

EXPLORING THE TYPES AND CHALLENGES OF HEDGES AND BOOSTERS IN EFL STUDENTS' ACADEMIC WRITING

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Abstract: This study aims to explore the types based on Bal-Gezegin & Baş (2020) theory and the problems of hedges and booster devices used in the EFL students' academic writing. The researcher chose Bal-Gezegin & Baş's (2020) theory because several previous studies have used a relatively older theory. This new theory may offer an innovative approach to comprehending a phenomenon, which can lead to new insights and discoveries. This research applied a qualitative case study approach. The data analysis employed by Miles et al., (2014). The researcher used purposive sampling to determine the research. The participants were six theses and six EFL students at the English Department of UNU Lampung who studied in 2018 and graduated in 2022. Furthermore, the researcher used a document checklist and interview to gather the data. The research found four types of hedges: modal auxiliaries, lexical verbs, hedging adverbs, and hedging phrases. There were six boosters: lexical verbs, boosting adverbs, modal auxiliaries, boosting adjectives, boosting nouns, and boosting phrases. Moreover, the problems faced by the students are the learner's limited knowledge, improper grammar, lack of confidence, difficulty constructing phrases, insufficient experience, overuse, inadequate vocabulary, and misplaced vocabulary. The results of this research highlighted that using hedges and boosters is crucial to help students express claims or arguments in academic writing. In sum, this research improved the learners' understanding of the nuances of academic communication. The pedagogical implication is that writing teachers are responsible for assisting students in tackling the challenges and obstacles in their academic writing.

Keywords: *case study; challenges; hedges and boosters*

INTRODUCTION

Writing is a way of expressing ideas, minds, and opinions to the readers. This language ability becomes crucial for establishing personal connections without having to physically meet (Zulaiha & Triana, 2023). As a result, writing is a useful skill that is essential for language learning. According to Rosyada & Sundari (2021) academic writing is intended for students, especially English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in Indonesia country. It can be challenging because they are required to write assignments. Furthermore, academic writing abilities are important across several disciplines and fields of study, since they are essential for effectively communicating ideas and knowledge in academic genres such as

textbooks, research papers, essays, theses, and other scholarly works (Wymann, 2021). It is common knowledge that writing in English is an arduous case for almost all foreign language learners. It is the fundamental concept of communicative strategies, such as hedges and boosters, to be used in academic writing (Akman & Karahan, 2023).

However, students often encounter challenges in writing. First, students have limited awareness of effective writing strategies (Asnas et al., 2022). Second, students lack thorough knowledge of hedging and boosting expressions (Triyoko et al., 2021). Insufficient understanding leads to improper utilization, which can weaken their arguments and diminish the overall clarity of their

work. Lastly, students lack of awareness about the importance of using hedges and boosters in the thesis (Taymaz, 2021). In the more complex aspects of academic writing, authors engage in particular interactions with readers, which manifest as meta-discourse. Meta-discourse is a social interaction that facilitates knowledge communication between writers and their targeted readers (Al-Mudhaffari et al., 2020; Gong et al., 2021; Uba, 2020). This can be particularly challenging for EFL learners, especially when they are tasked with addressing academic material or writing.

Therefore, the implementation of strategic approaches in academic writing is of crucial significance in the development of learners' writing abilities. Hedges and boosters are communicative or linguistic strategy to decrease or increase the strength of an utterance (Hyland, 2019). Hedges and boosters are components of the meta-discourse employed by writers to enhance the comprehensibility of the text for the reader. In order for readers to understand what the authors intend, writers use a number of language devices known as meta-discourse to construct their arguments in accordance with the wants and expectations of their audience (Bal-Gezegin & Baş, 2020). It is crucial to distinguish the ideational substance of the text from the aspects that organize it and convey the writer's thoughts and attitudes toward it. As a subcategory of interactional meta-discourse, hedges and boosters are used to implement a communicative strategy in which a text can only communicate effectively if the author has accurately assessed both the readers' interpretive resources and their likely response. Thus, authors strategically utilize hedges and boosters to indicate their position regarding the ideas offered in the sources (Sánchez-Jiménez, 2022).

