is used to express the writer's implication that readers may not agree with him about the point presented but in his cognition there is a possibility that this is the case.

#### **4.1.1.4 Hedging devices in forms of modal *would***

In the research corpora, instances of *would* show that this epistemic modal verb is mainly used to convey the senses of *hypothesis* and *tentativeness*.

It could be its sense of expressing politeness or tentativeness that epistemic *would* is frequently used in the research corpora, accounting for 90 instances of tentative *would* in the ORC in comparison with 4 instances of tentative *would* in the OBC. Whereas, the frequency of hypothetical *would* used in the OBC is much higher than in the ORC, accounting for 127 instances and 89 instances, respectively.

The higher frequencies of modal auxiliaries in epistemic meaning occurring in review articles than those in business articles reveal the writers' common selection in the use of patterns of hedges to express their personal critical analysis, confident assertion, commitment or assessment of the possibility of the event presented in the sentence.

#### 4.1.2 Hedging devices in patterns with non-auxiliary modals

##### 4.1.2.1 Hedging devices in patterns with modal lexical verbs

Table 4.1: Frequencies of modal lexical verbs used as hedging devices in the ORC and the OBC

<b>Modal lexical verbs</b>	<b>The ORC</b>	<b>The OBC</b>
I think	626 (76%)	120 (71.4%)
I believe	30 (3.6%)	23 (13.7%)
I hope	80 (9.7%)	16 (9.5%)
I wish	57 (6.9%)	8 (4.8%)
I suggest	31 (3.8%)	1 (0.6%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>824 (100%)</b>	<b>168 (100%)</b>

Observations show that these epistemic modal lexical verbs are similar in combination with the *I* pronoun showing the writer's personal opinion and commitment. The higher frequencies of such hedging devices in the ORC than in the OBC also reveal that authors of review articles are more personal while authors of business articles seem to be more reserved and cautious in expressing their opinions and commitment to the propositional content of the sentence

##### 4.1.2.2 Hedging devices in patterns with modal adjectives

Table 4.2: Frequencies of modal adjectives occurring in the ORC and the OBC.

<b>Modal adjectives</b>	<b>The ORC</b>	<b>The OBC</b>
Hopeful	3 (1.1%)	1 (0.5%)
Certain	12 (4.2%)	10 (5.0%)
Confident	7 (2.5%)	6 (3%)
Sure	181 (63.7%)	33 (16.4%)
Likely	46 (16.2%)	68 (33.8%)
Clear	35 (12.3%)	83 (41.3%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>284 (100%)</b>	<b>201 (100%)</b>

It appears to be the case that writers of Review articles are more personal and direct in expressing strong commitment while authors of Business articles seem to be more tentative and indirect. It can be argued that authors of Review articles prefer more expressions of personal opinion as strong commitment while authors of Business articles appear to be more tentative in making commitment.

#### *4.1.2.3 Hedging devices in patterns with modal adverbs*

Table 4.3: Frequencies of modal adverbs occurring in the ORC and the OBC.

<b>Modal adverbs</b>	<b>The ORC</b>	<b>The OBC</b>
Perhaps	22 (5.5%)	47 (20.6%)
Possibly	67 (16.8%)	42 (18.5%)
Clearly	79 (19.8%)	61 (26.7%)
Certainly	88 (22.1%)	22 (9.6%)
Obviously	67 (16.8%)	13 (5.7%)
Surely	76 (19%)	43 (18.9%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>399 (100%)</b>	<b>228 (100%)</b>

The frequencies of the modal adverbs *obviously, clearly, certainly and surely* which are used to enhance the level of certainty that the writer would like to hedge on the propositional content of the sentence occur with a higher frequency in the ORC than in the OBC (see table 4.4). Such comparisons also support the argument that Business articles are, therefore, more cautious and reserved than Review articles in expressing a sense of personal opinion and obligation.

#### 4.1.2.4 Hedging devices in patterns with modal nouns

Modal nouns are used in patterns of comment clauses showing the writer's degrees of certainty or attitude as hedges towards what is presented in the sentence. The common pattern of modality expressions with modal nouns found in the research corpora are: (1) [*There is* + determiner + N<sub>Mod</sub>]; and (2) [*It is* + possessive Adj + N<sub>Mod</sub>].

