THE USE OF HEDGING DEVICES IN TEACHERS' WRITTEN FEEDBACK ACROSS DIVERSE TASK TYPES

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OUTLINE

Current state of art (Motivation)

Research Question(s)

Corpora and Method

Results

Conclusion and Future implications

The focal point for enhancing students' writing skills lies in teacher feedback on writing (Zhan, 2016)

Are we aware of the language we
use when providing feedback?

PREVIOUS STUDIES …

Hyland and Hyland (2001)

mitigation strategies to soften feedback directives, including *hedging,* personal opinions, and questions

- ○ modal lexical items (e.g., *would, can, could, might, may* etc.)
- ○ imprecise quantifiers (e.g., *some, a little*)
- ○ usuality devices (e.g., *often, sometimes*)

Lee (2013)

the usage of hedging in written feedback

- • core modal verbs (e.g., *can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will, would*)

Sperling (1994)

- ▪ Variation in teachers' comments across various writing assignments

YES

MOTIVATION

❖ Personal motivation (directives +; hedges -)

❖ to see whether the use of hedges as one of the mitigated strategies varies in teachers' written feedback across different essays (L1 + L2 contexts)

❖ Some hedging devices might be used more frequently, and identifying these can encourage students to see feedback as a tool for improvement and reducing uncertainty.

RESEARCH QUESTION

- To what extent do hedging devices differ in teachers' written feedback on students' essays across different task types?

Table 1

Summary of Teachers' Background Information

Teachers	Qualifications	Gender	Teaching experience	L1
Teacher A	MA TESL	Female	2 years	Russian
Teacher B	MFA in Creative Writing	Female	4 years	English
Teacher C	MA TESL and Applied Linguistics	Female	2 years	Turkish
Teacher D	PhD in Applied Linguistics	Female	6 years	English

CORPUS...

Table 2

Overview of the Corpus Used in This Study

Task Types	Words	Files
Research Literacy Narrative Essay	11538	26
Rhetorical Analysis Essay	7405	26
Persuasive Essay	6598	14
Career Readiness Essay	4864	16
Total	**30, 404**	**82**

METHOD

- The coding scheme following Hyland and Hyland (2001) and Hyland (1994) framework
- AntConc (concordance lines)
- the content feedback (e.g., criticism and suggestions)
- Margin – end comments
- Corrective feedback removed
- Perfect agreement between raters ($n=2$)

Table 2

Overview of Hedging Devices

Hedges	Linguistics features	Example Sentences
Modal Verbs	can, could, may, might, would	*Adding another sentence to relate the resolution back to running **could** help tie the essay together (D_010_written_RLN)*[1]
Imprecise Quantifiers	some	*I like how you integrate them, but **some** parts of your text are missing a little bit of proof for the claims you are making. (A_100_written_RLN_A)*
Usuality Devices	pretty	*This is a statement that might be **pretty** difficult to back up with evidence since all jobs have unique challenges. (C_030_written_CR_A)*
Lexical Uncertainty Devices	perhaps, maybe	***Perhaps** a more academic transition word could be used ("furthermore" or "moreover"?) (D_012_written_RA_A)*
Modal Lexical Verbs	seem, appear, wonder	*It does not **seem** to be relevant to your focus on "violence" (C_018_written_PE_A)*
If Clauses	if	*It would be nice **if** you could include page numbers with your last name in the header (top right corner) (A_064_written_CR_A)*

