

Hedges used in Kurdish Political Discourse

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Abstract--- *This paper works within the frame work of E.F. Prince, J. Frader& C.Bosk theory (1982) and employs qualitative and quantitative methods. It analyzes President Masoud Barzani's speeches. In addition, this study aims at analyzing the hedges from the pragmatic perspective and focuses on their functions rather than forms. Hedges are specific expressions as 'I think', 'a sort of', 'entirely' ...etc. which may be employed by interlocutors as significant strategies to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy. Moreover, an attention also has been given to investigate and examine the frequency of occurrence of hedges in Kurdish political speech. This paper also tries to highlight how in Kurdish presidential speeches hedges have been employed to indicate a lack of complete commitment to the truth or falsity of the proposition , to communicate messages more precisely, to soften the impact of an utterance, or to convey vagueness purposely to reduce the riskiness of face-saving threats.*

Keywords--- *Hedge, Political Discourse, Kurdish Political Discourse*

I. INTRODUCTION

In fact, the use of hedges has received much attention in recent years as a phenomenon through which language users communicate a lack of commitment to what they are conveying. They play a crucial role in modifying the meaning of natural language expressions or utterances. For instance, hedges such as 'very', 'extremely' or 'so' intensify the meaning. In addition, hedges may consciously or unintentionally be used in spoken and written texts since they help conversational partners and writers communicate or present statements with humility, accuracy and expressing probability for interpretations rather than certainty and thus listeners/ readers judge them to be cooperative partners. In fact, hedges are used as mitigators to avoid the potential risk of losing face and as a way to show politeness [3]. Moreover, as Wilamova points out, hedges are pragmatic indications that weaken the power of an expression...hence, as a negative politeness strategy, they enable the communicators to go on-record but with redress. That is, the interlocutor tries to make an attempt to reduce the imposition or directness of his/her utterance [9].

There is no doubt that the language used in politics plays a crucial role in the present day public communication space on the public opinion since it influences people's beliefs, attitudes and conveys knowledge about the world. Moreover, in politics, language is regularly used as an instrument for achieving or practicing power: "the whole classical tradition from the sophists to the enlightenment wrestled with the relationship between persuasion, truth and morality, carrying a deep suspicion of the power of language" [5]. Politicians, in order to approach and influence the public at large, they use a language which has a specific code or features, either through the written or spoken text. Hence, when politicians employ an accurate use of language, they can make their speeches more effective and it is

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usually recognized as a key tool for convincing their audiences [7]. This paper aims at making an attempt to tackle the Kurdish political discourse. Its objectives are to investigate and identify the frequency of occurrence and the functions of hedges, as negative politeness strategies, which are used by, the Kurdish political figure, the president Masoud Barzani in his presidential speeches. In other words, the paper focuses and explores, via the pragmatic perspective, how often and why hedges have been utilized in Kurdish political discourse/speeches.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Generally, the study of the use of hedges has developed over the past twenty years. Researches revealed that though there are some considerable commonalities concerning the roles of hedges in academic writings, political speeches, day-to-day conversations and etc., scholars and linguists have different viewpoints concerning the reasons and functions behind using hedges.

According to some researchers (e.g., [12], and Hyland, 1998), it is not easy to give a satisfactory universal definition of the notion *hedge* because it has been viewed differently by different researchers for ages. Moreover, Geyer (2008) highlights that hedges are used as politeness strategies. And Crompton (1997) asserts that speakers and writers employ hedges to show modesty, avoid personal involvement, and protect the positive face of the hearer. Conversely, Riekkinen (2009) states that the use of hedges is considered as a negative politeness since the interlocutor/writer make the meaning of the proposition fuzzier. Further, many other scholars and researchers (Hyland, 1998,2000; Salager-Meyer, 1994,1997; Markkanen& Schroder, 2006; Refega de Figueiredo-Silva 2001; Vold, 2006; Kasper, 1975,1981; Blum-Kuka, 1984; Nikula, 1997) conducted researches and investigated hedges as a strategy used to mitigate or soften the influence of statements ,avoid face threatening, convey certainty or doubt, demonstrate the level and degree of confidence towards claims or statements. It is also worth noting to see that the appropriate use of hedges helps listeners/ readers evaluate the truth value of the proposition [4].