The discussion about hedging has become an interesting topic in linguists' view. In the academic context, hedging is included as one of the features of communication styles. Hedges decrease the level of academic commitment (Oktay, 2020). In academic writing, the use of hedging devices is crucial. In addition to demonstrating respect and modesty for their audience and colleagues, writers can demonstrate confidence in their ability to transmit facts using hedges and boosters (Farnia & Gerami, 2021). Hedges imply that a statement is based on the author's interpretation as instead of strong proof.

Boosters are contradicted with hedges. Boosters increase the level of academic commitment (Oktay,

2020). Boosters are commonly employed as rhetorical devices that show the writers' complete trust and conviction in their assertions, showcasing their active involvement with the subject matter and fostering a sense of unity with their readership. The strength of Bal-Gezegin & Bas (2020) theory than of other theories. In a new theory, an innovative approach to comprehending a phenomenon can lead to discovering new insights and knowledge. This theory is simpler and less complicated.

There have been several previous research findings on hedges and boosters (Ardhianti et al., 2023; Ekoc-Ozcelik, 2023; Jabbar, 2019; Taymaz, 2021; Triyoko et al., 2021). First of all, a study by Ekoc-Ozcelik (2023) examined the use of hedges and boosters in research paper abstracts of Turkish and Chinese students. Secondly, a study conducted by Ardhianti et al., (2023) provided a detailed description of the usage of hedges and boosters in scientific articles written by students. Thirdly, a study conducted by Triyoko et al., (2021) focused on enhancing the explanation of academic writing practices with types and functions of hedges and boosters. Fourthly, a study conducted by Taymaz (2021) aimed to examine and compare the potential variations in the utilization of hedging and boosting devices between Master's and Doctoral levels. Lastly, a study by Jabbar (2019) analysed the use of hedges and boosters in the students' academic research project. While previous studies have provided valuable insights into the use of hedges and boosters in academic writing, this research aims to address specific gaps and contribute to the existing body of knowledge. For example, Triyoko et al. (2021) explored the types and functions of hedges and boosters in academic writing practices but primarily focused on general academic texts rather than specific genres like theses. This current study builds on their work by narrowing the scope to undergraduate students' theses, offering a more detailed exploration of how hedges and boosters are utilized in this specific context.

Similarly, Ardhianti et al. (2023) analyzed the use of hedges and boosters in scientific articles written by students, emphasizing the frequency and patterns of usage. However, their study did not delve into the problems students face when using these devices. In contrast, this research goes beyond frequency analysis to investigate the challenges students encounter, such as improper utilization or lack of awareness, and how these issues impact the quality of their writing.

By adopting the framework of Bal-Gezegin & Baş (2020)—an adaptation of Dafouz-Milne (2008) and Hyland (2019)—this study incorporates a more modern theoretical perspective compared to the relatively older frameworks used in previous research. This innovative approach not only revisits the findings of earlier studies but also seeks to uncover new insights into the interplay between linguistic strategies and academic writing development (Forbes, 2019). Then, this research focuses on the types and problems of hedges and booster devices used in the students' theses.

Hence, this study decided to conduct a more in-depth investigation by constructing the following questions: (1.) What types of hedges and boosters do EFL students use in their theses at English Language Department of UNU Lampung? (2.) What problems do EFL students face when using hedges and boosters in their theses at the English Language Department of UNU Lampung?

METHOD

The researcher used a qualitative method to answer the research questions. Anderson (2005) stated that qualitative research is a type of study that explores phenomena in their natural settings and employs multiple methods to interpret, comprehend, explain, and give meaning to them. More specifically, a case study design was applied in this current research. According to Ary et al., (2019), a case study is an in-depth investigation conducted on a certain individual, group, event, or institution. The researcher selected a qualitative case study to explore the types and challenges EFL students face with hedges and boosters in their theses in depth. This depth may not be achievable through a mixed-method approach, which measures breadth over depth. The case in this current research was addressed in UNU Lampung based on several considerations. First, the student's lack of knowledge about hedges. Second, the students have a low awareness of using hedges and boosters. Third, preliminary studies suggested that students at UNU Lampung faced unique challenges related to hedges and boosters.

