

HEDGES USED IN DEBATE BETWEEN ELON MUSK AND JACK MA ABOUT ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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Abstract: In reporting and explaining the result of a research, a researcher often uses hedges in their report. Hedges are words or phrases such as perhaps, may, can, and other words related to the degree of probability. Hedges as words or phrases make things fuzzy or less fuzzy and imply that the writers less committed to the certainty of referential information presented in their writings (Lakoff,1973). Hedges can also be found in the form of utterance. Most of well-known people in the world use hedges when delivering their ideas in order to minimize “threat-of-face” which hides beneath every act of communication. One of the example occurs in the debate between Elon Musk and Jack Ma in 2019 when they talked about Artificial Intelligence (AI) in many aspects of life. This research aims: (1) to identify the linguistics features of hedges occurs in the debate between Elon Musk and Jack Ma; and (2) to identify the function of hedges in the debate between Elon Musk and Jack Ma. The data used in this research was taken from the debate about Artificial Intelligence between Elon Musk and Jack Ma which collected by using documentation. This research method is using descriptive qualitative. It is found that most of the hedges used in the debate are in the form of modal auxiliary verbs as an effort to make the speakers less committed to the certainty of their statements, to safe them from ‘threat to face’, and to apply politeness.

Keywords: Hedges, debate, politeness, threat to face

Abstrak: Dalam melaporkan dan menjelaskan hasil penelitian, seorang peneliti sering menggunakan lindung nilai dalam laporan mereka. Lindung nilai adalah kata-kata atau frasa-frasa seperti mungkin, dapat, bisa, dan kata-kata lain yang berkaitan dengan tingkat kemungkinan. Lindung nilai sebagai kata-kata atau frasa-frasa membuat hal-hal kabur atau sedikit kabur and menunjukkan bahwa penulis kurang berkomitmen terhadap kepastian dari informasi referensial yang ada dalam tulisan mereka (Lakoff,1973). Lindung nilai juga bisa ditemukan dalam bentuk ucapan. Sebagian besar orang terkenal di dunia menggunakan lindung nilai saat menyampaikan gagasan mereka untuk meminimalkan "ancaman muka" yang bersembunyi di balik setiap tindakan komunikasi. Salah satu contohnya terjadi pada perdebatan Elon Musk dan Jack Ma di tahun 2019 ketika membicarakan tentang Kecerdasan Artifisial dalam banyak aspek kehidupan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk: (1) mengidentifikasi fitur kebahasaan lindung nilai yang terdapat pada perdebatan antara Elon Musk dan Jack Ma; (2) mengidentifikasi fungsi lindung nilai dalam debat antara Elon Musk dan Jack Ma; dan (3) untuk mengidentifikasi bagaimana lindung nilai digunakan dalam debat antara Elon Musk dan Jack Ma. Data yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini diambil dari debat tentang Artificial Intelligence antara Elon Musk dan Jack Ma yang dikumpulkan dengan menggunakan dokumentasi. Metode penelitian menggunakan deskriptif-kualitatif. Diketahui bahwa sebagian besar hedges yang digunakan dalam debat berupa modal auxiliary verba sebagai upaya membuat

penutur kurang berkomitmen terhadap kepastian pernyataan, mengamankan dari 'ancaman wajah', dan menerapkan kesantunan.

Kata kunci: Lindung nilai, debat, kesopanan, ancaman terhadap muka

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Hedges are words or phrases which are used to make things fuzzy or less fuzzy. Hedges can also be applied in the form of utterances. Hedges in the form of utterances sometimes used by a well-known person such as a president or an actor or even a businessman. Hedging is a linguistic resource which defines the basic characteristics of science of doubt and skepticism. Stubbs (1986) argues that all sentences encode a point of view and academic text have no difference with what contained with author's presence where scientists inevitability (unavoidability) indicates their attitude in their writings. Academic writing cannot be seen as a series of impersonal statements of facts which enhance the truth since science is not the objective discipline. Moreover, research from various disciplines has revealed ways to accomplish rhetorical objectives according to a socially situated and structured academic discourse.