To do discourse analysis, there are different discourse analytical approaches However, as a matter of fact, it is somehow impossible to achieve an accurate identification of all these different schools or fields which are employed or tackled while doing discourse analysis; therefore, in this study, the data is analyzed according to an aspect of pragmatics(hedges); a pragmatic approach is concentrated on.

Definition of Hedges

In fact, hedges are the expressions of probability and tentativeness which are frequently used within various genres of natural language occurrences. The concept of *hedge* first introduced by the American linguist George Lakoff in his published significant paper *Hedges: A Study in Meaning Criteria and the Logic of Fuzzy Concepts*. He referred to them as the fuzziness of language as he said "for me, some of the most interesting questions are raised by the study of words whose meaning implicitly involves fuzziness-words whose job is to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy. I will prefer these words as *hedge*" [6]. Thus, fuzziness plays an instrumental role in the avoidance of embarrassing situations and helps interlocutors express their commitment to the truth value of statements and hence give chances for the possibilities of interpretations and avoids personal involvements [8].

Further, Brown and Levinson defined the notion of hedge as “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 certain respects, or that it is more true and complete than perhaps might be expected”(1978,pp.145).Hedges, as Yule points out, are used as indications which highlight the speakers’ concern that their hearers judge them to be cooperative partners (1996,pp.38-9). They are the particles like *nizikay* ‘about’, *jořek la* ‘sort of’, *azâni* ‘you know’, *lawânaya* ‘ perhaps’, etc. Generally, hedges, or the hedging words, are divided into two major types or classes [10].

Types of Hedges

The classification of hedges, which this paper focuses on in the analysis of its data, is made by the American linguists E.F.Prince, J.Frader&C.Bosk (1982). They identified and divided up hedges from the perspective of pragmatics into two classes: Approximators and Shields.

Approximators and Shields

Approximators include some specific expressions which alter the truth value of a proposition or give different meanings to the original discourse via depending on various contexts Approximators can be divided into sub-classes: adaptors and rounders.

Unlike approximators, shields do not alter the truth condition content discourse. They implicate the speakers’ opinions via reflecting a level of uncertainty, and hence indirectly moderate the tone of the expression. Shields are of two sub-types: Plausibility shields and Attribution shields.

Politeness and Hedges

Hedges have been taken into account as a means to tone down statements, show modesty, to lessen or reduce the riskiness of the utterance that seems too forceful and impolite to hearers or interlocutors. Further, hedges are used as instrumental devices to show politeness and mitigate face threats. They save or protect the interlocutor’s audience from any harm or negative influence of the uttered sayings. Thus, as Geyer (2008) points out that those hedging expressions are forms of politeness strategies [8].

III. METHODOLOGY

This paper tries to investigate and examine the reasons, or functions, along with the frequencies of occurrence of hedges in Kurdish political discourse/ presidential speeches. It employs E.F. Prince, J. Frader& C. Bosk theory (1982) and uses quantitative and qualitative methods. The data is based on President Masoud Barzani’s two speeches taken from the <http://www.presidency.krd/english/speeches.aspx> (available in both languages: English and Kurdish),delivered on different occasions (tragic and happy moments).All the hedges were written down, classified into their types, and then submitted to the quantitive analysis using Statistic package for the social sciences (SPSS) version 21.,in order to determine their frequency of occurrence in these speeches. The two speeches made by President Masoud Barzani: first speech (Text 1) was made at a ceremony to receive the Remains of 150 victims of Anfal (2008). The context or the occasion of this speech (Text1) is a tragic moment or event [2].

