



The Use of Hedges in Editorials in The Jakarta Post

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Abstract

Hedges are important in the newspaper, the use of hedges in Editorial has been paid more attention. The purpose of this research was to investigate the use of hedges and explained how they work in Editorials in The Jakarta Post. The qualitative method was applied by using discourse analysis. The data were taken from Editorials of The Jakarta Post issued between October 6th 2022 and December 28th 2022 which highlighted the politic as the topics. The analysis was employed based on the taxonomy of Salager-Meyer (1997). The findings revealed that all seven types of hedges was used in the Editorials of The Jakarta Post. However, among the seven hedges types, the modal auxiliary verbs was the most frequent hedge found in the editorials, comprising approximate proportion of 73.91% of all hedges found in the editorials. Frequent utilization of modal auxiliary verbs was the typical writing style in The Jakarta Post newspaper. Further, the frequent utilization of modal auxiliary verbs was considered as the editorialist's strategy to encourage the reader's critical thinking.

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INTRODUCTION

Hedges is considered as one of the essential elements of language that distinguishes human communication and makes it more adaptable, reasonable, and persuasive. Hedges have multifunctional characteristics. They convey "vagueness," "mitigation," "tentativeness," "politeness," "possibility," "evasiveness" and showing "deference" to the readers by leaving viewpoints open to other interpretations. According to Hyland (1996, p.1) hedging is the expression of tentativeness and possibility. Hedges are characterized by language in that they convey the writer's attitude toward the propositional information as well as his or her awareness of the readers. Since hedging has drawn a lot of attention as a key aspect of linguistic behavior in academic genres, this study tended to investigate hedges in journalistic language. Particularly in editorials, such a kind of discourse where hedges were used more cautious and accurate. It is important to consider newspaper editorials as genre of analyzing hedges where these type of articles according to Tahririan & Shahzamani (2009) represent the position of a newspaper on particular national concerns and underline the reputation of a newspaper.

The use of hedges in editorials aims to "reduce potential risk of a claim or prevent embarrassing situations in case one is found to be wrong." Editorialists should be careful in presenting their statements, opinions or arguments particularly when criticizing issues, and tackling controversial subject matters. Editorialists have the risk of damaging a newspaper's reputation if their claims is not cautious. They soften or weaken their claims in discussing the topics when they lack confidence in their ability to support their views with evidence that the readers will find acceptable. They can also in an implicit manner relate to the readers how certain or doubtful with the information which is given out to the readers. The use of hedges is important in editorials as a result. Furthermore, hedges are crucial because they may influence whether or not readers agree with editorialists' assertions.

At present, there are numerous studies that have been conducted on this topic, including the use of hedges by non-native speakers of English Nivales (2001); Atai and Sadars (2006); Abdollahzadeh (2011). Besides academic discourse, hedges are

widely used in other discourses such as newspapers or magazines. However, not many studies have explored this particular topic.

In regard, newspaper is important sources of information and is widely read by people all over the world. The manner in which information is presented in these newspapers may influence the public's opinion. Therefore, the hedges play an important role as they may affect how strongly readers accept the truth of the information presented in newspapers. Since their presence is to balance subjective evaluation and objective information with anticipated reader reactions and aim to persuade readers to accept their claims, doing study on the usage of hedges in online newspaper articles is crucial (Zakia 2018).

A newspaper consists of various types of articles e.g., news stories, editorials, letter, opinions etc. These different types of discourse have different linguistic characteristic which may include the different uses of hedges. For instance: opinions may employ different hedging strategies from news stories since they both have different functions. An opinion article is a commentary written by someone who is independent of the newspaper that has purpose of presenting their own views and to encourage thoughtful arguments whereas editorials represent the voice of board, its editor and the publisher.

