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PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE

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IDENTIFICATION OF HEDGING STRATEGIES IN BUSINESS NEGOTIATIONS

Abstract

The way people conduct business negotiations has altered immensely over the past decades to adapt to the ongoing changes in business environment. Innovative strategies have been orchestrated to overcome the challenges as well as meet the prerequisite requirements of contemporary businesses. The ultimate goal of such effective strategies is the maintenance of courteous relations among the negotiators and the achievement of a mutually beneficial outcome. In this respect, vague language or fussy language is regarded as a sui generis negotiation strategy that is prevalently exploited by negotiators with the intention to make the communication process smooth, polite and cooperative. Vagueness in a language is expressed through hedges, the semantic and pragmatic features of which are inextricably linked. The scope of this research shapes a profound pragmalinguistic analysis of hedges, which engender divergent negotiation strategies (detachment, agreement, complimenting, vagueness, etc.), its functions and roles in business negotiations. In addition to its linguistic significance, hedging is a widespread practice in a risk management strategy to offset losses against the risk and protect the investments. Obviously, on both occasions, business people pursue the following goals: at least reduce the chances of failure or minimize further complications, and, at most, obtain the desired result.

Keywords: hedges, hedging strategies, business negotiation, pragmatics.

Introduction

Hedges serve as mitigating or intensifying means employed in various conversational situations when conversers create vagueness and fuzziness during discourse, the meaning of which could be conjectured drawing on pragmatic features pertaining to the general conversational situation rather than only on semantic meanings of the words (hedges) in the context. Failure to hedge appropriately may result not only in misunderstanding and communication breakdown but may also be perceived as an impolite, even offensive phenomenon. The research in this field dates back to the concept of *metalinguistic operators* (Weinreich, 1966). The term "metalinguistic operators" refers to words which signal how phenomena should be interpreted (Weinreich, 1966, p. 168). Based on the works of Weinreich and Rosch-Heider, American linguist Lakoff was the first to introduce the term "hedge" in his work "Hedges: A Study in Meaning Criteria and The Logic of Fuzzy Concepts" in 1973. "The study of words whose meaning implicitly involves fuzziness – words whose job is to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy. I will refer to such words as 'hedges'" (Lakoff, 1973, p. 471). In his research, Lakoff dwells upon such hedges as almost, basically, exceptionally, sort of, kind of, more or less, largely, par excellence, particularly, principally, pretty, rather, relatively, roughly, somewhat, strictly speaking, loosely speaking, in essence, in a sense, typically, etc.

Since hedges are based on fuzzy concepts, the degree of veracity of hedges is somewhat relative and depends on various factors (formal/informal

discourse, written/oral communication and other pragmatic features). Purely semantic examination of hedges, excluding its pragmatic features, will lead to a finite number of options of interpretations and leave no room to proffer ideas or expound on the situation. "Clearly any attempt to limit truth conditions for natural language sentences to true, false and "nonsense" will distort the natural language concepts by portraying them as having sharply defined rather than fuzzily defined boundaries" (Lakoff, 1973, p. 458). Lakoff's notion of hedges has become a cornerstone of further studies in pragmatics and has significantly expanded the scope of the research in this area (Prince, Frader, & Bosk, 1982; Hyland, 1996; Salager-Meyer, 1995; Crompton, 1997; Caffi, 1999; Crismor & Vande Kopple, 1999; Fraser, 2010, etc.).

Rosch, a professor in cognitive psychology, who propounded the theory of prototypes, uses categorization to define the degree to which membership is perceived and arranged under a certain category with its central and peripheral members. Hence, the initial role of hedges is to attenuate or reinforce their class membership. Lakoff considers mainly propositional hedges. Although he discusses the interaction of hedges with performatives, however, the researcher does not conduct thorough research in that subfield. "Obviously, hedges interact with felicity conditions for utterances and with rules of conversation" (Lakoff, 1973, p. 490). "Fraser (1975) introduced the term HEDGED PERFORMATIVE, where certain performative verbs such as apologies, promise, and request when preceded by specific modals such as can, must, and should result in an attenuated illocutionary force of the speech act designated by the verb" (Fraser, 2010, p. 18). In the example "I *should apologize* for running over your cat", Fraser considers the modal verb *should* as a hedge which intensifies the meaning of the verb *apologize.* According to Fraser, hedging is a rhetorical strategy, and one should hone their skills of hedging to guide smooth effective communication. Fraser's list of

