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ХЕДЖИРОВАНИЕ В РАЗЛИЧНЫХ ТИПАХ ДИСКУРСА

В статье описываются дискурсивные особенности некоторых наиболее распространенных хеджей, встречающихся в современном английском языке, и исследуется их коммуникативное влияние на высказывание. Авторы применяют классификацию хеджирования Принса и соавторов к аппроксиматорам (которые изменяют пропозициональное содержание, передаваемое в высказывании) и “цитам” (изменяют истинную ценность высказывания) для анализа хеджирующего поведения говорящего в двух дискурсивных жанрах: интервью и политические речи.

Выбор материалов для анализа определяется практическим интересом исследователей к изучению использования хеджей в дискурсивных жанрах, которые значительно различаются по степени спонтанности и предполагают решение разных целей. Хотя существует большое разнообразие языковых единиц, которые могут функционировать в качестве хеджей, они делятся на две основные группы, упомянутые выше.

Целью статьи является выявление наиболее распространенных типов хеджей, используемых в двух типах дискурса, изучение их структурных типов, прагматических особенностей и обоснование их использования в данном типе дискурса. Исследование проводится в рамках современных лингвистических парадигм, таких как функциональная грамматика, прагматика и сравнительный анализ.

Авторы делают выводы о характере хеджирования, основных особенностях хеджирования и их дискурсивно-маркированных чертах.

Ключевые слова: хеджирование, хедж, публичные речи, интервью, аппроксиматор, адаптер, раундер, цит, выражающий правдоподобие, атрибутивный цит

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HEDGING IN DIFFERENT TYPES OF DISCOURSE

The article describes discourse features of some of the most common hedges observed in modern English and explores their communicative impact on the utterance. The authors apply Prince et al.'s classification of hedges into approximators (modify the propositional content conveyed in the utterance) and shields (modify the truth value of the utterance) to the analysis of speakers' hedging behaviour in two discourse genres: the interview and political speeches.

The choice of the materials for the analysis is determined by the researchers' practical interest to the study of the usage of hedges in discourse genres that differ considerably in the degree of spontaneity and presuppose solution of different aims. Although there is a great diversity of linguistic units which can function as hedges, they fall under the two major groups mentioned above.

The aim of the paper is to identify the most common types of hedges used in the two types of discourse, study their structural types, pragmatic features and account for their usage in the given type of discourse. The study is conducted within the framework of contemporary linguistics, such as functional grammar, pragmatics and comparative analysis. The authors make inferences about the nature of hedging, key features of hedges and their discourse-marked specifics.

Keywords: hedging, hedge, public speeches, interview, approximator, adaptor, rounder, plausibility shield, attribution shield

Introduction

The present article deals with hedging, a phenomenon widely used by native speakers of English in everyday conversation and writing. Despite considerable theoretical research on hedging which has been conducted since it became the topic of linguistic study in the 60s of the XX century (Lakoff, 1973; Prince et al., 1982; Crismore & Vande Kopple, 1997; Crismore & Vande Kopple, 1999; Crompton, 1997;

Cabanes, 2007, Caffi, 2007; Fraser, 2010; Brown & Levinson, 2014) the nature of hedging, classes of hedges, their pragmatics and discourse features remain understudied. Moreover, discourse-marked specifics of hedging behavior are left outside the scope of most investigations of modern English.

The practical value of the research consists in the fact that it provides insight into the use of hedges in two different discourse genres which differ in their primary purposes and the degree of spontaneity: the interview (spontaneous, informal) and political speeches (planned, formal). Appropriate hedging behavior requires awareness of the functions of hedges and structural patterns they are used in. When non-native speakers fail to hedge correctly, they may be perceived as impolite, offensive, or arrogant. If they misinterpret a hedged utterance, they may misunderstand the interlocutor's intention. Hedging is part of the target culture that foreign speakers and language learners should be aware of. The present article aims to study the frequency of hedges in the discourse types mentioned, their collocability and pragmatic functions.

Materials and methods

The present analysis focuses on the two categories of hedges, approximators and shields (Prince et al., 1982), in interviews of British celebrities and in public speeches of British Prime Ministers (2000-2013). The choice of the sources of materials was determined by the differences in the communicative purpose, degree of formality and spontaneity of the two genres, which makes the study of hedging discourse oriented. Among the methods used for linguistic assessment of the corpus data are quantitative and comparative analyses. The sources of materials subjected to investigation comprise authentic scripts of interviews with British actors, singers, musicians, TV-hosts as well as public speeches of British Prime Ministers, obtained from the BBC, the Guardian and the Independent.