The subjects of this research were six theses and six EFL students at the English Education Department of UNU Lampung who studied in the academic year 2018 and graduated in 2022. The sample size of six has been saturated; no more new information is obtained from the participants. They were selected by employing a purposive sampling approach. This sampling approach was defined by Schreier (2018) as a strategy in which sample members are selected to represent a location or

type concerning the criterion. First of all, several theses contained numerous hedges and boosters. Secondly, the students who wrote the thesis had different advisors. Thirdly, the students who wrote the thesis were willing to be the participants. Additionally, based on the Gender distribution, there is a balanced representation between male and female students in using hedges and boosters intensifiers in academic writing.

Furthermore, the researcher employed two data collection techniques: documents and interviews, using corresponding instruments, namely a document checklist and an interview guide, as described by Creswell (2015). There are three structures of the document checklist. First, Categories of Analysis means the document checklist is organized into specific categories that align with the research questions. For instance, categories might include types of hedges used (e.g., modal verbs, adverbs) and types of boosters used (e.g., lexical verbs, adjectives). Second, the Parts of Thesis Section includes five chapters introduction, literature review, method, discussion, and conclusion. Third, the Note Section for qualitative notes could allow the researcher to capture additional insights about using hedges and boosters in the theses, such as patterns or anomalies. The aim of analyzing these documents was to identify the types of hedges and boosters used and to support data from the interview. The process involved several steps: preparing document checklists, collecting and selecting relevant theses, reading through the documents to identify instances of hedges and boosters, coding these instances, and cross-checking the obtained data.

Thus, the interview technique involved semi-structured interviews. These interviews aimed to gain insights into students' difficulties when applying hedges and boosters in their academic writing. The interview process involved developing and validating an interview guide with open-ended questions, contacting participants, conducting individual interviews via Zoom, and then cross-checking the data obtained. from these interviews. The researcher took approximately 20 minutes to ask the subjects some questions. The questions consist of fourteen. They regard the students' difficulties in writing a thesis, the argumentation about hedge and booster, the experience in writing strategies that have been used, the barriers when using hedge and booster, the expectations of learning hedge and booster in the future, etc.

In data analysis, the researcher followed the steps provided by Miles et al. (2014), including data condensation, data display, and drawing conclusions.

Firstly, during the data condensation phase, the researcher simplified the data obtained from both the documents and interviews. Next, the researcher selected relevant data that aligned with the research focus and identified information that could be deemed irrelevant for reduction. Additionally, the researcher classified the types of hedges and boosters according to the challenges students faced in writing their theses. Finally, the researcher analyzed the results from the document checklists and interview guides to address the research questions.

Secondly, the researcher implemented a series of steps in the data display phase. First, the entire dataset collected from documents and interviews was presented. Second, the researcher highlighted

both hedges and boosters in a table format for clarity. Third, the researcher listened to and transcribed the interview results. Lastly, the researcher provided a comprehensive description of the interview findings, focusing on the types and challenges students encountered when using hedges and boosters.

In the final phase of drawing conclusions, the researcher verified the findings, engaged in a detailed discussion, interpreted the data, and drew conclusions regarding the use of hedges and boosters by EFL students at UNU Lampung.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The types of hedges and boosters

According to the result of the document analysis, the researcher presented the following table:

Types of hedges

Table 1. *Types of hedges used by students*

Types of Hedges	Students' Initial Name					
	IK	FDJ	MRH	FP	NZ	RAR
Modal auxiliaries	can, could, will, would, should, may, might,	can, could, will, would, should, may, might,	will, would, can, could, should, may	will, would, can, could, should, may, might	will, would, can, could, should, may	can, will, would
Lexical verbs	conclude, inferred, seem, assume, presume, suggest	conclude, seems, summarize, appear	summarize, conclude, inferred	appear, seem, conclude	seem, conclude	conclude, suggested
Hedging adverbs	generally, perhaps, usually, almost	perhaps, usually, generally, almost, commonly	mostly, usually, almost, likely, most of, commonly	slightly, generally, usually, mostly, almost	most of, almost, commonly	almost, usually,
Hedging phrases	researcher conclude, researcher assumes	the writer thinks, the author concludes	Indonesian people still think	researcher concludes, the researcher suggests	the researcher proposes	

Based on the table above, it was found that the students used almost all the types of hedges. Only one student did not use hedging phrases. This indicated their stated uncertainty regarding their stance on a particular topic. Bal-Gezegin & Baş (2020) highlighted the application of hedging, which indicated the author's decision to reduce

total commitment to a statement. Therefore, the information is presented as opinion rather than proven fact. Furthermore, employing hedges as linguistic devices indicated that students had modesty rather than arrogance or were all-knowing. Numerous utterances of hedging devices were found in the students' theses as follows:

In theory, it is hoped that this research can contribute to the development of the study of linguistics, especially functional systemic linguistics (RAR, Introduction).