Thus, this study focused on investigating the use of hedges of Editorials in the Jakarta Post. More specifically, it explored the frequency and the types of hedges employed in editorials. The purpose was to find out whether hedges are used similarly or differently in the newspaper. The hedging strategy which is used by journalists or authors may be different in style of conveying their commentary or critics towards a particular event reported through discourse. Furthermore, the term of hedges is considered as a tentative language about referred information of journalists to express their tact and generosity to gain the context acceptance of the readers through the appropriate attitudes for writing their opinion. Additionally, Yule (1996) explains that the maxim of hedges is important as a united interaction and expression of language usage as it is called as cautious notes that typically marked with quantity of maxims which is considered as conversational or written implicature and the notion of implicature itself is examined as one of essential

pragmatics concept. Arif Saricoban & Leyla Karakurt, (2016) identified the hedges using semantics and pragmatics approach in two different languages, English and Azerbaijan, in Editorial column of Azerbaijan online newspaper written in those both languages. The research examination shows that the hedges devices which consist of approximators, adaptors, rounders and shields (epistemic modals) are utilized in both languages (English and Azerbaijan languages). Likely, Khanbutayeva (2019) identified that the usage of hedges is functioned to deliver the expression of politeness in certain or uncertain, confidently, and as a devotion in proposition form. He added that the hedging strategy proves the relationship between the politeness, face threatening acts, discursive process, and interpersonal meaning that indicates the value of assertion devices. It is classified as one of the communicative strategy using soft utterance form that aims to be accepted by both of English and Azerbaijan Newspaper's reader or receiver.

Yeganeh et al., (2015) used quantitative methods and textual analysis approach to analyse the hedges and booster devices in Keyhan Newspaper of Iran and Washington Post of U.S.A particularly in upcoming elections article. They found 26 hedges and 64 booster items in Keyhan Newspaper articles before the elections, and 18 hedges and 30 booster devices in Washington Post. These findings discover the sociocultural context and it is utilized by both countries newspaper to deliver their opinions towards the election.

Regarding the explanation presented, the researcher procedurally is going to take data source in total of ten articles from Editorials of Jakarta Post (political genres) issued around October 6th 2022 to December 28th 2022. The researcher uses the theory based on Salager-Meyer classification (1997: 109-110) called Taxonomy of Hedges. He points out those hedges are mostly found in the following linguistics items; modal auxiliaries, modal lexical, verbs, adjectival, adverbial and nominal modal phrases (probability adjectives, nouns, adverbs), approximators of degree, quantity, frequency and time, introductory phrases, certain if clauses, compound hedges.

METHOD

This current study used qualitative design with discourse analysis. The article used as the object of study were taken from the online version of the Jakarta Post newspaper issued between October 6th 2022 and December 28th 2022 which highlighted political segments. The data was taken from Editorials of The Jakarta Post which consist of 10 articles. Each article was approximately 5000 words in length. The unit of analysis of this study was every sentence found in Editorials of The Jakarta Post containing hedges. The article of editorials was examined to determine the types and frequency of hedges used. After collecting all of the sentences containing hedges from editorials in The Jakarta Post, the researcher began analyzing the data using Manion, Morrison, and Cohen's (2007: 470-48) steps of coding, identifying, and classifying. After completing some steps, the data was analyzed using taxonomy by Salager-Meyer (1997), which includes finding hedges, classifying the types of hedges, and explaining why the writers of the editorials used those hedges.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Editorials articles

After a thorough analysis, 10 editorial articles were selected for further analysis. The articles selected for the analysis had the politics as the topic, regardless the focus of the discussion. Detailed information regarding the editorials used in the research is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Selected editorial articles of The Jakarta Post used for hedges analysis

No.	Date of Newspaper Issued	Title of Editorial
1.	October 6, 2022	Know your candidates
2.	October 10, 2022	Legislative overreach
3.	October 24, 2022	Promoting local leaders
4.	October 26, 2022	Invite Suu Kyi's representative
5.	November 15, 2022	Asean paralysis over Myanmar

No.	Date of Newspaper Issued	Title of Editorial
6.	November 18, 2022	Fostering progressive Islam
7.	November 22, 2022	Uncertainty in Malaysia
8.	December 7, 2022	Conservative turn
9.	Desember 27, 2022	To vote for change
10.	December 28, 2022	Good year for diplomacy

Types of hedges

The types of hedges analysis in this present study refers to the seven types of hedges composed by Salager-Meyer (1997). Based on the analysis result, 115 hedges were found in 10 editorials analyzed in the research. Among the hedges found in the articles, the modal auxiliary verb type was the most frequent hedge used, comprising 73.28% of total hedges found in the articles. While the least used hedge was the type of approximators of degree, quantity, frequency and time type, comprising only 0.86% of total hedges found in the articles. A complete identification result on the frequency of hedges found in the editorial articles is presented in **Error! Reference source not found.**