10

RESULTS

Figure 1

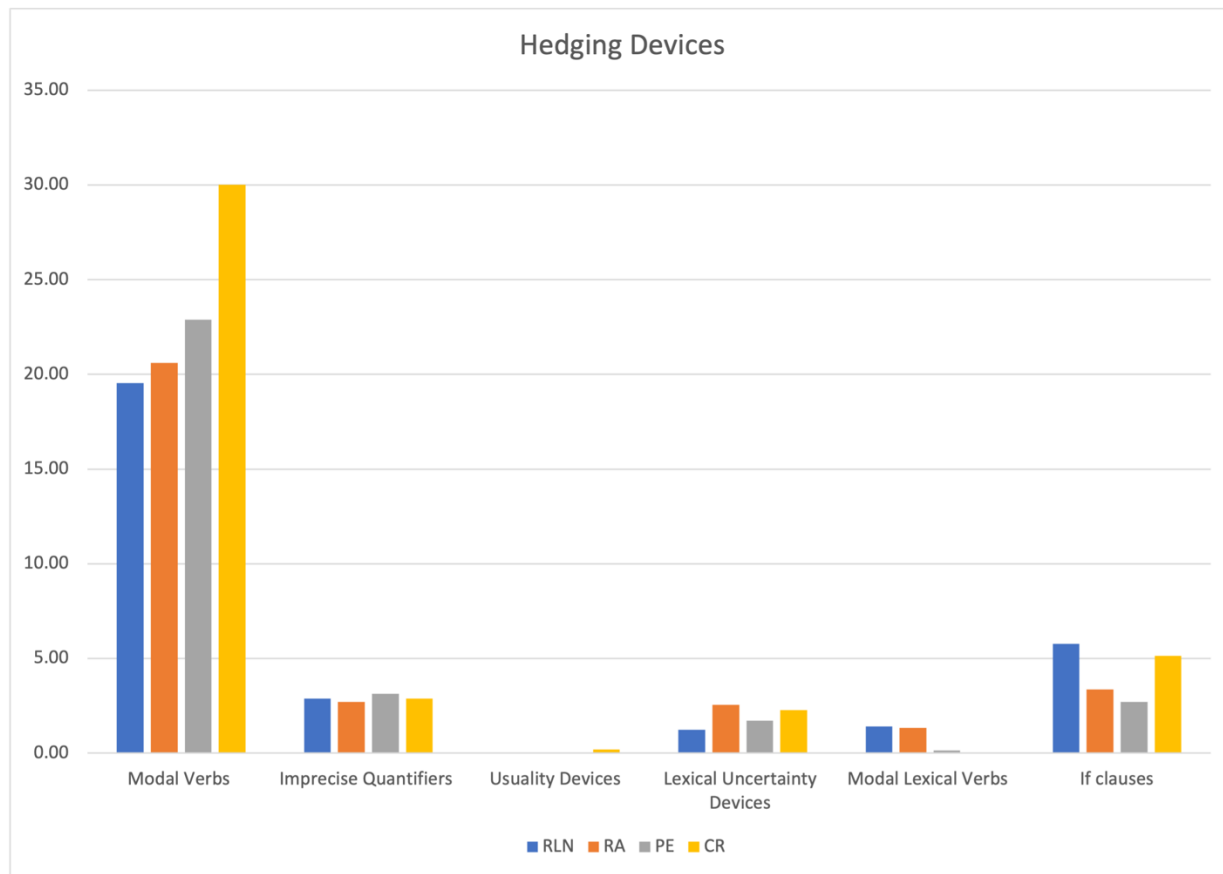*Distribution of Hedges in Teachers' Feedback Across Task Types*
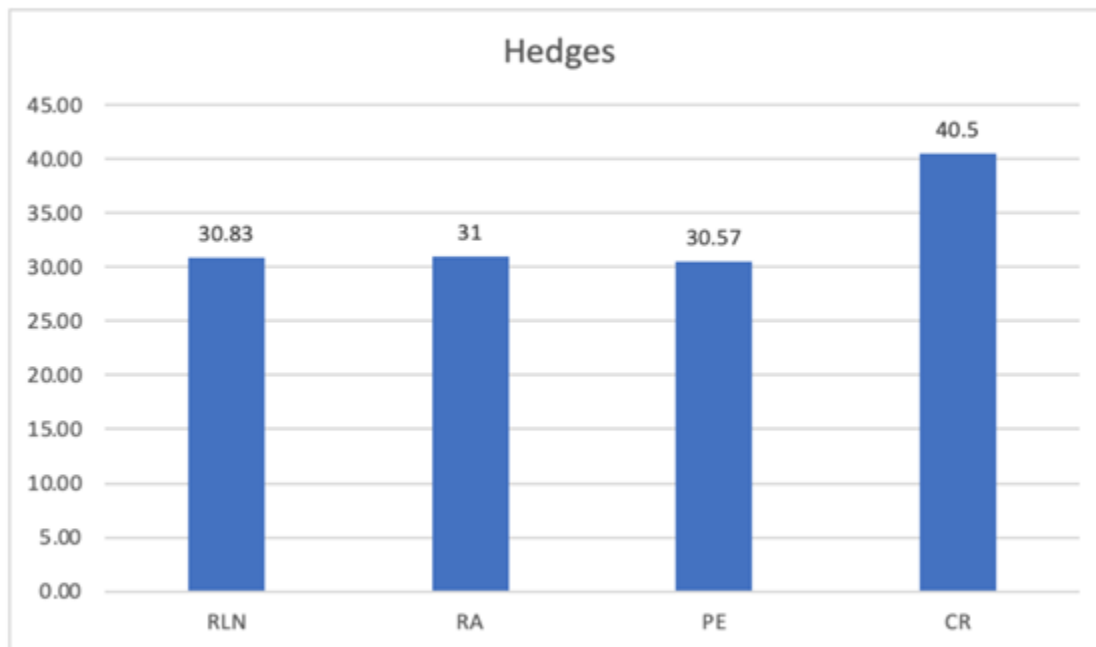
Note. The frequencies are presented in normalized units per 1000 words. The x-axis lists the task types, and the y-axis represents the normalized frequency of hedges.
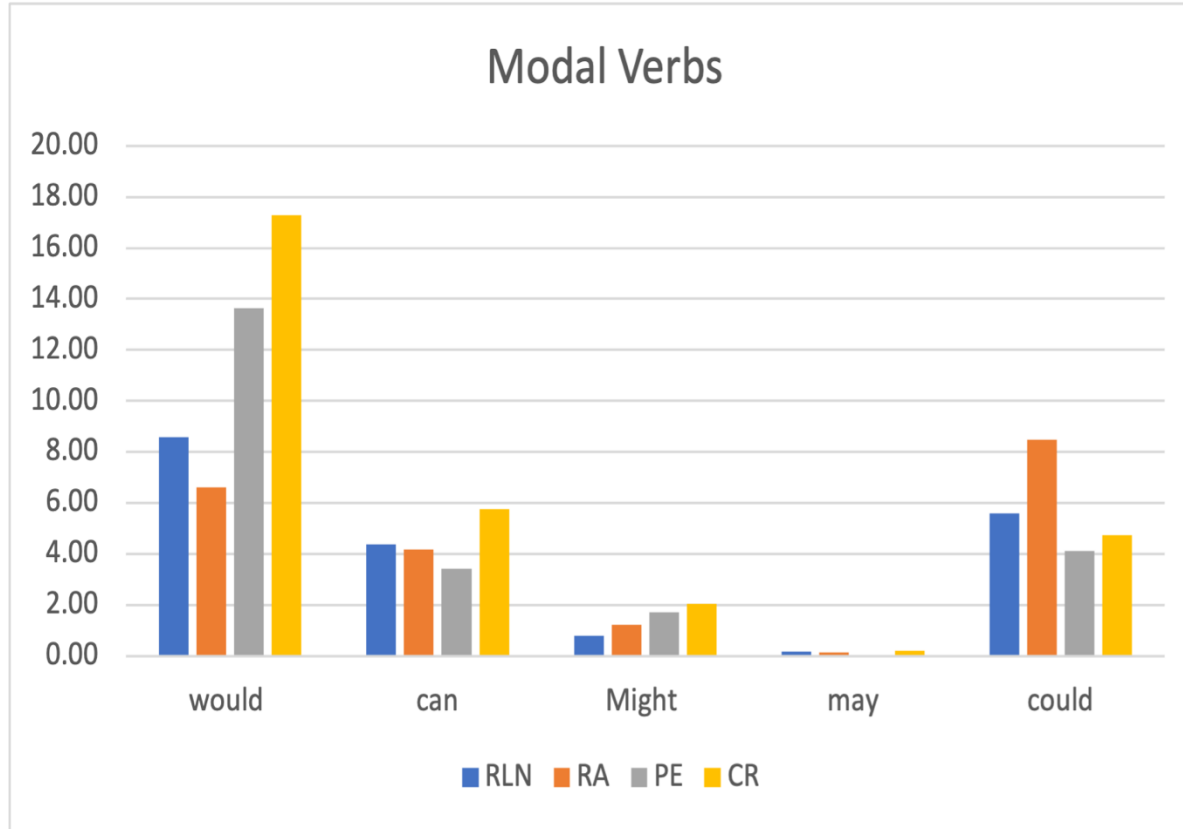
MEANING...