Researcher took VIII A and VIII I as the sample, because the students of each class almost had same ability in English proficiency (IK, Method).

Modal auxiliaries are auxiliary verbs that convey thoughts of possibility, probability, or necessity. The term “can” showed the frequently used hedges modal auxiliary verbs in students’ theses. The employ of “can” in RAR’s statements when stating the significance of her research decreased the strength of her argument. The statement above demonstrates a form of uncertainty, which RAR softens her claim when she mentions her study has theoretical and practical benefits.

Hedging adverbs modify verbs to express uncertainty or possibility. IK stated that he took classes VIII A and VIII I as samples because students in each class “almost” had the same English language skills. The word “almost” in his words is a form of adverbial hedge, meaning he is still unsure. The word “almost” can be interpreted as meaning that class VIII A students have better English proficiency than class VIII I or vice versa.

The writer thinks that the students’ mistakes are caused by several factors (FDJ, Introduction).

From the explanation above, the researcher concluded that writing is a productive skill that expresses an idea in written form which involved the mastery of all elements in the target of language such as grammatical, content, organizations, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling and mechanism (FDJ, Literature Review).

Hedging phrases are linguistic expressions that convey the writer’s subjective opinions or restricted expertise. There were hedging phrases when FDJ said: “the writer thinks that the students’ mistakes are caused by several factors”. FDJ’s opinion showed a personal pronoun as “the writer+thinks” in the beginning sentence. She said that based on several cases she faced. The writer, FDJ, conveyed her doubt and used hedging phrases to describe her point of view.

Lexical verbs are primary verbs that represent a certain level of uncertainty or subjectivity. The author stated that she summarizes the descriptions of writing from several experts. In this way, she expresses her opinion based on several previous statements with a different conveyance without changing the meaning.

Types of boosters

Table 2. *Types of boosters used by students*

Types of Boosters	Students’ Initial Name					
	IK	FDJ	MRH	FP	NZ	RAR
Lexical verbs	showed, found, indicated, defined, demonstrate	showed, find, found, devise, indicate	reveal, find, found, indicate, show, believe, produced	reveals, find, found, show, indicate	find, found, showed, display	find, found, show, realize,
Boosting adverbs	confidently, clearly, basically	definitely, actually	correctly, clearly, definitely, obviously, actually	absolutely, really, certainly, exactly, basically, clearly	exactly, basically, actually, obviously	actually
Modal auxiliaries	have to, must	must	must	must	must	
Boosting adjectives	certain, obvious, clear, confident, definite	certain, sure, proven	obvious, certain, actual	certain, clear	certain, true, actual	certain, clear

Boosting noun	evidence	
Boosting phrases	the fact	the fact

As seen in the table above, it was found that the students used almost all the types of boosters. Only one student did not use modal auxiliaries. This indicated that participants appeared confident in their position on certain matters. Meanwhile, the data presented in the table indicates that the student-respondents commonly employ the word "certain" to express their unwavering belief in a specific point. The word "certain" describes something definite, fixed, or determined. Numerous utterances of boosting devices found in the students' theses as follows:

His findings showed that there is figurative language found in Adele and Taylor Swift song and what is the dominant form of figurative language used by both of them (NZ, Introduction).

The data above were taken from the introduction section of NZ's thesis. The use "showed" means showing the research result. While "found" refers to what the researcher found in his research. The lexical verbs showed and found have similar meanings. The function of them in the sentence is to strengthen the writer's responsibility for the accuracy of the statement.

Basically, applying problem-based learning (PBL) allows students to improve their speaking skills through PBL participation, performance, and projects (IK, Literature Review).

The statements above were gained from the second chapter of IK's thesis. The researcher applied the above utterance in his classroom. He wanted to improve students' speaking skills using PBL as a previous study. Then, the term "basically" enhances his argument's politeness and clarity.