Most notably, Anfal was a genocide campaign led by the former Iraqi Ba’athist regime against Kurds and Kurdistan (the northern part of Iraq). Sorrowfully, 182000 Kurds; hundreds of thousands of men, women and children lost their lives in a pre-planned succession of attacks to exterminate the Kurdish population in Iraq in the late 1980s.

The second speech (Text3) was given on a happy occasion, at the Award Ceremony which was held in the Monumental Complex of Santo Spirito in Saxia, one of the Rome’s historic buildings, on the occasion of Receiving the Atlantic Award in the presence of a several Italian Senators. The Kurdistan Region’s President Mr. Barzani received the Award from the Italian Atlantic Committee and the Italian Delegation to NATO Parliamentary Assembly (2011) for his instrumental role in promoting peace, stability, and religious tolerance in the Kurdish Region and Iraq.

IV. DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

In the following Tables, hedges used in Barzani’s two selected speeches (President Barzani’s speech at ceremony to receive the remains of 150 victims of Anfal (Text 1) and the second speech during receiving the Atlantic award in Rome (Text 3), are classified into their types and sub-types.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for Approximators Hedges used in Text 1

		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent</i>
Valid	Adaptors	5	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 1.depicts that only Adaptors as a sub-type of Approximators Hedges used in Text 1.Its total number is 5; only five adaptors are employed.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for Adaptors Hedges used in Text1

		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent</i>
Valid	Ba tawâwi(totally)	1	20.0	20.0	20.0
	Handĕk(Some)	1	20.0	20.0	40.0
	Ziyâtr(More)	1	20.0	20.0	60.0
	zor (Very)	1	20.0	20.0	80.0
	La řâstida(Indeed)	1	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	5	100.0	100.0	

According to the statistics results presented in Table 2, it is found that the president Barzani only used Adaptors Hedges as a sub-type of Approximators Hedges in his presidential speech Text 1.,and its total number is 5.

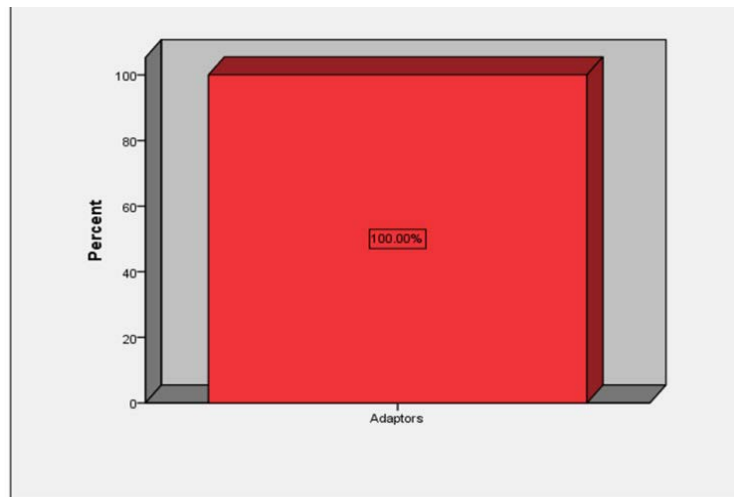


Figure 1: The frequency of occurrence of the above mentioned Hedges (Approximators; its sub-type Adaptors) used in Text1.

As the figure 1 indicates, the frequency of occurrence of the Adaptors Hedges, as a sub-type of Approximators, used in Text 1 is 100%.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for Shields Hedges used in Text 1

		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent</i>
Valid	Attribution shields	3	100.0	100.0	100.0

As it can be seen in Table 3, only Attribution Shields; a sub-type of Shields Hedges are used in Text 1. They are used three times.

Table 4: Descriptive statistics for Attribution Shields used in Text 1

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	labarama (Because of....)	1	20.0	33.3	33.3
	Ba p̄yī ?urfū ?adati..(Because of our customs....)	1	20.0	33.3	66.7
	Šâyati aw halatabun(Rest assured that....)	1	20.0	33.3	100.0
	Total	3	60.0	100.0	
Missing	System	2	40.0		
Total		5	100.0		

Regarding the descriptive statistics results shown in Table 4, it is found that Barzani only utilized Attribution Shields, a sub-type of Shields Hedges, in his speech Text1. And the total number is 3.