- The higher usage of hedges in feedback on students' CR essays
  - Encourage students to take ownership of their career development
  - Increase their self-autonomy
- The similar use of hedges in the RLN, RA, and PE task types despite the different requirements of each task
  - instructors may prioritize clarity and directness with the use of other strategies (e.g., *unmitigated strategies, interrogative syntax, personal attribution, directives with modals*).

- Hedging might not be an inherent characteristic of a text but rather emerges from the interaction between the writer and the reader (Hyland, 1998)

RESULTS

Hedging Devices

Categories (x-axis): Modal Verbs, Imprecise Quantifiers, Usuality Devices, Lexical Uncertainty Devices, Modal Lexical Verbs, If clauses

Legend: RLN, RA, PE, CR

RESULTS

Modal Verbs

MEANING...

- The high frequency of modal verbs across all written task types
  - "modals are the most easily identified and widely used means of hedging in academic writing." (Hyland, 1994, p.247).

- *would* and *could* typically function to provide suggestions or express criticism without being too direct, *would* also be used to give advice (Lee, 2013).

CONCLUSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

➢ Investigating other factors affecting the teachers' use of hedging devices such as their personal styles, backgrounds, and time constraints rather than relying on the nature of the task

➢ Investigating whether students prefer the use of hedges or more direct feedback could be a valuable route for future research

➢ Analyzing written feedback from instructors with diverse backgrounds and experiences, including full-time faculty members

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THANK YOU