Table 4.4: Frequencies of modal nouns occurring in the ORC and the OBC

Modal nouns	The ORC	The OBC
Hope	5 (9.25%)	3 (7.5%)
Belief	5 (9.25%)	3 (7.5%)
Doubt	31 (57.4%)	28 (70%)
Pleasure	7 (12.96%)	2 (5%)
Honour	6 (11.11%)	4 (10%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>54 (100%)</b>	<b>40 (100%)</b>

The point is that only a few instances of patterns with modal nouns such as *hope, belief, honor, pleasure and doubt* were found in the research corpora (See Table 4.5). This is opposed to the high frequencies of modal lexical verbs such as *think, hope, believe* or *expect* used in patterns of comment clauses expressing the same

sense of epistemic modal. It can be explained that modal lexical nouns are not preferred and are thus replaced by the modal lexical verbs as hedging devices in samples of the Observer articles.

## 4.2 HEDGING DEVICES AS POLITENESS STRATEGIES

### 4.2.1 Positive politeness strategies

#### 4.2.1.1 *Paying attention to readers*

Table 4.6: Distribution of hedging devices of paying attention to readers

	<b>The ORC</b>	<b>The OBC</b>
<i>As you may know</i>	7 (77.7%)	2 (66.7%)
<i>As you probably know</i>	2 (22.3)	1 (33.3)
<b>Total</b>	<b>9 (100%)</b>	<b>3 (100%)</b>

The patterns collected from the research corpora reveal that more hedging devices used in this strategy are found in the ORC than in the OBC, accounting for 9 instances and 3 instances. This indicates that the Review articles are more direct than the Business articles in addressing readers with the use of the *you* pronoun showing the writer's attention to readers.

#### 4.2.1.2 *Expressing solidarity with addressees*

Table 4.7. Frequencies of patterns with inclusive 'we' combined with modal auxiliaries

<b>Modal</b>	<b>The ORC</b>	<b>The OBC</b>
<i>may</i>	35 (20.2%)	17 (17.5%)
<i>might</i>	44 (25.4%)	8 (8.3%)
<i>would</i>	37 (21.4%)	35 (36.1%)
<i>could</i>	57 (33%)	37 (38.1%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>173 (100%)</b>	<b>97 (100%)</b>

The frequencies of inclusive we combined with individual modal verb forms are higher in the ORC than in the OBC. This evidence also supports the argument that the ORC seem to be more indirect by using inclusive we to seek addressees' agreement to strengthen the commitment to the performance of the act uttered.

#### ***4.2.1.3 Hedging to address readers' positive face***

As observed in the research corpora, hedges serve both positive and negative politeness strategies. Hedging, as a positive politeness strategy, is related to modality expressions to indicate that the writer knows what addressees want and is willing to take their wants into account. Hedging expressions normally function as weak committers "which are used to lower the degree to which X commits himself to the state of affairs referred to in the proposition" (House and Kasper, 1981: 167)

Table 4.8: Distribution of hedges on addressees' positive face

	<b>The ORC</b>	<b>The OBC</b>
<i>I hope</i>	80 (10.8%)	16 (9.7%)
<i>I expect</i>	9 (1.2%)	7 (4.2%)
<i>I believe</i>	30 (4%)	23 (13.8%)
<i>I think</i>	626 (84%)	120 (72.3%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>745 (100%)</b>	<b>166 (100%)</b>

Table 4.8 shows patterns of modality expressions as hedges on addressees' positive face collected in the research corpora. The Review articles use such hedging expressions more frequently than the Business articles, accounting for 745 instances in the ORC compared with 166 instances in the OBC. This evidence also supports the argument that the ORC are more personal and direct because the writers prefer patterns of modality expressions with the "I" pronoun.