linguistic hedges includes adverbs, adjectives, impersonal pronouns, concessive conjunctions, indirect speech acts, introductory phrases, modal adverbs, modal adjectives, hedged performatives, modal nouns, modal verbs, epistemic verbs, negation, tag questions, agentless passives, parenthetic constructions, if clauses, progressive forms, tentative inference, hypothetical past, metalinguistic comments, etc. Salager-Meyer (2017) refers to hedges as "linguistic cues of bias, which avoid personal accountability for statements" (p. 129) and puts forward the concept of compound hedges (consisting of several hedges):

1. a modal auxiliary combined with a lexical verb (e.g., it would appear),
2. a lexical verb followed by a hedging adverb or adjective (e.g., it seems reasonable/probable),
3. double hedges (it may suggest that; it seems likely that; it would indicate that; this probably indicates),
4. treble hedges (it seems reasonable to assume that),
5. quadruple hedges (it would seem somewhat unlikely that it may appear somewhat speculative that), and so on.

Brown and Levinson (1987), who developed the theory of politeness, state that "a hedge is a particle, word, or phrase that modifies the degree of membership of a predicate or a noun phrase in a set; it says of that membership that it is partial, or true only in a certain respect; or that it is more true and complete than perhaps might be expected" (Brown and Levinson as cited in Fraser, 2010, p. 145). They regard hedges as a part of the illocutionary force guiding the speech acts. Fraser labels it as "Speech Act Hedging". "Communicative intentions are regulated and encoded in speech acts, and if one looks at the conditions on the felicitous use of speech acts, the sources of threat become clear… Consequently, to hedge these assumptions – that is, to avoid commitment to them – is a primary and fundamental method of disarming routine inter-

actional threats" (Fraser, 2010, p. 145).

According to E. Prince, J. Frader and C. Bosk (1982), there are two main types of hedges: approximators and shields. "The first type affects the truth condition of a proposition (propositional hedging), and the second type affects the degree and type of speaker-commitment that is inferred (speech act hedging)" (p. 85). The illustration below is created by the authors and is based on E. Prince, J. Frader and C. Bosk's classification of hedges and their subclasses.
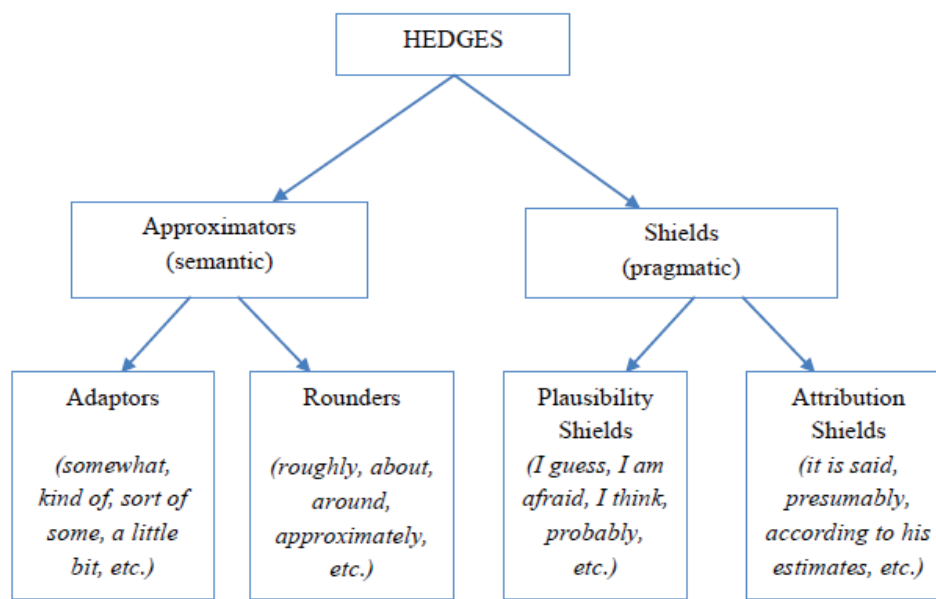
However, there are many critics of the above-mentioned classification. For instance, Skelton (1988) claims "…that the distinction between shield and approximator seems to be sustainable only in the abstract: it looks more like a description of a property of text sentences than of language use" (p. 38). He asserts that some approximators could act as shields and the omnipresence of the latter allows it to extend over more than one sentence. In his example, "It's made of *something like* rock", *something like acts as an approximator since it makes* the meaning of the phrase vague and fuzzy. Nevertheless, it can also function as a shield, providing it is supplemented by the phrase *I suspect - I suspect* it's made of *something like* rock. Skelton distinguishes between "proposition" and "comment" and labels the language, which is more *evaluative* than *factual or propositional,* as a *commentative language.*