Hedges are mostly in the form of verbal and adverbial expressions which includes can, perhaps, may, suggest, and other words related to degrees of probability. The interactive elements which serve as a bridge between the propositional information in the text and the write's factual interpretation can be considered as hedges. Hedges could be seen as element of the larger phenomenon which called by commentative potential of any language where natural languages are reflective which is not only saying things, but also reflecting on the status of what they say. The exclusive association 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. In fact, academic writers may well wish to reduce the strength of claims simply because stronger statements would not be justified by the experimental data presented. Academics want their readers to know that they do not claim to have the final word on the subject, choosing instead to remain vague in their statements. Hedges then are not a cover-up tactic, but rather a resource used to express some fundamental characteristics of modern science which reveal the probabilistic nature science started acquiring during the second half of the 19th century ((Meyer, 1993) and (Banks, 1994)).

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Studies on hedges in debate had ever done before. First, the research by Eka Wahyuniati entitled *The Use of Hedges in the Second Obama-Romney Presidential Debate*. It aims to investigate the use of hedges by Obama-Romney as the candidates in the second presidential debate. It also aims to identify the types, functions, and the impacts of the hedges use in the debate. The research found that three function of hedges occur in the debate. It also found that the impacts of the hedges uses in the debate are mostly create uncertainty in their statement, which is a negative impact. Second, the research entitled *The Use of Hedges in the First Clinton-Trump Presidential Debate* by Dina Mentari. The research aims to identify the linguistic features of hedges and investigate the functions of hedges. The research found that

both candidates used the seven features of hedges actively. It also found that the function of the hedges in the debate are used to mitigate claims by showing some kind of uncertainty, to express a lack of full commitment, to search for acceptance as well as expressing politeness, to avoid direct criticism. Moreover, hedges used to predict the future events or consequences. It also used to ask the listeners participations. The research on Elon Musk and Jack Ma debate also held to find the types and the functions of hedges also the ways hedges used in the debate.

?Regarding to (Salager-Meyer,1997), hedges can be expressed through the following words, phrases, or clauses, such as:

1. Modal auxiliary verbs

It is the most common expression found in English academic writing which includes may, might, can, could, would, and should. It is used to express modality.

2. Modal lexical verbs or “speech act verbs”

It seems like evaluating something rather than decribing. It expresses acts of doubting. It includes degree of illocutionary force, such as to seem, to appear, to believe, to assume, to suggest, to estimate, to tend, to think, to argue, to indicate, to propse, and to speculate.

3. Adjectival, adverbial, and nominal modal phrases

It includes probability adjectives e.g. possible, probable, unlike, and like; nouns e.g. assumption, claim, probability, and suggestion; and adverbs e.g. perhaps, possibly, probably, practically, likely, unlikely, presumably, virtually, and apparently. It is used to express uncertainty of a statement.

4. Approximators of degree, quantity, frequency, and time

These are also used to express doubt or uncertainty of a statement. For examples, approximately, rooughly, about, often, occasionally, generally, usually, somewhat, somehow, and a lot of.

5. Introductory phrases

It expresses the author’s personal doubt and direct involvement e.g. I believe, to our knowledge, it is our view that, and we feel that.

6. If “clauses”

These include some expressions, such as if true and if anything. These are used to state something that might happen caused by another event or thing occurs before it.