#### ***4.2.1.4 Complimenting to mitigate the force of critical comments***

The Business articles appear to be more indirect and thus more reserved in addressing issues with negative effects. In addition to the praise opening the utterance, critical comments are cautiously hedged by means of modal verb forms, i.e., *may, might*; embedded modality expressions, i.e., *others believe..., To be fair...*; and other hedges in terms of conditionals. Interestingly, these hedging devices occur with a higher frequency in the OBC than in the ORC accounting for 19 instances in the OBC compared with 4 instances in the ORC.

It could be claimed that complimenting is actually a strategy for mitigating the effects of critical comments. The Review and Business articles are different in their use of hedging devices to change from complimenting to making comments in that the Business articles are more indirect and reserved whereas the Review articles are more direct in addressing negative points.

#### **4.2.2. Negative politeness strategies**

##### ***4.2.2.1 Minimizing imposition on addressees through indirectness***

Table 4.9 Hedging devices used for minimizing imposition

	<b>The ORC</b>	<b>The OBC</b>
<i>Perhaps</i>	22 (34.4%)	47 (41.3%)
<i>Probably</i>	28 (43.7%)	42 (36.8%)
<i>Maybe</i>	14 (21.9%)	25 (21.9%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>64 (100%)</b>	<b>114 (100%)</b>

Table 4.9 demonstrates the raw counts of modality expressions as indicators for minimising the sense of imposition.

Modal adverbs such as *perhaps*, *probably* and *maybe* are also used to mitigate the sense of imposition.

#### 4.2.2.2 Making tentative claims

Samples of patterns such as *I would say that*, *I would mean that*, and *I would admit* are frequently used to show the writer's politeness strategy as making tentative claims. With the *I* pronoun combined with *would* and a performative verb, the writer makes a tentative claim or desire towards the occurrence of the event uttered.

The data sets collected in the research corpora show that the frequency of these MEs of tentativeness in the OBC is higher than in the ORC, accounting for 15 instances in the OBC and 5 instances in the ORC. It can be explained that the Review articles are more direct and personal with a preference for the use of the *I* pronoun, while the Business articles appear to be indirect and formal with more variables of the *we* pronoun used. (see also 4.2.1.2).

#### 4.2.2.3 Hedging on the force of an FTA

Table 4.10. Distribution of modality expressions as hedges on the force of an FTA

	<b>The ORC</b>	<b>The OBC</b>
<i>It may be</i>	7 (14.9%)	10 (14.7%)
<i>It might be</i>	20 (42.5%)	35 (51.5%)
<i>There may be</i>	11 (23.4%)	16 (23.5)
<i>There might be</i>	9 (19.2%)	7 (10.3%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>47 (100%)</b>	<b>68 (100%)</b>

Table 4.10 shows that the impersonal subject "*it*" occurs more frequently in the OBC than in the ORC, accounting for 45 instances and 27 instances respectively. Similarly, the frequency of the pattern with impersonal "*there*" in the OBC is higher than that in the ORC, accounting for 23 compared with 20 instances. That is

to say the Business articles seem to be more indirect and impersonal than the Review articles in using hedging devices to express their politeness strategies.

#### ***4.2.2.4 Expressing a hypothesis***

A hypothesis can be considered as a condition for the act uttered to be performed or the event presented to occur. However, observations of articles in this research reveal that the major point is not in the hypothetical *would* itself but in the writer's implication to hedge on the negative effect that may occur in the propositional content uttered. Hypothetical *would* is used as a marker of politeness to compensate for the strong sense of a command included in the utterance and turn it into a suggestion.

Table 4.11 The frequencies of pattern *would* expressing a hypothesis

	<b>The ORC</b>	<b>The OBC</b>	<b>Total</b>
hypothetical <i>would</i>	89 (41.2%)	127 (58.8%)	<b>216</b> <b>(100%)</b>

Observations of the datasets reveal that more instances of hypothetical *would* are found in the OBC than those in the ORC, accounting for 127 instances, at 58.8% in the OBC compared with 89 instances, at 41.2% of those in the ORC. The difference in frequency use of patterns with hypothetical *would* between the ORC and the OBC indicates that the Business articles are more reserved and formal in using more patterns of tentativeness than the Review articles.