Writing is one of four skills that must be mastered by the students. It is an active skill because in order to construct a good paragraph, the students must be involved personally (MRH, Introduction).

Based on the data taken from the first chapter of MRH's thesis, if we are English learners, we must master the four English skills. Namely speaking, listening, reading, and writing. The researcher used "must" to strengthen his claim. It means there is an

obligation that we have to fulfill. Boosting modals "must" and "have to" are the same.

It is obvious that in order to be able to speak a foreign language, it is necessary to know a certain amount of grammar and vocabulary. (IK, Literature Review).

The data above were taken from the literature review section of IK's thesis. In his utterance, he used the boosting adjectives twice. "Obvious" and "certain". It appears he intended to assert that to acquire the ability to communicate in a foreign language, you must be skilled in grammar and vocabulary, owing to they are included in the element of speaking. It is the fact that, presumably, the writer believes in it.

Omission happen when there is an evidence that grammatical morphemes (e.g. noun and verb inflections, articles, repositions) are omitted more often than content morphemes which carry the meaning (MRH, Discussion).

This statement is from the discussion section of MRH's thesis. It is beyond doubt due to the existence of "evidence". The term "evidence" pertains to the observable data demonstrating the frequent omission of grammatical morphemes. The data found by the researcher that there are 12 errors of omission in writing descriptive paragraphs.

Considering the fact after observing in MTS Maarif NU 14 Sidorejo that there are still many errors committed by the students in writing skills, the researcher is interested in researching "Errors Analysis of Students Writing Descriptive Texts at MTS Ma'arif NU 14 Sidorejo" (MRH, Introduction).

The sentence above was obtained from the introduction part of MRH's thesis. It was applied "the fact," so the researcher did not doubt to conduct the research. He found several issues when observed. "The fact" highlighted in the study is that despite observations at MTS Ma'arif NU 14 Sidorejo, students still make many writing skills errors.

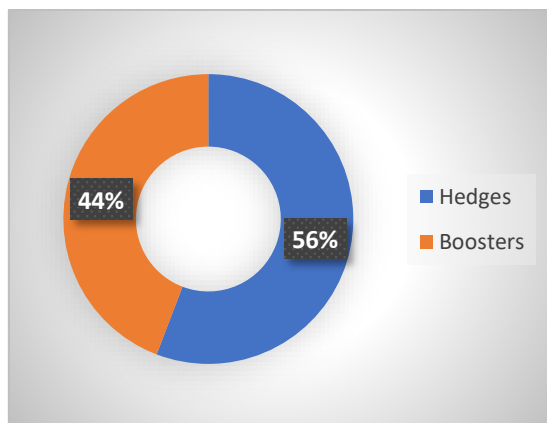


Figure 1. Overall trends in hedge and booster usage

Based on the findings, the pupils used more hedges than boosters. It is in line with research by (Al-Harthi et al., 2022) that hedges have the highest application in the research articles' four disciplines. The most common types of hedges applied in the present research are modal auxiliaries and lexical verbs. Moreover, section-specific patterns and trends can be observed using hedges and boosters. In the *Introduction*, hedges are more common as writers express uncertainty about the research context or carefully frame the significance of their study. The *Literature Review* is dominated by hedges, as writers cautiously engage with existing studies and highlight gaps or limitations in prior research. In contrast, the *Methodology* section often employs boosters to assert the reliability and validity of the chosen methods and procedures. In the *Results* and *Discussion* sections, a mix of both hedges and boosters is evident; students hedge their claims about findings while using boosters to emphasize key results. Finally, in the *Conclusion*, both hedges and boosters are used minimally but strategically, allowing writers to summarize their findings with measured confidence while suggesting implications or recommendations.

The problems in using of hedges and boosters *Limited knowledge*

The researcher found data on EFL students' problems regarding limited knowledge. Five respondents, FP, FDJ, NZ, RAR, and IK, do not know the hedges and boosters strategy.

Sure. In my opinion, knowledge is fundamental and necessary when we apply something. Limited knowledge can be the main factor in the challenges (NZ).

The interview transcription above explained that limited knowledge means having a constrained

or inadequate understanding of a specific subject, indicating that when we utilize a strategy or technique, we must know about it. This is a basic need for us. Then, we are able to apply it easily.