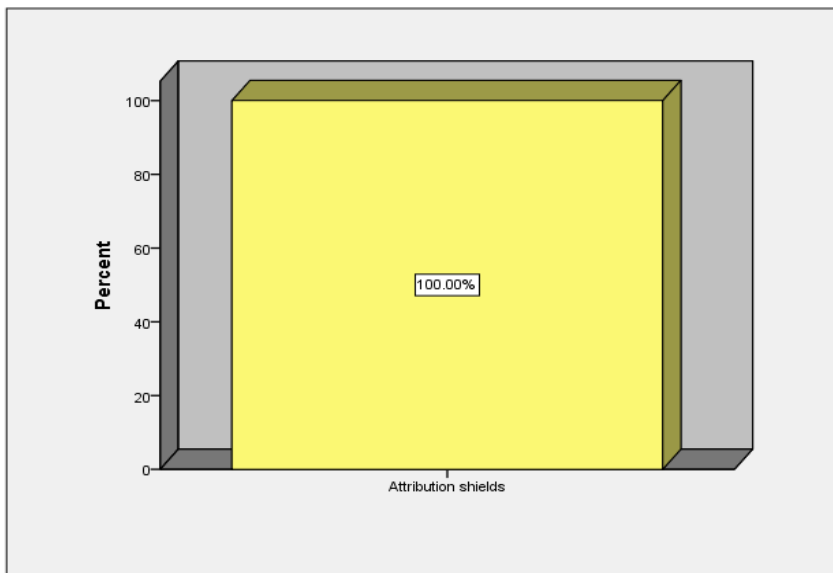


Figure 2: The frequency of occurrence of the above mentioned Shields Hedges; its sub-type Attribution Shields used in Text1.

As the figure 2 shows, the frequency of occurrence of the Attribution Shields; a sub-type of Shields Hedges, used in Text 1, is 100%.

Table 5: Descriptive statistics for Approximators Hedges used in Text 3

		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent</i>
Valid	Adaptors	4	100.0	100.0	100.0

According to the statistics results given in Table 5, it is shown that only Adaptors Hedges, a sub-type of Approximators Hedge, are used in Text 3. And the Adaptors employed are only four.

Table 6: Descriptive statistics for Adaptors Hedges used in Text 3

		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent</i>
Valid	Zor(very)	1	20.0	25.0	25.0
	Labarhandē (so)	1	20.0	25.0	50.0
	Ziyâtr(more)	1	20.0	25.0	75.0
	zorzor (so much)	1	20.0	25.0	100.0
	Total	4	80.0	100.0	
Missing	System	1	20.0		
Total		5	100.0		

As Table 6 depicts, the total number of Adaptors Hedges, used by the president in his speech Text 3, is four.

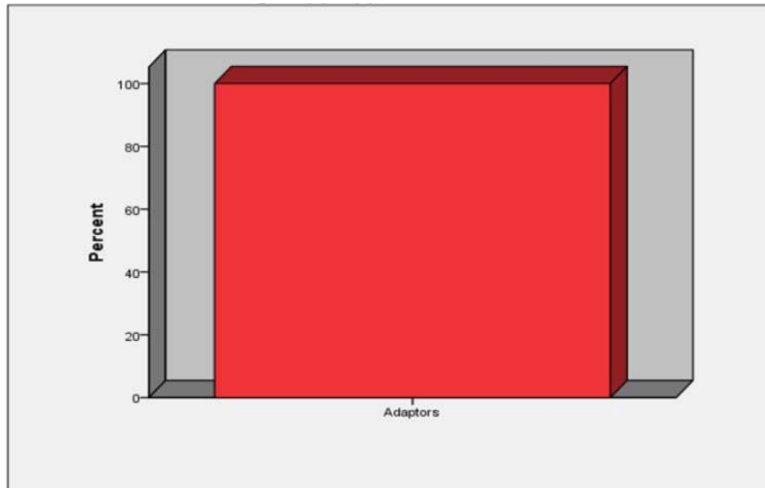


Figure 3: The frequency of occurrence of the above mentioned Hedges (i.e. Approximators Hedges; its sub-type Adaptors Hedges) used in Text3.