Drawing on Skelton's classification, Crompton distinguishes "between propositions which have the status of facts – containing information already shared by the discourse community – and those which have the status of *claims* – presented for evaluation by the target audience of the message-" (Cabanes, 2007, p. 141). Crompton's taxonomy of hedges includes 6 categories:
1. epistemic copulas (The moon *appears* to be made of cheese.),
2. epistemic modals (The moon *might* be made of cheese.),
3. adjectives expressing probability (It is *likely* that the moon is made of cheese.),
4. adverbs expressing probability (The moon is *probably* made of cheese.),
5. non-factive verb phrase structures, which fall into two sub-types:
   a) I/we + non-factive verb (*I suggest* that the moon is made of cheese.),

b) impersonal subject + non-factive verb (*It is therefore suggested that the moon is made of cheese.*),

6. impersonal subject + non-factive verb + NP (*These findings suggest a cheese moon.*) (Chen & Zhang, 2017, p. 7).

Caffi introduces 3 types of mitigating tools – bushes, hedges and shields. *Bushes* are expressions that aim to reduce the precision of the propositional context and, as a result, affect the truth value of a proposition. *Hedges* are expressions that affect the emotive and relational aspects and reduce the degree of the speaker's commitment. Finally, *shields* are devices used to avoid personal self-ascription and disclaim responsibility, for example, by assigning it to a different speaker (Gribanova & Gaidukova, 2019, p. 88).

Salager-Meyer divides hedges into 5 main categories:

1. Shields (all modal verbs expressing possibility (*might*), semi-auxiliaries (*seem, appear*), probability adverbs (*probably*), and their derivative adjectives, epistemic verbs (*suggest, speculate*)),

2. approximators (*approximately, somewhat, often, occasionally*),

3. expressions of the authors' personal doubt and direct involvement (*I believe, to our knowledge*),

4. emotionally-charged intensifiers (*extremely difficult, absolutely interesting, of particular importance, surprisingly*),

5. compound hedges (*It may suggest that…, It would seem likely that…*) (Chen & Zhang, 2017, p. 6).

The subtypes of compound hedges are discussed earlier in this paper.

Hyland's classification of hedges comprises the following aspects: content-oriented, accuracy-oriented, and reader-oriented hedges. Content-oriented hedges include attribute hedges (the extent to which a term accurately describes the reported phenomenon), reliability hedges (writer's assessment of the certainty of the truth of a proposition) and writer-oriented hedges (concealing the writer's viewpoint and avoiding personal responsibility). Accuracy-oriented hedges are of propositional content, and the degree of veracity is high. Reader-oriented hedges assume the writer's responsibility for the content (Livytska, 2019).

There is no consensus among researchers pertaining to the functional purpose of hedges as well. "There is no limit to the linguistic expressions that can be considered as hedges… The difficulty with these functional definitions is that almost any linguistic item or expression can be interpreted as a hedge … no linguistic items are inherently hedges but can acquire this quality depending on the communicative context or the co-text. This also means that no clear-cut lists of hedging expressions are possible" (Clemen, as cited in Fraser, 2010, p. 23). Hedges are employed in a particular rhetorical genre to accomplish a communicative goal and exercise various roles and functions in order to fulfil the task (rhetorical objective). Thus, the function of hedges may vary from being polite and vague or protective and deferential by setting a required degree of precision through the application of an appropriate type of hedges. In business negotiations, the genre of hedges is chiefly formal and planned since one of the primary steps of negotiation is preparation/planning. Nonetheless, the element of spontaneity is also present due to various factors that influence the course of negotiation. Therefore, hedges are chosen with the consideration of specific conditions of ongoing discourse and its pragmatic features. Fraser regards hedging as an aspect of pragmatic competence, which is "the ability to communicate your intended message with all its nuances in any socio-cultural context and to interpret the message of your interlocuter as it was intended" (Fraser, 2010, p. 15). Hedges are largely perceived as mitigating tools that allow speakers to tone down their statements and demonstrate evasiveness and imprecision. However, "Salager-Meyer (1993) and Banks (1994) claim that the exclusive associa-