Theoretical background

Research on hedging first appeared in the 1960s in the field of logic and philosophy, later researchers focused on semantic and pragmatic features of hedges. The term "*hedge*" in linguistics was introduced by G. Lakoff who defined the phenomenon as a means to make things "fuzzier or less fuzzy" (1972, p. 195). This view was further developed in the works by E. Prince, J. Frader, and C. Bosk (1982), A. Crismore

(1990), B. Fraser (2010), Crismore and W. Vande Kopple (1997, 1999), W. C. Caffi (1999), P. Brown and S. Levinson (2014) and others.

Although G. Lakoff (1972) understood hedging widely as both reinforcement and attenuation of the propositional content, today hedges are regarded in a different way, their reinforcement aspect has been laid aside. L. Hosman (1989) studied the interactive effects of intensifiers and hedges in speech and concluded that hedges have an influence on perceptions of attractiveness and credibility, while intensifiers do not. This is, probably, the main difference between these two notions.

A. Hübler (1983) in the book “Understatements and Hedges in English” shows the difference between the notions of “hedge” and “understatement”. In his view, understatement deals with the propositional content of the sentence, whereas hedging focuses on the speaker’s attitude to the situation. To prove his point of view he gives the following examples:

- (a) It is **a bit** cold here.
- (b) It is cold in Alaska, **I suppose**.

According to A. Hübler (1983), (a) contains an understatement, while (b) is a hedge because it pertains to the speaker’s attitude.

The Collins English Online Dictionary states that “*to hedge*” means “*to evade decision or action, especially by making noncommittal statements*”, and the noun “*hedge*” is defined as “*a cautious or evasive statement*” (1997, p. 365).

Classifications of hedges

The notion of hedging is a controversial issue in linguistics. Classifications of hedges are numerous and often display noticeable differences. This can be put down to the fact that the underlying principles of research on hedging are different, researchers view hedges from different perspectives, different variables are taken into consideration while classifying them, moreover, the classes of hedges subjected to analysis may vary considerably. For example, G. Lakoff (1972) focused on propositional hedging, B. Fraser (1975) considered performative verb hedging, P. Brown and S. Levinson (2014) investigated the speech act aspect of hedging, describing hedges in terms of politeness strategies.

A multidimensional approach to research on hedging was introduced by E. Prince et al. (1982). Relying on the conclusions made

in earlier studies E. Prince et al. (1982) suggested that hedges should be divided into two major classes – approximators and shields. The first class (approximators) hedge the propositional content and may be further subdivided into adaptors and rounders. Adaptors, such as *somewhat, kind of, sort of, some, a little bit*, apply to class membership and contribute to the interpretation of the utterance. Rounders, such as *about, approximately, something, around*, indicate a range, within which a notion is approximated. The other major class (shields) pertain to the degree of uncertainty about the propositional content that the speaker expresses and may reflect the extent of their involvement. These hedges fall into two groups: plausibility shields and attribution shields. Plausibility shields, such as *I think, probably, I take it, as far as I can tell, I have to believe right now, I don't see that* convey the speaker's uncertainty, doubt about what is being said. The other subclass – attribution shields – comprises expressions contributing to the truth value of the proposition, for example *according to, presumably, at least, to somebody's knowledge, etc.* They often make mention of the source of information.

E. Prince et al.'s (1982) distinction of hedges into approximators and shields is often criticized as purely theoretical. J. Skelton (1988) points out that the given classification is sustainable only in the abstract. He believes that approximators could easily function as shields. To illustrate this, he gives a phrase “It's made of something like rock”. He claims that “something like” here is an approximator as it makes the context fuzzier. But if we use “I suspect” in the same phrase it will be regarded as a shield. On the whole shields are more frequent in speech and can extend over more than one sentence.

F. Salager-Meyer (1995) includes the following classes of words in the taxonomy of hedging devices.

1) Shields: *can, could, may, might, would, to appear, to seem, probably, to suggest.*

2) Approximators of degree, quantity, frequency and time: *approximately, roughly, about, often, occasionally, etc.*

3) Hedges expressing authors' personal doubt and direct involvement: *I believe, to our knowledge, it is our view that, etc.*

4) Emotionally charged intensifiers: *extremely difficult/interesting, of particular importance, unexpectedly, surprisingly, etc.*

5) Compound hedges: *could be suggested, would seem likely, would*

seem somewhat, etc.