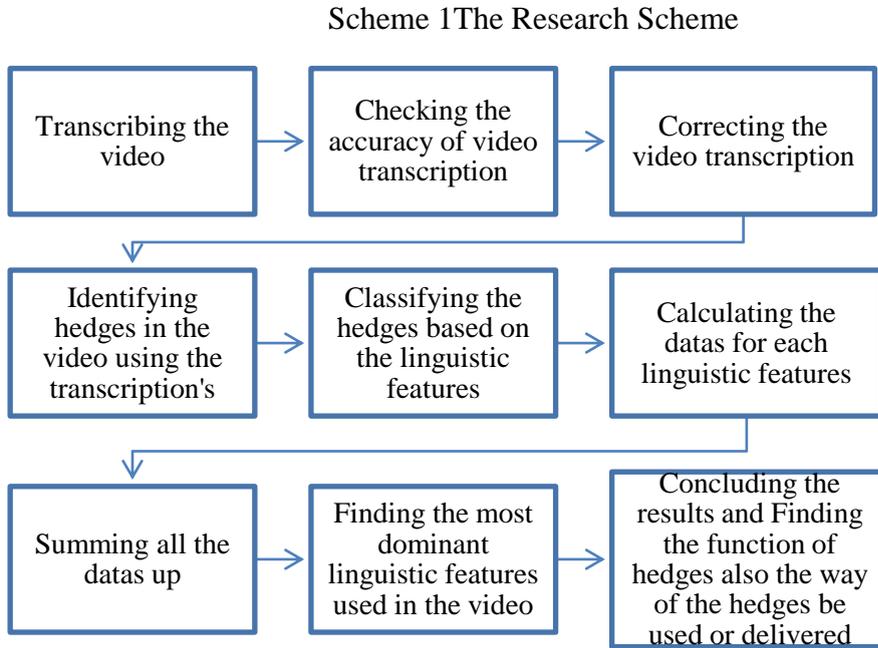
7. Compound hedges

It is formed by few of some expressions above e.g. an if “clause” followed by an approximator of degree and a modal lexical verb followed by an approximator of quantity. It can be used to express a statement which icludes the author’s or speaker’s opinion about uncertainty in a fact of an certain event)

RESEARCH METHOD

The research began with the process of collecting the datas using documentation. The video will be transcribed in order to make the analyzing process easier. Then, the transcript of the video should be checked in order to fix the incorrect transcription. After getting the correct transcription, the researcher will identify and classify the linguistic features, i.e. Modal Auxiliary Verbs, Modal Lexical Verbs, Adjective; Adverb; Nominal Modal Phrases, Approximators of degree, quantity, frequency, amd time, Introductory Phrases, “if” Clauses, and Compound Hedges, which was found in the debate. The researcher counts the number of

the datas in each features and sum them up. Last, the researcher concludes the linguistic features of hedges that appear the most in the debate and find the function of hedges also the way of the hedges being delivered or used. The research method can be drawn in the following scheme:



RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 The Result of Hedges in Debate between Elon Musk and Jack Ma

Linguistics Features of Hedges	Datas	Percentage (%)
Modal Auxiliary Verbs	205	41,33
Modal Lexical Verbs	169	34,07
Probability Adjectives	12	2,42
Nouns	4	0,81
Adverbs	14	2,82
Approximators of Degree, Quantity, Frequency, and Time	35	7,06
Introductory Phrases	11	2,22
“If” Clauses	31	6,25
Compound Hedges	15	3,02

Total	496	100
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As explained in the table above, the hedges mostly used in the debate between Elon Musk and Jack Ma was in the form of Modal Auxiliary Verbs since Jack Ma and Elon Musk tried to give their opinion about something or some event, mentioned the possible events in the future which caused by a certain event happened in the past or in present, showed uncertainty about something to make it less fuzzy and made themselves less committed to the truth of their statements, so it can safe them from the treat to face. While, hedges in the form of Nouns or nominal modal phrase was rarely used in the debate. Modal Auxiliary Verbs was found 205 times in the debate. Modal Auxiliary Verbs include may, might, can, could, would, should, and other forms of modal auxiliary verbs. As the examples:

(1) 02:04

Elon Musk: "that small that **would** be amazing"

Regarding to the previous utterance, **would** was used to express the situation that probably happens in the future if something happend before it.

(2) 02:21 – 02:24

Elon Musk: " AI and so they **can** of them **cannot** imagine something smarter than themselves but AI will be vastly smarter,"

Refer to the previous utterance, **can** and **cannot** were used to respond the statement that AI researchers are assuming that they're smarter than AI itself.

(3) 04:25 – 04:31

Elon Musk: "human speech to a computer **will** sound like very slow tonal wheezing,"

Will was used to respond the possible event happend to human speech sound in computer in the future.

(4) 06:57 – 07:02

Elon Musk: "you go back 40 40 years ago or 50 years ago **maybe** you had pong that was just two rectangles in a square now,"

In this utterance, **Maybe** was used when Elon Musk tries to give an example of what we get when we decide to go back to 40 to 50 years ago and it tells uncertainty.

(5) 24:55 – 25:00

Jack Ma: "we **should** have a confidence computer only have chips, men have the heart,"

Should was used by Jack Ma to encourage people to be confident that human beings are better than computers since human beings have hearts while computers only have chips.

(6) 42:14 42:18

Elon Musk: "I mean you **could** take a fruit fly for example,"

And **could** was used when Elon Musk gave the possible example of changing DNA.

Next, there is Modal Lexical Verbs which include the words such as to seem, to appear, to believe, to assume, to suggest, to estimate, to tend, to think, to argue, to indicate, to propose, and to speculate. For the examples,

(1) 41:30 – 41:31

Elon Musk: "I don't mean **to suggest to suggest** complacency,"

The word **to suggest** was used by Elon Musk to make the earlier statement and create the act of saving himself from threat-of-face before explaining the following statement.