tion of hedges with evasiveness can obscure some important functions of hedging and that expressing a lack of certainty does not necessarily show confusion or vagueness" (Salager-Meyer, 2017, p. 129). This approach should be considered in a business negotiation discourse since it provides an opportunity to negotiate on the grounds of politeness. Hedging could serve as a reliable politeness strategy. The participants are evasive not because they are confused but probably because they are either trying to be polite or attenuate the negative imposition. According to Brown and Levinson, the primary purpose of human interaction is *maintaining the face* and minimizing *face-threatening* acts. They distinguish between positive and negative face, each exercising their role of pragmatic politeness in the given sociocognitive situation. The linguistic dimension of hedging in conjunction with its pragmatic features requires further elaboration from the perspective of positive and negative politeness strategies. "Strategies of positive and negative politeness cover the basic techniques used by interlocutors in everyday communication, primarily in phatic communication, and clearly show how the mechanism of human relationship works. Taking them as a basis, we can assume that *politeness is the observance of a balance, a balance between solidarity and distance*" (Yerznkyan, 2018, pp. 72-73). Apparently, it is crucial to obtain and hone *basic techniques utilized in phatic, everyday communication* to prime oneself for formal institutional discourse interactions, such as business negotiations.

The complex nature of business negotiation requires vital skills, competence and sophisticated strategies to accomplish the negotiation objectives. Linguistic hedging is an indispensable strategy to reach an amicable resolution during a business negotiation process by outmanoeuvring any personal conflict or hostility.

The research of this paper adheres to Prince's classification of hedges and focuses on the pragmatic function of hedges in shaping strategies for business negotiations. The analysis of hedging strategies in business negotiations was conducted in several stages. First, 25 American films with presumably business topics were thoroughly watched. The examined films were released in the time period from 1990 to 2021. The excerpts reflecting business negotiations were located, and their transcripts were recovered. Secondly, the excerpts were analyzed from the pragmalinguistic point of view, i.e. the context, the setting, the linguistic units employed by the negotiators, etc., were studied. Then, based on the results of the analysis of revealing the negotiators' intentions and their communicative strategies, we identified hedging strategies that are regularly employed in business negotiations by the speakers in an attempt to get what they want, simultaneously remaining as polite as possible towards the other party. Finally, we conducted a taxonomic analysis of these strategies relying on which their classification was made.

Let us consider the following excerpts from different movies on business negotiations. The examples display how hedges form diverse strategies in a business negotiation process and guide the discourse in compliance with those strategies. Additionally, some examples show an overlap of strategies during negotiations expressed through relevant hedges. Regardless of the strategies employed, the politeness strategy is present in almost every negotiation process.

Depersonalization / Detachment

When negotiators want to reduce to a minimum or even remove the influence or the presence of their standpoints or opinions in the utterance altogether. The strategy is realized through passive voice construction (*it is believed, it is said, it is supposed, etc.*) and verbal expressions such as *according to someone, they say, etc.*

The example given below is taken from the movie, which is based on real events. Ray Kroc and his lawyer are negotiating contract terms with the McDonald brothers (Mac and Dick)

about the purchase of their company. During the negotiation, Ray Kroc avoids the responsibility for one of the contract terms and uses the detachment strategy to place the burden on the third party.

Ray Kroc - *It's my investor group*. The financing is contingent on leaving that out of the contract, and, unfortunately, this deal just doesn't happen. It doesn't just get financed unless you leave that out of the contract (Hancock, 2016).