F. Salager-Meyer (1995) includes intensifiers in the class of hedges and analyzes the frequency of their occurrence and distribution in different genres. Her findings suggest that case reports and research papers contain fewer hedges than editorials, and in reviews the use of the passive voice is one of the most common hedging devices.

C. Caffi (1999, 2007) in the course of the research on *mitigation* which is defined as either lessening the intensity or force of something unpleasant or attenuation of the possible unfortunate effects on the hearer introduces another classification of mitigating mechanisms. Three major types of them are singled out: *bushes*, *hedges* and *shields*. Bushes are expressions that aim to reduce the precision of the propositional context and, as the 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. C. Caffi's (1999, 2007) mitigators resemble E. Prince et al.'s (1982) hedges, although the labels are applied differently.

C. Swee and H. Tan (2002) elaborate on F. Salager-Meyer's (1995) theory. According to their linguistic investigation all hedges can be grouped into 1) Adverbials (*approximately*), 2) Epistemic Verbs (*suggest*, *seem*, *appear*), 3) Modal verbs (*may*, *can*, *would*, etc.), Cognition Verbs (believe, suppose, think, surmise), 4) Hypothetical Constructions (*if*-clauses + adjectives, adverbs, nouns expressing modality), 5) Anticipatory *it*-clauses and *there is/are*.

Crompton (1997) suggests another typology of hedges: copulas, other than *be* (e.g. *The result appears to be that...*), lexical verbs (e.g. *The result suggests that...*), modal verbs (e.g. *The result might be that...*), probability adverbs (e.g. *The result possibly is that...*), probability adjectives (e.g. *It is possible that the result...*) (p. 280).

Functions of hedges

The controversial character of hedging has brought about a great diversity of views of the functional aspect of hedges. There is no consensus among linguists concerning the purposes of hedging either. G. Lakoff (1972) mentions two reasons why hedges are used in the first place: to express the speaker's uncertainty or to soften speech in order to be polite. E. Prince et al.'s (1982) and J. Skelton (1988) believe that

the main function of hedges is to convey information in an unobtrusive and unostentatious way. Crystal (1987) explains the use of hedges by the speaker's intention not to be precise, avoid further questions and their unwilling to tell the truth. According to Salager-Meyer (1994, 1995), explicit expression of facts, opinions, information or claims might not seem very appropriate, even impolite in many situations. Besides, hedging allows speakers to present information and report research results to the audience in a more precise way: "*hedging may present the strongest claim a careful researcher can make*" (1994: p. 151). P. Brown and S. Levinson (2014), Cabanes (2007) and B. Fraser (2010) consider hedges in terms of "positive" and "negative" politeness. Positive politeness strategies minimize the threat to the hearer's "positive face", make them feel satisfied, valued and relaxed, whereas negative politeness strategies serve to mitigate the effect the utterance may produce on the hearer, especially if the rank of imposition the utterance conveys is high, make it more tentative and less impinging.

What all researchers agree upon is that hedges are discourse features whose functions may succinctly be described as follows: they contribute to precision, politeness and attenuate the negative imposition.

The present research attempts to apply E. Prince et al.'s (1982) methodology to the analysis of authentic language use.

Study and results

The present research aims to explore speakers' hedging behaviour during interviews and political speeches, two genres representing oral discourse. The interview is characterised by a relatively high degree of spontaneity and instantaneous decision making because in the majority of cases the interviewee cannot even predict what questions they will be asked, besides the interviewee is likely to receive loaded or inconvenient questions to which they may have difficulty in finding an answer. Public speeches by contrast are generally prepared in advance, they are expected to be well-organised and strategically planned to satisfy the goals set by the speaker. Yet, they also allow for a certain degree of spontaneity primarily due to the unexpected character of the audience's reaction. Public speeches are usually referred to quasi-spontaneous discourse genres.

Approximators: Adaptors

Since the class of hedges is vast and displays great diversity, we have chosen the most frequently occurring items for our analysis. According to Prince et al. (1982) the most frequently used adaptors are *sort of*, *kind of*, *a little bit* and *somewhat*. These are hedges that affect the truth value of the proposition, make it less representative, thus attenuating its imposition.