As it can be seen in figure 3, the frequency of occurrence of the above mentioned Hedges used (Adaptors Hedges; a sub –type of Approximators Hedges) in Barzani’s speech Text3 is 100% [1].

.Table 7: Descriptive statistics for Shields Hedges used in Text 3

		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent</i>
Valid	Plausibility shields	3	100.0	100.0	100.0

Looking at the descriptive statistics presented in Table 7, for Shields Hedges used in Text 3, it is found that only Plausibility Shields are used. And the number of the employed plausibility Shields is three.

Table 8: Descriptive statistics for Plausibility shields Hedges used in Text 3

		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent</i>
Valid	Wadâdanēm(I consider)	1	20.0	33.3	33.3
	Hiwadârin (We are hopeful)	1	20.0	33.3	66.7
	Hiwadaxwâzin(We all hope)	1	20.0	33.3	100.0
	Total	3	60.0	100.0	
Missing	System	2	40.0		
Total		5	100.0		

As the Table 8 shows, the Plausibility Shields Hedges used in Text3 is three in number. That is, this sort of hedges is utilized only three times.

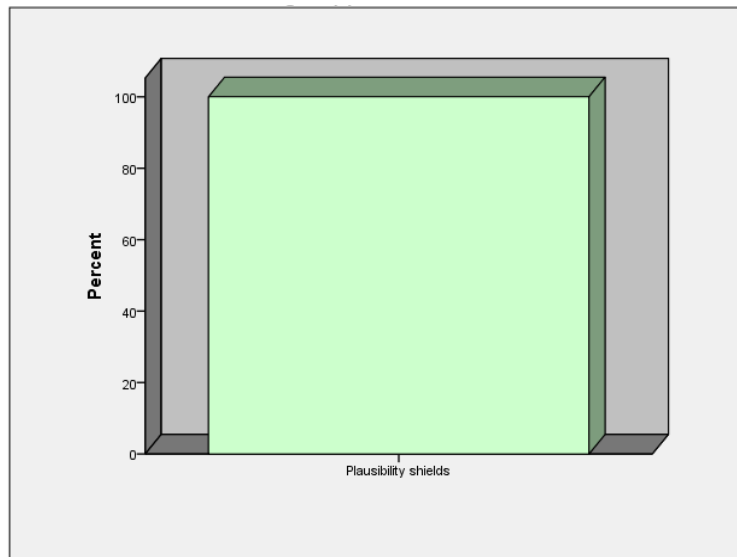


Figure 4: The frequency of occurrence of the above mentioned Hedges (i.e. Shields Hedges; its sub-type Plausibility shields) used in Text3.

As it can be viewed in figure 4, the frequency of occurrence of the Plausibility shields; a sub-type of Shields Hedges, employed in Text3, is 100%.

By investigating and analyzing the speeches of President Masoud Barzani, it is understood that he only used adaptors (100%) (*Ba tawâwi* ‘totally’, *Handêk* ‘some’, *Ziyâtr* ‘more’, *zor* ‘very’, *fee3lan*(*La řâstida*) ‘indeed’, *Labarhandê* ‘so’, ‘zorzor’, ‘vey very’ in these two speeches (Text 1 and Text 3). He used these terms (adaptors) in order to make his sentences neither absolutely accurate nor absolutely false and thus reduces the degree of certainty and implicates reservation. It can be said that in Barzani’s speeches adaptors (a sub-type of Approximators) are utilized to operate on the propositional content proper contribute to the interpretation by denoting some markedness.