The introductory phrase *It's my investor group* serves as an attribution shield to protect the negotiator from further personal conflict with the other party. Stating the fact that it is not him but an investor group is a locutionary act. However, given the pragmatic and socio-cognitive features of the negotiation process, it becomes an illocutionary speech act underpinned by further justifications (the deal just doesn't happen, it doesn't just get financed), which will definitely affect the actions and considerations of the other party. The hedging strategy of detachment employed by Ray Kroc also allows him to stay polite and less vulnerable.

Another example of the execution of the same strategy is in the movie "Startup", when Izzy, the founder of Gencoin, is trying to pitch her product to the representatives of a company called Valecia. One of the representatives is trying to politely reject Izzy, using the detachment strategy.

Representative – That sounds very interesting, but I have just one concern, all this Bitcoin cryptocurrency stuff. I have been reading up on it, but *if I may*, its ultimate success looks *pretty, um…* Well, *it just looks pretty grim* for the *banking community* (Ketai, 2018, Season 1, Episode 1).

The example is inundated with mitigating hedges (*if I may, pretty, just*) that help the negotiator stay polite and limit the degree of personal engagement. The repeated utilization of the approximator *pretty*, initially with a pause and hesitation, after in combination with the adjective *grim (pretty grim),* softens the intensity of the utterance and sounds less displeasing. The plau-

sibility shield, *if I may*, which expresses indetermination, also contributes to easing the tension of the situation. By the same token, the phrase *looks pretty grim* also alleviates the situation since it lacks precision and clarity on the one hand and serves as justification for a refusal on the other hand. Apart from the vagueness strategy, the negotiator also shrewdly executes the detachment strategy (*banking community*) by distancing himself from the responsibility for the outcome of the negotiation.

Detachment strategy could also be expressed through plausibility shields, as *you know, as you may be aware*, etc., when one of the parties expresses uncertainty and makes the other side responsible for the point in question.

In the same movie "Startup", two fellows from NSA (National Security Agency) want to be incorporated into the activities of Araknet to track the transactions of Araknet's clients. Naturally, Araknet partners are against this idea and try to resist.

Nick (Araknet partner) – I'm sorry. You said 'the nature of your visit'. What is that?

NSA agent – Your network, *as you may be aware,* is sometimes used as a communication channel for terrorists (Ketai, 2018, Season 3, Episode 7).

The epistemic modality of the phrase *as you may be aware* mitigates the propositional/semantic context of the hedging strategy, which, constructed otherwise, could have aggravated the situation. The hedge *may* diminish the negative impact of the word terrorist. However, indirectly, the hedging phrase shows some degree of imposition.

Agreement / Solidarity

When the speaker aims to show the consistency of their opinion and attitudes with others in the discourse community, this strategy is fulfilled with such expressions as *I agree, my opinion is consistent with yours, etc.*

The excerpts below are from the movies

"Blacklist" and "Startup". In the first example, the most wanted fugitive Raymond Reddington surrenders himself to the FBI and offers a deal. He suggests providing a list of criminals who are impossible to catch. The negotiation is taking place between Raymond Reddington, a high-profile criminal, and Assistant Director of FBI Counterterrorism Division Harold Cooper. With his cogent arguments about one of the most wanted criminals Ranko Zamani, Reddington ignites Harold's interest.

Raymond Reddington – …His name is Ranko Zamani. You want him. I want him. So, let's say, for the moment *our interests are aligned* (Carnahan, 2013, Season 1, Episode 1).

The way Reddington employs the strategy is somewhat twisted and implicit. It is not similar to the "classical approach" with explicit, appropriate solidarity phrases (I agree, I concur, I consent, etc.) and pragmatic features (handshaking, tapping on the shoulder, etc.), but rather a challenge that will be irrational to reject. The passive construction *our interests are aligned* implements two functions simultaneously: firstly, it focuses Harold's attention on mutual gain, which leaves the impression of cooperation and, secondly, it mitigates the process of the agreement through the verb *align*, which could act as a hedge, indicating that the solidarity, Reddington expects from Harold, is not due to some compromise or concession, but because of their interests that happen to be on the same line.

The second example demonstrates a more conventional way of making agreements. The negotiation is taking place among Izzy, Nick, Vera, Alex and their main partner Wes.