#### ***4.2.2.5 Mitigating the negative force of obligation***

The pattern *we must* occurs with a higher frequency in the OBC than in the ORC, accounting for 40 instances of negative politeness strategies in the OBC compared with 21 instances of those in the ORC. The difference in the frequencies of this pattern in the

two research corpora also supports the argument that the Business articles are more cautious and reserved as they use more hedging devices express negative politeness strategies than the Review articles.

### 4.3 A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF HEDGING DEVICES EXPRESSING POLITENESS STRATEGIES IN THE OBSERVERS' BUSINESS AND REVIEW ARTICLES

#### 4.3.1 Introduction

#### 4.3.2 Hedging devices expressing positive politeness strategies

Table 4.12 Distribution of hedging devices as positive politeness strategies

<b>Positive politeness strategies</b>	<b>Hedging devices</b>	<b>The ORC</b>	<b>The OBC</b>
1. Paying attention to addressees	<i>As you may know, As you probably know...</i>	9 (0.9%)	3 (1%)
2. Expressing solidarity with addressees	<i>We may/ We might/ We would...</i>	173 (18.5%)	97 (31.9%)
3. Hedging to address addressees' positive face	<i>I hope / believe / think / expect that...</i>	745 (79.5%)	166 (54.6%)
4. Complimenting to mitigate the force of critical comments	<i>while, whereas, however, on the other hand, but...</i>	10 (1.1%)	38 (12.5%)
<b>Total</b>		<b>937 (100%)</b>	<b>304 (100%)</b>

### 4.3.3 Hedging devices expressing negative politeness strategies

Table 4.13 Distribution of hedging devices as negative politeness strategies

Negative politeness strategies	Politeness expressions	The ORC	The OBC
1. Minimizing imposition on addressees through indirectness	<i>perhaps, probably</i>	64 (28.3%)	114 (31.3%)
2. Making tentative claims	<i>I would say that, I would expect that...</i>	5 (2.2%)	15 (4.2%)
3. Hedging on the force of an FTA	<i>It may be, there may be, it might be...</i>	47 (20.8%)	68 (18.7%)
4. Expressing a hypothesis	<i>would</i>	89 (39.4%)	127 (34.9%)
5. Mitigating the negative force of obligation	<i>We must...</i>	21 (9.3%)	40 (11%)
<b>Total</b>		<b>226</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>364</b> <b>(100%)</b>

### 4.3.4 Conclusion

The analysis of data shows that the Review articles and the Business articles tend to be aligned with particular patterns of modality expressions associated with particular modal forms such as modal adjectives, modal adverbs, modal lexical verbs and modal auxiliaries in their expressions of politeness.

The data regarding hedging devices reveal that the Review articles had higher frequencies of modal forms (non-auxiliary modals) than the Business articles. Whereas, higher frequencies of modal verbs used in patterns of hedging devices were found in the Business articles than in the Review articles. It could be argued that the difference between the Review articles and the Business article is mainly in their selections of modal forms used in patterns of hedging devices.

Besides, in their politeness strategies, the Review articles are more direct and explicit in their expressions of politeness while the Business articles tend to involve addressees' agreement with the occurrence of the event presented.

In conclusion, it can be claimed that expressing indirectness and objectivity is a characteristic of Business articles, whereas Review articles are oriented towards directness and subjectivity.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

#### **5.1 CONCLUSIONS**

It can be argued that the Review articles are more interested in using hedging devices expressing directness, assertion and personal opinions than the Business articles.

Whereas, Business articles tend to use more patterns of hedging devices expressing negative politeness strategies than the Review articles. It is because of in the Business articles, the writer uses language of business to confirm or to announce news in an exact statement. That is to say that Business articles are more indirect, tentative and objective the Review articles.

## **5.2 IMPLICATIONS**

The findings and discussion are expected to provide language learners with syntactic, semantic and pragmatic knowledge of comprehending and using hedging devices expressing politeness strategies effectively, especially in writing discourse.

Besides, this paper will serve as a reference for further studies and provide some instructional guidance for students of English.