Improper grammar and sentence structure

The challenge in academic writing, which often requires the skilful balancing of hedges and boosters, was a common struggle shared by three participants: NZ, FDJ, and RAR. These individuals openly acknowledged their difficulties with grammar skills, especially in structuring sentences that sound academically appropriate.

Actually, I do not know how to organize words. I have low grammar skills. Particularly when arranging sentences, and I was doubtful about expressing my opinion (FDJ).

This excerpt data described that using grammar is crucial when constructing sentences, not only for implementing hedging and boosting that should use modal auxiliaries, verbs, adverbs, or adjectives correctly. Maintaining proper grammar implies that communication is clear and precise.

Lack of confidence

The next challenge is a lack of confidence. The researcher found that NZ, FDJ, and FP have low confidence in what they wrote in their theses.

I am confident with my thesis, but I am not really confident because there are many things. I have not understood until now (NZ).

According to the interview result above, NZ has a strong sense of conviction. However, there remain other aspects or particulars she still needs to grasp comprehensively. This is a prevalent opinion experienced while doing the final task, like a thesis.

Another EFL student also shared a different reason. She said:

Yes, I am afraid that what I wrote is wrong. Because if we have our own opinion, the examiner will continue to ask us during the exam (FDJ).

In the transcription above, the respondents have low trust in their writing. The uncertainty involves all the aspects. Especially using hedges and boosters related to certainty level. When conveying ideas in writing, we must be confident of our state.

Low constructing phrase

A notable issue brought up involves the difficulty in constructing phrases. FDJ, NZ, and RAR face this problem. Constructing phrases, as described, entails arranging a well-structured sentence that conveys the intended meaning.

Yes. Constructing phrases means arranging a good sentence. It makes me think more (NZ).

The data above explained that constructing phrases is challenging for hedging and boosting. The arrangement of phrases can create ambiguous words and lead to misinterpretation. This interviewee's problem was supported by another interviewee, who said:

Yes. As I said before, I have difficulty using hedges and boosters, especially in phrases. This relates to my research topic because the novel has many phrases (RAR).

In the statement above, the researcher stated that when she was investigating the phrases in the novel, the researcher may have faced uncertainty over the appropriate usage of hedges to convey unsure interpretations and boosters to emphasize precise findings.

Insufficient experience

I do not have any other writing experience besides a thesis. I was studying while working. So, this is the main factor in me being lazy and inactive from various activities on campus (FP).

The data above explained that the students have no experience writing anything besides a thesis. In contrast, three other students have written articles to be published. Despite this, writing experiences such as textbooks, research papers, and essays significantly influence the use of writing strategies.

Overused

All the participants' over-employment of hedges and boosters can be attributed to their insufficient understanding of this strategy. This recurrent reliance on hedging and boosting mechanisms in the articulation of viewpoints without a nuanced comprehension of strategies to mitigate their overuse.

I think if we always use hedges and boosters in every opinion and do not know how to avoid them, we will end up with an overused strategy (FP).

Overused hedges and boosters by students can create an impression of uncertainty and can reduce credibility or be exaggerated in their writing.

Inadequate vocabulary

In my opinion, limited vocabulary is the key from all challenges because a lack of vocabulary can affect our ability to state our feelings and compose sentences (IK).

Concerning the next challenge, the data above was gained from the student. It was inadequate vocabulary. This is a new challenge that has appeared and is experienced by students. This issue is not mentioned in Chapter Two. Limited vocabulary likes limited expression. Learners who lack an extensive vocabulary may struggle to express their ideas and opinions.

Misplaced

The researcher found a novel challenge originating from the student's experience.

The difficulty that I may face in using hedges and boosters is that in writing articles that I have written, several times errors occurred in a placement where hedges and boosters were placed in one sentence so that the sentence, which should be a fact or convincing statement was broken which made the writing strange or less precise. I think there are sentences in my thesis that are ambiguous (RAR).

RAR conveyed the data above regarding another problem when we used hedges and boosters. She said that because she thought she faced it when writing her thesis. Misplacing these items can alter the intended of the message. The improper arranging of these sentences has led to a loss of factual accuracy or convincing power, decreasing overall clarity.

Then, to support RAR's statement, the researcher found misplaced hedges and boosters in her thesis.