Vera – *We want peace*. A *symbiotic relationship* between Gencoin and Araknet.
Nick – *So do we* (Ketai, 2018, Season 2, Episode 10).

The illocutionary act *we want peace* uttered by Vera signals the condition based upon which the agreement could be achieved and expresses demand rather than cooperation. After, the explanation of the concept of peace follows a *sym-biotic relationship*. The semantic meaning of the word *symbiotic* (characterized by or being a close, cooperative, or interdependent relationship) (Symbiotic, n.d.) allows the negotiator to mitigate the illocutionary force of the previous utterance and, hence, it functions as a propositional hedge. Nick has infinite options to give his consent. However, he opts for the phrase *so do we* to emphasize that it is not just a mere agreement but also a concurrence with the notion of peace (both want peace, and both see peace in symbiotic relations). The adverb *so* displays similarity with the abovementioned idea, and the inverted grammatical structure *so do we* makes the agreement even more emphatic.

Complimenting / Praising

When the negotiators, aiming to achieve their goals, try to persuade the opposite party to do what they want by saying pleasant things to them, in other words, soft-soaping them. As a rule, this hedging strategy is exploited at the beginning of the negotiation in order to soothe the opponent and create a positive disposition towards them. For illustration, consider the following example from the negotiation between NSA (National Security Agency) agents and Araknet's partners.

Nick (Araknet partner) – There is no central ledger, so there's no way to scrub that data anyway.
NSA (agent 2) – Then we better find a way.
Wes (Araknet's main partner) – *Well, look, I mean, for one, am incredibly sympathetic to the work that you are charged with*, but we're just not able to work with feds. We're just not set up that way (Ketai, 2018, Season 3, Episode 7).

In the example, the negotiator, Wes, effectively uses a praising strategy and makes the situation more personal and specific. The plausible hedges, *well, look, I mean* convey more personal, amicable attitude. Wes, through praising, somewhat primes the other party for the next phase of the negotiation. Meanwhile, *incredibly* serves as

an intensifying element and aims to accentuate the adjective *sympathetic,* display personal admiration and, in the interim, reduce the negative effect of the refusal. By using the passive construction, *you are charged with,* instead of using *your duty is, your work is, your obligation is,* Wes, tries to shrewdly use complimenting strategy to mitigate the rejection.

Justification / Explanation

When the negotiator tries to justify their positions and attitudes toward the issue in question, the strategy is signalled through such verbal expressions as *the reason is that…, that is why…, so…, consequently…, etc.*

The justification strategy is employed during the business negotiation between Izzy and Alex Bell's team, who are trying to negotiate a hostile takeover of Izzy's startup - Gencoin.

Alex – For *a number of* reasons, I have to act quickly on this. *Otherwise*, *I am forced* to move on. The choice is yours (Ketai, 2018, Season 1, Episode 9).

The negotiator uses the approximator a *number of* to demonstrate that there is more than just one justification for his actions and reinforces its position with the conjunction *otherwise*, which indicates that something negative may occur. The negotiator, Alex, minimizes his role and accountability for the situation by using the hedging phrase *I am forced,* thus, once again, justifying its actions and showing that the only possible solution is the one that he suggests.

Vagueness / Showing Lack of Precision

When the speaker's aim is to hide, in some cases even to distort the information they convey to the members of the discourse community, these expressions refer mostly to quantitative data when verbal expressions such as *some, little, numerous, various, different, etc*. are used in the utterance.

Below are two excerpts from the movie "Startup", which conspicuously illustrate how appropriate hedging can obscure the implied message, thus helping to stay polite.

NSA agent 1 - Folks, we are a *little concerned* that you may have been compromised (Ketai, 2018, Season 3, Episode 7).

The message is obvious: they have been compromised. However, the phrase *little concerned* adds some degree of ambiguity to the context.

Alex - Things would get a *little too messy*, *unfortunately* (Ketai, 2018, Season 1, Episode 9).

Likewise, the second example demonstrates the lack of precision in a presumably obvious situation.