Table 2. Hedges found in the editorials articles of The Jakarta Post based on the category

No	Types of Hedges	Total	Proportion (%)
1.	Modal auxiliary verb	85	73.91
2.	Modal lexical verb	7	6.09
3.	Adjectival, Adverbial and nominal modal phrases	7	6.09
4.	Approximators of degree, Quantity, Frequency and time	1	0.86
5.	Introductory phrases	5	4.35
6.	If clauses	7	6.09
7.	Compound hedges	3	2.60
Total		115	

Refer to **Error! Reference source not found.**, all seven types of hedges were found in the editorial articles during the period mentioned. However, the frequency of utilization was varied between types, showing that not all of the hedge types were used everytime the newspaper was issued. Even the

hedges other than the modal auxiliary verb were occasionally used in the editorials.

Samples of hedges

Refer to **Error! Reference source not found.**, hedges were found with various frequencies. Other than the frequency, the occurrence of the hedges were also varied.

Table 2 shows a more detailed occurrences and examples of hedges found in the editorial articles of The Jakarta Post.

Table 2. Examples of hedges found in the editorial articles of The Jakarta Post

No	Types of Hedges	Number of Editorials	Examples
1.	Modal auxiliary verb	10	Found on 1st news: “It remains to be seen if the Nas Dem Party’s bet on Anies <i>will</i> pay dividends in the 2024 election”

No	Types of Hedges	Number of Editorials	Examples
			<p>“Something that if materialized <i>could</i> make it difficult for the Democratic Party to join the coalition”</p> <p>Found on 2nd news:</p> <p>“The lawmakers <i>should have known</i> better that we are a country based on the rule of law”</p> <p>“It is not clear whether the President <i>would give</i> the House what it wants.”</p> <p>Found on 3rd news:</p> <p>“...they <i>should not</i> take too long to make up their minds.”</p> <p>“The more time the party and its machinery <i>can</i> spare to prepare for the presidential election”</p> <p>Found on 4th news:</p> <p>“It <i>may</i> be difficult to determine the most legitimate representative of the ousted government.”</p> <p>“...the foreign ministers <i>can</i> ask Suu Kyi’s representative in exile...”</p> <p>Found on 5th news:</p> <p>“ASEAN leaders <i>should</i> know that the junta never had the intention of abiding by the agreement”</p> <p>“We <i>may</i> recall that the five-point consensus was the result of Indonesia’s hard work and diplomatic skills in bringing all 10 ASEAN leaders”</p> <p>Found on 6th news:</p> <p>“The largest modernist Islamic organization in Indonesia, <i>will</i> begin its 48th national congress today after two years of postponement as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic”</p> <p>“...It <i>must</i>, instead, influence the political process in a way”</p> <p>Found on 7th news</p>

No	Types of Hedges	Number of Editorials	Examples
			<p>“Changes in the typical will of voters <i>could</i> explain why the UMNO-led coalition.”</p> <p>“... confident his UMNO-led coalition Barisan Nasional (BN) <i>would</i> win a clear mandate and overcome the prolonged political instability besetting the country”</p> <p>Found on 8th news:</p> <p>“, a major policy shift that many fear <i>could</i> embolden various vigilante groups to encroach on our privacy in their attempt to police morality”</p> <p>“Indonesia <i>may not</i> be a supporter of the French concept of laïcité, with “traditions”,”</p> <p>Found on 9th news:</p> <p>“Indonesia <i>may not</i> be a supporter of the French concept of laïcité, with “traditions”,”</p> <p>“We <i>can</i> even find House politicians who have served four or five terms”</p> <p>Found on 10th news:</p> <p>“Readers of advanced nations <i>would</i> be instrumental in Indonesia’s ability”</p> <p>“although the term <i>will</i> officially start on Jan. 1, 2023.”</p>
2.	Modal lexical verb	7	<p>Found on 2nd news:</p> <p>“But Aswanto <i>appears</i> to have done the opposite.”</p> <p>Found on 3rd news:</p> <p>...and are <i>supposed</i> to talk about who is the right presidential candidate the PDI-P should choose.</p> <p>Found on 4th news:</p> <p>“Excluding the Myanmar military regime from any ASEAN official meetings has proved to be ineffective in bringing changes to the country”</p> <p>“the general <i>seems</i> not to care”</p> <p>Found on 6th news:</p>