Adaptors in the interview

Since the interview presupposes a lot of spontaneity, speakers tend to use a great number of hedges to mitigate the imposition of their utterances and sound less categorical. Quantitative comparison of *kind of* and *sort of* (the most common adaptors) allowed us to conclude that during the interview speakers tend to use *kind of* more frequently than *sort of* (57% and 43% correspondingly), although it is noteworthy that this difference is not considerable.

Kind of and *sort of* may modify various parts of speech and are normally used in pre-position to the modified item. The most commonly used distribution pattern for *sort of* is **Sort of + Verb** (58%), reporting verbs being the most frequent class, for example:

(1) *You sort of think: "Oh Christ, I'm going to have to just let go of the expectation and just play the part and try be as truthful about who I feel April is as I possibly can be."*

(2) *We played it on a tape cassette, and he just sort of said <...>*

In 25% of instances of *sort of* it was followed by a Noun or a Noun Phrase: **Sort of + Noun/Noun Phrase**.

(3) *It was sort of a solo flight.*

(4) *But I did study Shakespeare, that was sort of my thing.*

The pattern **Sort of + Adjective** was encountered in 17% of cases, for example:

(5) *I work with new people all the time and in different places, and it can be quite disorienting and so it's sort of nice to be working with the same person again.*

The adaptor *kind of* is used in the interview in a similar way. The most common pattern found in the corpus proves to be **Kind of + Verb** (45%). Interestingly, verbs preceded by *kind of* in our interview corpus either belong to the informal register and/or are emphatic, for example:

(6) *I had to kind of bang on people's doors for it to get made, so it was interesting.*

(7) *Sam wants to give Charlie the perfect first kiss because her first*

kiss **kind of** sucked.

This is a notable difference bearing in mind that *sort of* modified primarily reporting verbs.

In 29% of the *kind of* corpus it preceded a Noun or a Noun Phrase.

Kind of + Noun/Noun Phrase, for example:

(8) <...> *as opposed to kind of a failure of what she wanted him to be.*

Kind of may also modify **adjectives** (19.5%):

(9) *“Penny Lane” was kind of nostalgic, but it was really a place that John and I knew <...>*

Occasionally *kind of* and *sort of* were used as hesitation fillers which allowed the speaker to find the right word in case they felt doubtful or had to search for words, or have not come up with an idea, for example:

(10) *I don’t think victims are particularly attractive, in kind of as a character trait, you know?*

(11) *So it’s sort of – it’s a fabulous way to get into character. If you’ve got such an extreme costume <...>*

Instances of *kind of* modifying clauses were observed in 6.5% of the *kind of* corpus.

Kind of + subordinate clause:

(12) *I think that’s kind of how most people do this stuff.*

No such examples were found for *sort of*, which suggests that this hedge can hardly modify clauses.

Despite Prince et al.’s (1982) evidence for the most frequently used adaptors being *sort of*, *kind of*, *a little bit* and *somewhat* our analysis shows that this hedge is infrequent in the interview. There were only eleven occurrences of *a little bit* in the ten interviews analyzed.

The structural patterns observed in the case of *a little bit* are as follows:

A little bit + Adjective (39%)

(13) *I was a little bit nervous to the point that Beryl was offering so many cups of tea and biscuits to me that I think she thought she was playing Mrs. Hudson.*

A little bit + Adverb (30%)

(14) *But I would find moments throughout playing April and Hanna where I would understand them a little bit more as time went by.*

Verb + A little bit (31%)

(15) *If I watch an actor doing something like that, at a certain point*

*I think you start to switch off **a little bit** and tune out.*

A *little bit* in the hedging function was used in the preceding position to adjectives and adverbs, and in post-position to verbs. No considerable differences were observed in the occurrence rate of a *little bit* with different parts of speech

The results obtained in the course of the analysis of interviews with British celebrities point to a high frequency of *sort of* and *kind of* in the hedging function. A *little bit* was rare. No instances of *somewhat* were found.

Several situations where *almost* seemed to function as an adaptor were found in the corpus. It modified the propositional meaning of adjectives and verbs and was used in the preceding position.