The illustrations above depict how hedges can mitigate the illocutionary force of the statement through imprecision. It builds up a strategy that helps to avoid categorical expressions and sound somewhat ambiguous but, at the same time, communicate the intended message. The contrasting effect, expressed through the hedges *little* and *too,* is used by Alex to blur the picture and circumvent directness. Nevertheless, the hedge *unfortunately* demonstrates his attitude towards the situation.

Showing Initiative / Intentional Collaboration

When the negotiating parties demonstrate their disposition, make offers, initiate the interaction with the communicative goal of protecting their own views/interests and making suggestions related to the issue in question with an intent to achieve the desired outcome. Meanwhile, the negotiating parties are endeavouring to find ways to urge the other side into collaboration. Even in case of stalemates, appropriate hedging can lead to compromises and resume cooperation. This hedging strategy is realized through such verbal expressions as *I think, I suggest, we should,* etc. The offer can also start with a hypothetical question (*What if…*)

To illustrate this strategy, let us refer to the negotiation among Araknet partners.

Ronnie (Araknet partner) - *Maybe*, we *should* do...

Wes (Araknet's main partner) – The problem is we're agnostic. We just don't work like that.

Ronnie (Araknet partner) – It's worth the discussion, *though, right*?

Kelly (Araknet partner) – Yeah, maybe it's worth this one specific... (Ketai, 2018, Season 3, Episode 7).

The execution of initiative strategy in the above examples improves the negotiator's position and empowers with certain advantages. Hedges *maybe* and *should* indicate that the speaker leaves space for discussion. In the second example, the offer is made through the question tag *though, right?* which, in this particular example, carries out two functions: firstly, it reinforces the initial offer (*maybe*, we *should* do) and secondly, indirectly exerts pressure on the other side to consent to the offer.

In the following example, two NSA agents are trying to persuade Araknet partners to give access to their network.

NSA agent 2 – Regardless, we've picked up some intel. A missing cache of chemical weapons has fallen into the wrong hands. *Recent chatter suggests* these weapons are going to be used to carry out an attack. Potentially on US soil. Potentially as early as next week.

NSA agent 1 – For obvious reasons, it *would be very helpful if we could scrape* the network just to check for any possible transmissions (Ketai, 2018, Season 3, Episode7).

The above example comprises two strategies at the same time: collaboration and detachment. The hedging phrases *would be very helpful* or *if we could scrape* are explicit examples of cooperation. Within the hedging phrase *it would be very helpful. T*he intensifying hedge *very* is present, which is a *propositional hedge* and aims to emphasize the word *helpful*. This effect is achieved through modals, and as Yerznkyan (2018) mentions: "Having at their disposal a developed system of modal verbs, moods, modal words and expressions, as well as a rapidly developing sys-

tem of epistemic (secondary) meaning of modal verbs, the speaker can express and substantiate his thought in different ways, for example, to focus on inner conviction, on the inevitability actions, on the pressure of someone else's will, etc." (p. 142). The second strategy employed in the negotiation is depersonalization or detachment strategy, which is expressed through the phrase *recent chatter suggests*. This hedging functions as an attribution shield. The negotiators make a reference to an external source, thus becoming no longer accountable for the provided information.

Conditionality / Contingency

When the negotiators, for the sake of protecting their own interests, put forward a condition connected with the situation. They do not want to refuse explicitly and directly. Instead, they put forward a condition, sometimes in their view an implausible one, hoping that the opposite party will not be able to realize it. As a result, the negotiator protects their interests. At the same time, they save their face by being polite. This strategy is signalled via conditional sentences.

The examples below are from the movies "Blacklist" and "Founder", respectively. The negotiation is between Raymond Reddington and Elisabeth Keen (FBI agent). In the course of the negotiation, Reddington gives directions on how to save the hostage and states the condition, which could be fatal.

Raymond Reddington - Now, I'll give you Zamani, but first..., *If you don't move quickly, she will die*...

Elisabeth Keen – I need your help with Zamani.

Raymond Reddington – *How about* a trade? You tell me, and I'll tell you. (Carnahan, Season 1, Episode 1)

The second example is a negotiation between Ray Kroc and the McDonald brothers on one of the conditions of the contract, which Ray Kroc and his lawyer are trying to secure.