No	Types of Hedges	Number of Editorials	Examples
			<p>“Muhammadiyah has the responsibility to <i>ensure</i> that short-term elite interests</p> <p>Found on 7th news: “Some observers even <i>believe</i> Malaysia is experiencing a surge of political Islam.”</p> <p>Found on 8th news: “<i>There is no doubt</i> that Indonesia is now entering the darkest episode of reformation”.</p> <p>Found on 10th news: he <i>seems</i> to believe big powers like China and Russia and friendly neighbors such as Thailand will not desert him</p>
3.	Adverbial, Adjectival, Nominal Modal Phrase	7	<p>Found on 1st news</p> <p>Politics is the art of making the <i>impossible possible</i> and on Monday the NasDem Party</p> <p>Found on 3rd news</p> <p>The fact that Megawati has not announced her preference <i>perhaps</i> reflects the tug of war in herself.</p> <p>Found on 4th news</p> <p>Jokowi will surely pay particular attention to <i>possible</i> measures to help the Myanmar people escape from their deal</p> <p>Found on 6th news</p> <p>The rising political temperature ahead of the 2024 election which is <i>likely</i> to divide the nation along ideological lines</p> <p>Found on 7th news</p> <p>Whoever becomes prime minister will <i>very likely</i> to go the way of the three previous leaders</p> <p>Found on 10th news</p> <p>For Jokowi, it was almost <i>impossible</i> to reconcile the group, especially the West, which was even considering a boycott of the summit if Russian President Vladimir Putin turned up</p>

No	Types of Hedges	Number of Editorials	Examples
4.	Approximators of degree, Quantity, Frequency and time	1	<p>Found on 2ndnews</p> <p><i>In recent years</i>, Aswanto has backed the court's rulings declaring key House legislative products unconstitutional.</p>
5.	Introductory phrases	5	<p>Found on 3rdnews</p> <p><i>Opinion polls</i> have consistently put Anies and Central Java Governor Ganjar Pranowo at the top of the list, aside from Gerindra Party chairman and Defense Minister Prabowo Subianto</p> <p>Found on 5thnews</p> <p><i>This would at least</i> allow ASEAN to move on with other pressing issues without being saddled by the Myanmar issue.</p> <p>Found on 9thnews</p> <p><i>at least most of them</i>, is they belonged to the old ones but decided to part ways following an internal feud</p> <p><i>A number of opinion surveys</i> have found only eight or nine parties will beat the legislative threshold</p> <p>Found on 10thnews</p> <p><i>But surprisingly</i>, this year, Indonesia gained major achievements on at least two pressing international issues.</p>
6.	If clauses	7	<p>Found on 2ndnews</p> <p>In its most basic, <i>if</i> not cynical form, politics is nothing but a “means to an end”</p> <p><i>if</i> not plot, to remove Constitutional Court justice Aswanto by refusing to “extend” his term is hardly surprising, despite its controversy.</p> <p>For the legislators, his removal is politically rational, <i>if</i> not somewhat transactional.</p> <p>Found on 3rdnews</p> <p><i>If</i> the NasDem-led coalition is solid behind Anies, he will emulate Joko “Jokowi”</p>

No	Types of Hedges	Number of Editorials	Examples
			<p>Found on 7th news</p> <p>And even <i>if</i> a ruling coalition is formed, it will be very fragile..</p> <p>Found on 10th news</p> <p>, especially <i>if</i> it offers no concrete or immediate results</p> <p>, especially the West, which was even considering a boycott of the summit <i>if</i> Russian President Vladimir Putin turned up.</p>
7.	Compound hedges	3	<p>Found on 4th news:</p> <p>Jokowi <i>will surely</i> pay particular attention to possible measures to help the Myanmar people escape from their ordeal.</p> <p>Found on 5th news:</p> <p><i>This would at least</i> allow ASEAN to move on with other pressing issues without being saddled by the Myanmar issue</p> <p>Found on 7th news:</p> <p>Whoever becomes prime minister <i>will very likely</i> to go the way of the three previous leaders,</p>