(2) 41:31 – 41:36

Elon Musk: "but I do **think** humans can and will solve sustainability,"

The word **think** also said by both Elon Musk and Jack Ma several times. In this utterance, **think** was used by Elon Musk to create a little certainty in his statement that humans can and will solve sustainability.

(3) 36:49 – 36:51

Elon Musk: "we'**reassuming** that the AI is a there's a benevolent future,"

Are assuming was used by Elon Musk as the earlier statement which encouraged people to assume that AI is a there's a benevolent future, so he gave the following statement by stating the possible situation all people will face in 20 years that is population collapse.

Then, Probability Adjective Modal Phrases which includes the words possible, probable, unlikely, and likely also the negative forms of it. As the examples:

(1) 32:55 – 32:59

Jack Ma: "human being said I can run faster than a car. It's **impossible**."

Jack Ma used **impossible** as his respond to the his own example about human being can run faster than a car. It showed that **impossible** was used to express his uncertainty about the example.

While, in the form of Nouns which include assumption, claim, possibility, estimate, and suggestion. One of the example is:

(1) 11:14 – 11:23

Elon Musk: "but there's a certain **probability** that is irreducible that something may happen to earth despite our best intentions despite everything,"

Elon Musk used it to reduce threat of face he could get by stating that Earth is doomed, so he said that there is a certain probability that is irreducible that something may happen to earth despite our best intentions despite everything, which make his previous statement less certain.

On the other hand, in Adverb which includes perhaps, probably, possibly, and the other possibility adverbs. There is an example:

(1) 09:59 – 10:09

Elon Musk: "it's important for us to take the set of actions that are most **likely** to continue consciousness into the future,"

Likely was used by Elon Musk to explain the closest example of the purpose of set of actions. It also showed his uncertainty in what is exactly the purpose of the actions meant by him.

In Approximatorsof Degree, Quantity, Frequency, and Time, as an example:

(1) 12:49 – 12:53

Jack Ma: "but we have to care **about** the the seven point four billion people on the earth,"

Jack Ma was used **about** to show uncertainty in his statement and to avoid him from threat of face.

Another linguistic features of Hedges is in the form of Introductory Phrases. For example:

(1) 12:24 – 12:28

Elon Musk: "as quickly as possible, **that's my view**"

When some people use "in my view" in the beginning of their statement, they want to emphasize that the statement which they say are based on their opinion and do not include other's opinion, instead Elon Musk used it in the end of his statement in order to emphasized his statement. On the other hand, Jack Ma used it before state his opinion, as what is in duration 13:53 by saying "my view is ...". Both of them used it to emphasize that everything they said are based on their personal views.

The last linguistics feature of Hedges is in the form of "if " clauses. As an example:

(1) 08:03 – 08:12

Elon Musk: "If we lasted for a million years so that seems like a long time given,"

Elon Musk used "if" clause to give the example earlier in his statement.

It is also possible that hedges occurs in the form of compound hedges. Compound hedges formed by two or more hedges which appear sequentially. For example:

(1) 05:48 – 05:57

Jack Ma: "I think if a lot of solutions we don't have today,"

Jack Ma's statement included three linguistic features of hedges, those were **think**, **"if" clause**, and **a lot of**. **Think** is in the form of modal lexical verb, "if" clause, and **a lot of** is in the form approximator of quantity. It was used to give the example in his statement.

CONCLUSION

Hedges used to make things fuzzy or less fuzzy in order to express uncertainty and to avoid from threat-of-face. Hedges can be used not only in the form of academic writings but also in the form of utterances. On of the examples are the utterances used in the debate about Artificial Intelligence in various aspects of life between Elon Musk and Jack. The researcher found that both Jack Ma and Elon Musk mostly used hedges in the form of modal auxiliary verbs such as can, could, will, would, and should. The results of this research are supported by (Salager-Meyer,1997) which was found that modal auxiliary verbs as the most common hedges used in English academic writing, although in this case, hedges also can be found in other forms such as modal lexical verbs and approximators of degree, quantity, frequency, and time, where they used it to make their statement less fuzzy or reflecting uncertainty. Jack Ma and Elon Musk also used hedges to avoid them from threat of face caused by their statement also as the application of politeness in order to respect their debate-partner and audiences.

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