Satisfaction is an emotion that is usually felt after fulfilling a certain want or need (RAR).

To enhance conciseness without sacrificing meaning, the phrase "a certain want or need" might be condensed to "a want or need".

In accordance with the findings, some aspects can be deliberated. The first research question concerns the types of hedges and boosters the students employ, which follow Bal-Gezegin & Baş' (2020) theory that was adopted from Dafouz-Milne (2008) and Hyland (2019). The researcher solely

focused on the exploration of types and the prevalence of hedges and boosters. There were four types of hedges and six types of boosters. Those were modal auxiliaries, lexical verbs, hedging adverbs, and hedging phrases. For boosters, those are lexical verbs, boosting adverbs, modal auxiliaries, boosting adjectives, boosting nouns, and boosting phrases. The findings of the current study are different from those of other studies.

In comparison, a study by Triyoko et al., (2021) revealed five types of hedges and boosters in Indonesian scientific articles. They were in the verb of hedges, the adverb of hedges, the adjective of hedges, the modality of hedges, and the phatic of hedges. For boosters, They were in the verb of boosters, the adverb of boosters, the adjective of boosters, the modality of boosters, and the phatic of boosters. They classified phatic expressions as a category not previously addressed in this research. The addition of phatic expressions may highlight a cultural nuance in Indonesian scientific articles, emphasizing the significance of the sentence predicate and reinforcing the author's confidence in the proposition being made.

In addition, a study by Ardhiyanti et al., (2023) focused on articles by students at PGRI Adi Buana University Surabaya, narrows down the types of hedges and boosters to three categories each (modal, verbs, and adverbs), pointing towards a potentially simplified or more focused use of these linguistic strategies. Meanwhile, Jabbar (2019) investigated the use of hedges and boosters in an academic research project written by a fourth year of English Language and Human Science at Garmian University. He found seven types: shields, impersonal constructions, approximators, time deictic, concessive conjuncts, comment on truth, and epistemic. At the same time, only four types of boosters (evidential, solidarity, intensifiers, and certainty) were identified. This difference indicates that his study employed an old theory Markkanen & Schroder (1997) and the researcher used a new one. Thus, it has different types significantly.

Lastly, a study by Taymaz (2021) revealed five types of hedges and boosters. They are epistemic modal verbs, lexical verbs, adverbs, adjectives, and epistemic nouns reinforcing the epistemic dimension as a critical aspect of scholarly stance-taking. In essence, the comparison across these studies contributes to a deeper understanding of how hedges and boosters are navigated in academic discourse. Thus, the multifaceted nature of academic writing, where disciplinary conventions, cultural expectations, and genre-specific norms influence the choice and use of

hedges and boosters. It showcases the rich tapestry of linguistic practice in academic discourse, emphasizing the importance of the expression of certainty. They highlighted the imperative for students and scholars alike to comprehend these linguistic strategies to communicate effectively.

In brief, the current study identified two novel categories of boosters, specifically boosting nouns and boosting phrases. This result is derived from plenty of evidence. Firstly, this study employed a more comprehensive analysis and investigation of an expanded range of linguistic components compared to previous research. Secondly, this study emphasized the use and purpose of words and phrases contrary to strictly traditional grammatical classifications. Lastly, the researcher analyzed a distinct genre of text or context that diverges from Bal-Gezegin & Baş' (2020) theory, which explicitly utilizes various forms of improvement.

The second research question pertains to the problems the students faced while using hedges and boosters in their theses. Based on this research's findings, especially in interview results, eight issues come up when EFL students use hedges and boosters: limited knowledge, improper grammar, lack of confidence, low constructing phrases, insufficient experience, overuse, inadequate vocabulary, and misplaced. The most dominant challenge that students face is limited knowledge. It aligns with a study by (Wang & Xie, 2022) found that students have limited knowledge and less strategy in writing. In fact, only one in six EFL students recognize this strategy. The students confessed they did not get this material and lacked reading of literature. Accordingly, they hope that the hedges and boosters strategy can be conveyed in academic writing subjects, especially in the first semester, so that they have basic skills to employ in their writing.