Discussion

The finding suggests that editorialist of The Jakarta Post is quite intensive in encouraging the readers to develop their critical thinking through frequent utilization of hedges. Notably, average utilization of hedges was 12 hedges per article. Schmauss & Kilian (2023) suggested that through the use of hedges, the speaker or writer do not wish to give impression of imposing their point of view on the interlocutor. Through the hedges, the speaker or writer tried to create a space for discussion.

Refer to the findings in this research, the modal auxiliary verb was found as the most frequent hedge used in the editorial articles in The Jakarta Post newspaper. The hedge was found in all of the editorials samples used in the research. Similar result was found in previous research carried out by Mahanani (2013) on the opinion column of The Jakarta Post which showed frequent use of modal auxiliary verbs, and approximators of degree,

quantity frequency and time. Thus, it is likely that the frequent use of modal auxiliary verbs is the general writing style in The Jakarta Post newspaper. This is appropriate to Mahanani (2013), which found that the use of hedges in The Jakarta Post has met the writing style and express politeness.

The utilization of hedges is strongly related to the writing style preference of the newspaper. Al-Ghowery & Kayed (2019) found a difference of proportion of hedges used in English and Jordanian Arabic newspapers. In English newspaper, modal auxiliary verbs was the most frequent hedge used with approximate proportion of 41.20%, while in the Jordanian Arabic newspaper, it was the approximates of degree, quantity and frequency with approximate proportion of 39.40%. However, the use of modal auxiliary verbs in the editorials of The Jakarta Post as the finding of this research could be considered as the dominant types of hedges, comprising the approximate proportion of 73.91%.

Refer to the result, the use of modal auxiliary verb conveyed possibility function was the most frequent, suggesting that the editorialists tendency to stimulate readers awareness. Haq and Mahdi (2020) explained that modal auxiliary verb has three functions, namely prediction, necessity and probability. Hedges with prediction function include the verb will and would, while should and must determine the necessity function. As for verbs with possibility function are including can, could and might.

In addition to Haq & Mahdi (2020), Jaime & Pérez-Guillot (2015) suggests that modal auxiliary verbs has various semantic values, such as ability, permission, possibility/impossibility, obligation/necessity, prediction/probability, and intention. Alternatively, Narimanova (2022) explained that can and could convey permission, possibility and ability, while must and should convey obligation and necessity. While Torabiardakani et al. (2015) referred the functions of prediction and volitions of shall, will and would. Based on the research carried out by Chilwa & Anurudu (2020), modal auxiliary verbs are also used as manipulative and deceptive strategies as they serve to direct, promise, threaten and present politeness functions.

Modal auxiliary verbs are complex semantically which frequently causes misleads (Khojasteh & Reinders 2013). A verb might express different semantic values while used in different context (Jaime & Pérez-Guillot 2015). The utilization of modal auxiliary verbs would also be different depending on the writer's/speaker's role. For example, the verbs must, will and shall are typically used at speaker oriented levels (Chilwa & Anurudu 2020). Another examples is shown by Aning (2020) that the verb *can* frequently used in political speech conveyed the expression of ability. However, while used by third person such as in the editorials, the verb *can* conveys the expression of possibility.

Typically, English used in a more specific field would have a more limited semantic values than general English (Jaime & Pérez-Guillot 2015). Additionally, according to Narimanova (2022) the semantic type of the modal verb and the corresponding contextual condition would create variations of the general meaning of probability.

CONCLUSION

All seven types of hedges as categorized by Salager-Meyer (1997) were found in the editorials of The Jakarta Post issued between October 6th and December 28th 2022. A strong emphasis on the modal auxiliary verbs was found in the editorials with approximate usage frequency of 73.28% and the occurrences were found in all the editorial issues. The finding suggested frequent utilization of modal auxiliary verbs was the preferred writing style in The Jakarta Post newspaper. In the other side, through frequent utilization of modal auxiliary verbs, the editorialist tried to encourage the readers to express their critical thinking.

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