Further, Barzani only used the attribution shields(a sub-type of Shields) (100%) (*labarama* ‘Because of...’, *Ba pëyi ?urfu ?adati..* ‘Because of our customs...’, *Şâyati aw halata bun* ‘Rest assured that...’) in Text 1, and he used only the plausibility shields(100%)(a sub-type of Shields) (*Wadâdanêm* ‘I consider’, *Hiwadârin* ‘we are hopeful’, and *Hiwadaxwâzin* ‘we all hope’) in Text 3. Thus, the president used some expressions of shields since they do not change or affect the meaning of the proposition. However, they reflect personal instances and the speaker’s uncertainty toward a proposition to another party. Hence, the interlocutor’s viewpoint is expressed indirectly via using these shields and thus the speaker avoided the riskiness of the falsity of the proposition and mitigated force and the responsibility when he made statements.

In fact, the total number of the attribution shields in Text 1 amounted to 3 items, and zero in Text 3, while the total number of plausibility shields is Zero in Text 1, and 3 in Text 3. The adaptors used in Text 1 are 5 and 4 in Text 3, and the total amount of Rounders in both speeches is Zero.

According to the frequency of occurrence, they can roughly be divided into different frequency bands: those which occurred few times and those which were not used at all, and those which were frequently occurred. The zero

used hedges is rounders (a sub-type of Approximators) in both speeches (Text1 ,Text 3) and the most frequently used ones are adaptors(9 items) and less or few frequently used ones are shields: plausibility(3 items) and attribution(3 items).

The president employed adaptors and shields because he had no interest to add any personal doubt and direct involvement.

The result showed that there is a slight difference between the frequency of hedges, in these two compared groups, in both speeches (Approximators (9 items used) and Shields (6 items used). The president used both types of hedges except rounders as a sub-type of approximators; therefore, what is inferred is that there is a significant difference in terms of the frequency of the use of different sub-types of hedges (i.e. rounders, adaptors, plausibility shields and attribution shields).

In this analysis, the Adaptors Hedges, the sub-type of Approximators, are the most frequent ones followed by the Shields Hedges (including both types: plausibility and Attribution hedges). It is found that Mr.Barzani used adaptors and shields as the most frequent ones, while rounder hedges have not been employed at all in the speeches. This shows that the president did not want to reveal his personal doubts and get involved directly. In other words, it can be said that Barzani was more tactful and cautious in uttering his claims and tended to address his audience indirectly. He used hedges not only to reduce personal commitment and mitigate the force of the statements on his addressees but also to gain acceptance from the community for which he spoke to.

V. CONCLUSION

Throughout this study, the researchers reached to the following findings.

Hedges are employed to strengthen the expressive force of an utterance and make it more acceptable to the interlocutors since they reflect the degree of certainty and acknowledge the presence of several possibilities. Further, through the appropriate use of hedges, the communicator tries to avoid the potential loss of faces. That is, he tries to protect himself from negative evaluation on the part of his judgments.

In addition, hedges are taken as devices whereby the president demonstrates reservation and denote the absence of absoluteness of the accuracy of his claims. Hence, via using hedges, readers/ listeners evaluate the truth value or possible falsification of the proposition.

As a matter of fact, this study has sought to examine how the use of hedges as a mitigated device is motivated and employed by the president Masoud Barzani in his political speeches. That is, an attempt has been made to identify and quantify different types of hedges. It showed that hedges are used to lessen the force of an utterance to reduce the riskiness of what one says and show politeness to strangers.

Moreover, hedges are confined as a means of fuzziness. Thus, they weaken the speaker's accountability since the communicator makes the utterance fuzzier and hence uses hedges to express ambiguity which leads to different interpretations.

Finally, the use of hedges is a negative politeness strategy for it mitigates face-threatening act. And President Masoud Barzani is very tactful and cautious in delivering his speeches and tends to address his interlocutors indirectly. That is, Mr. Barzani does not use rigid expressions and hence avoids criticism and gives some room for alternative interpretations. Thus, a sense of politeness is felt in these speeches via forming some vagueness purposely.

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