On the other hand, the current study's findings differ from those of previous studies. The preliminary research findings found that students lack experience and confidence (Mifdal & Lewis, 2023; Qiu & Ma, 2019). They do not specifically examine the challenges faced directly by students; they only examine global coherence as a shared problem. For this barrier, instructors can address students' lack of experience to more practice and build good writing. Then, if students lack confidence, educators can raise their awareness of the appropriate usage of hedges and boosters. This involves teaching students how to balance these elements by emphasizing their distinct purposes. Consequently, the study by (Bacang et al., (2019);

Trihartanti & Fadilah (2020) showed that female students employ a greater frequency of hedging and boosting in their argumentative writing than male students. Additionally, instructors can highlight the contexts where hedges and boosters are most suitable, such as using cautious claims in introductions and employing confident assertions in conclusions. By understanding these distinctions and their contextual applications, students can develop more excellent experience and confidence in using language effectively in academic writing.

The next issue related to improper grammar. Align with a study conducted by (Lo et al., 2021) suggested that students consider writing with the proper grammar use of boosters and academic style to be among the most challenging demands. Basically, grammatical errors occur because when writers do not use appropriate grammar, they are able to apply hedges and boosters correctly in the relevant context. Proper grammar is essential for the practical application of hedges and boosters. It is in line with the findings of this present study that almost all participants had difficulties using appropriate grammar.

Likewise, this study aligns with Smirnova & Strinyuk (2020); Yoon (2021) that some students use hedges excessively and find it difficult to compose phrases. Overusing hedges can give the impression that your writing lacks strength or confidence, whereas overusing boosters can make it appear highly strong. The use of nuanced language, including hedging, seems to pose significant difficulty for learners.. Whereas, the constructing phrases, including hedging, seems to pose significant difficulty for learners. Students often employ hedging mechanisms in their expressions that are not typically found in academic English.

Therefore, excellent writing must maintain a balance when using hedges and boosters. This current research proved that hedges are used more than boosters. This is supported by the findings by Oktay (2020), which showed that Turkish writers applied more hedges than boosters. In contrast, a study by J. Wang & Zeng (2021) revealed that Chinese PhD students and journal article writers used more boosters than hedges. Lastly, the students also discovered problems regarding limited vocabulary. Adequate vocabulary is the primary obligation to develop various skills in different fields.

Apart from the similarities and differences, this study also has some uniqueness related to the use of hedges and boosters, as followed by Bal-Gezegin & Baş' (2020). Firstly, the researcher

discovered two novel categories of boosters. Specifically, boosting nouns and boosting phrases. Secondly, this research has identified problems with inadequate vocabulary and misplaced difficulties among participants, distinguishing it from previous studies that did not find this issue. The author was unaware of the incorrect misplacement of hedges and boosters. Hence, this study provides some challenges students can avoid to improve their academic writing abilities to gain deeper comprehension. Lastly, there is no specific research regarding the problems faced directly by the authors in using hedges and boosters.

In addition, the interview results pointed out that using hedges and boosters is crucial to help the students understand how hedges and boosters can be used for expressing claims or arguments in academic writing. Therefore, the present study has significant implications that consist of two essential aspects: theoretical and practical. Theoretically, this study is intended to give contribution to the enrichment body of knowledge related to increasing the students' awareness of using hedges and boosters in writing a thesis.

Then, practically, this study contributes to the students' and writers' ability to enhance their readiness for future writing by utilizing a balanced strength and weaknesses in their statements. Supported by the argument of Wang & Xie (2022) in the writing classroom, writing educators have a shared responsibility to assist students in addressing the challenges and difficulties they struggle with in their writing process.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that the current study provides a nuanced understanding of the types and prevalence of hedges and boosters employed by students, aligning with Bal-Gezegin & Baş' (2020) theory and incorporating elements from Dafouz-Milne (2008) and Hyland (2019). The study identified four types of hedges: modal auxiliaries, lexical verbs, hedging adverbs, and hedging phrases, and six types of boosters: lexical verbs, boosting adverbs, modal auxiliaries, boosting adjectives, boosting nouns, and boosting phrases.

Moreover, several challenges hindered the EFL students when applying hedges and boosters. They included the learner's limited knowledge, improper grammar, lack of confidence, low constructing phrases, insufficient experience, overuse, inadequate vocabulary, and misplaced. Therefore, those issues can be resolved by increasing students' understanding of proper use,

frequent practice of its application, and help and guidance from lecturers.

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