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Ray Kroc - It's my investor group. The financing is contingent on leaving that out of the contract, and, *unfortunately this deal just doesn't happen, it doesn't just get financed, unless you leave that out of the contract*. (Hancock, 2016)

In the examples, the conditionality is expressed by a model verb *will* and conjunction *unless,* which, in their turn, serve as hedges to politely indicate the fact that there is no other solution or alternative to the problem. In both examples, the justification strategy is also present in order to underpin the condition put forward by one of the negotiating sides. The hedge *just* is used repeatedly in the second example. On the one hand, it emphasizes, and strengthens the semantic meaning of the sentence, on the other hand, acts as a shield or mitigating factor that allows the negotiator to account for the provided conditions. In the second example, one could observe an overlap of showing initiative strategy and conditionality. The initiative is expressed through the phrase *how about,* which is the initial step for suggesting cooperation on the condition that will benefit both sides.

On a final note, to summarize the results of the research, let us analyze the following excerpt, which illustrates how various hedging strategies are enacted by negotiating parties and oftentimes overlap during a single negotiation process. Three partners (Izzy – the code writer, Nick and Reymond) are pitching their product - cryptocurrency GenCoin - to persuade a rich businessman to invest in their startup business. After listening to the partners and weighing up the pros and cons, the businessman proceeds with caution.

The businessman - Me, *I don't know* anything about tech or computers or apps or what have you, but *my consultant was very impressed* with your code, Izzy. And, uh, Nick, you know, Leo will vouch for you. He says that you're a good kid…

The businessman - But I don't think I can jump in this pool yet. *I would like to*, believe me, but, uh, *some of my people say* there are *a lot of* other competitors out there right now in the cryp

tocurrency market.

Izzy – Like Redcoin?

The businessman - That's one of the big ones, yeah.

Izzy - Dude, Maya Hibert, I went to Stanford with her. They've been begging me to come work for them, I mean, they're a joke.

The businessman -Well, *maybe so*. But you know what *they say*. It doesn't matter if you're the best. It only matters if you're first. Here let me get you another drink (Ketai, 2018, Season 1, Episode 4).

Three distinct strategies are distinguished in the abovementioned example: complementing (*my consultant was very impressed*), justification (*I would like to*) and detachment (*my people say, they say*). The result of the research has shown that complementing is used in the preliminary stages of the negotiation process to positively dispose the sides towards each other. The second phase is detachment, which separates the negotiator from the issue and eliminates the risk of identifying the speaker and the problem or the resolution of the problem. Afterwards, the justification strategy is enacted to provide a solid grounding for the actions.

As it is seen from the example, the businessman is ambivalent about the investment prospects and uses detachment strategy (*some of my people say*) to distance himself from the justification he puts forward. The use of the adaptor *some,* which is a type of an approximator, indicates several anonymous agents who are accountable for the provided information, thus relieving the businessman of the responsibility. At the same time, the pronoun *my* places a certain amount of responsibility since he knows the people and relies on their information. The speaker continues by utilizing the adaptor *a lot of* (with intensifying meaning), which is a reference to a considerable number of competitors, who, in their turn, serve as the main culprits behind his hesitation, hence laying ground for a refusal. It is obvious that the businessman tries to be polite by availing all possible techniques relevant to the

situation. For instance, he starts the sentence with a negative epistemic verb *I don't think* instead of *I don't want,* to show the degree of his contemplation and not his final decision or conclusion. Moreover, he reinforces his polite and amicable attitude by the usage of the modal verb *can*, which implies a lack of ability rather than desire.

Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated how hedges and hedging strategies, revealed during the research, could elevate the effectiveness of the negotiation process on the whole and advance the positions of each negotiating party separately. The paper has referred to an array of classifications of hedges suggested by different scholars and researchers and highlighted their pragmalinguistic features due to which they have been incorporated into several business negotiation cases to form various hedging strategies (detachment, agreement, complimenting, justification, showing initiative, vagueness, conditionality, etc.). Drawing on this research, it is obvious that the most prevalent strategy encountered in business negotiations can be considered the detachment strategy.

It could be concluded that the linguistic means of expression of hedges are so diverse that they allow negotiators to stay polite (save their face), mitigate the illocutionary force, reduce the risk of conflict, and, at the same time, get the desired outcome.

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