(16) *He can smell the dwarves, and he knows there's something else going on the mountainside. He's **almost** telepathic.*

(17) *There's so many teenage TV series and movies and whatever else, that it's kind of a subject matter people **almost** hate to hear.*

Adaptors in political speeches

None of the above-mentioned adaptors (*kind of*, *sort of*, *a little bit*, *somewhat*) was observed in the corpus subjected to analysis. This can be accounted for by the fact that any modification of the propositional content with the aim of making it sound fuzzy or vague in political speeches will produce an undesirable effect of being perceived as an unreliable person by the public. The purpose of hedging runs counter to the requirements set for politicians: they need to sound confident and knowledgeable and avoid evasive statements.

Approximators: Rounders

Rounders represent a class of hedges which modify the propositional content presented in figures, statistics, deictic markers of time and measurements. They are normally used when the exact or precise information is of no importance to the speaker. Among the most common rounders in Prince et al.'s (1982) classification are *almost*, *about*, *approximately* and *something between*.

Rounders in the interview

Rounders such as *almost*, *about*, *approximately*, *something between* were attested in the corpus of interviews with British celebrities, however, they were infrequent. The interview rarely contains much statistical data in the first place, which makes rounders somewhat unnecessary.

Of the four rounders attested in the interview corpus the hedge *almost* proves to be the most common (72%). *Almost* used as a rounder normally modifies nouns (76%), for example:

(18) *It was **almost** a week, 5 days that we were in that green orangery thing a lovely conservatory near Bristol.*

and adverbs (24%), for example:

(19) *And it seems that, when you read about Lili's story, she would blend **almost** immediately in the world.*

The pattern **Almost + like + (Numeral +Noun) + Gerund** was frequently used in the interview with the meaning “*similar to*”, for example:

(20) ***Almost** like two magnets repelling each other.*

(21) *<...> it became **almost** like doing a one man show to the most surreal audience of people you know.*

However, it remains unclear whether *almost* functions as an adaptor or a rounder here. Such cases of ambiguity are not infrequent which proves it was not for nothing that Prince et al.'s (1982) classification of approximators into adaptors and rounders went in for severe criticism.

The rounder *about* is considerably less frequent (28%) than *almost*. It is used to modify nouns and noun phrases (usually numbers and measurements)

(22) ***About** 6 weeks ago, I traveled to Edmonton Alberta to show Connor the movie at his hospital.*

(23) ***About** a third of them were given to me by <...>*

No instances of *approximately* and *something between* were found in the interview corpus.

Rounders in political speeches

According to Wardhaugh (2010) hedges are typical of colloquial spontaneous speech which leads to the conclusions that they are hardly ever in political speeches, which belong to quasi-spontaneous discourse types and are traditionally planned in advance. However, the analysis conducted on our corpus proves the opposite.

Politicians often use rounders to hedge utterances which contain statistics pertaining to the issue discussed. Information supported with statistical data is usually perceived by the recipient as highly reliable, and therefore sounds more convincing to them. However, everyone understands that exact numbers are of no interest to the public, few of them are going to assess the information presented to their attention,

moreover, hedging allows speakers to disclaim responsibility for what is being said and convey information in an unostentatious way. Among the most common rounders (approximators of degree) are *almost*, *about*, *roughly*, *approximately*, *nearly*, etc.

In our corpus comprising political speeches *almost* (53%) and *nearly* (40%) were rather frequent, while *about* turned out to be less common (7%).

The most common pattern for *almost* was:

Almost + Numeral + Noun/Noun Phrase (62, 5%):

(24) *Leave aside that **almost** two million children are brought up in households where no one works.*

The other two patterns observed are noticeably less frequent. *Almost* modified adjectives (19%) and adverbs (18,5%).

Almost + Adjective

(25) *It seems **almost** impossible to believe now, that so recently, the T & G were mulcted for £50,000 by an Order of the Court.*

(26) *But despite all of them, I believe there is in every Conference a general will that seems to emerge **almost** unknowingly to set its own objectives.*

In (25) and (26) the function of *almost* is closer to that of adaptors rather than rounders, i.e. *almost* influences the truth value of the proposition attenuating its force.

The rounder *nearly* which is semantically equivalent to *almost*, modified only nouns and noun groups (usually numbers and measurements).

(27) ***Nearly** a third of your income of £37 million comes from private individuals and companies and we would like to thank them very much indeed.*

The rounder *about* always preceded statistical data presented in figures.

(28) *The £2.5bn Pupil Premium that I first wrote **about** 10 years ago.*

The rounders *approximately* and *roughly* were not found in the political speeches analyzed.

Shields: Plausibility shields

Shields unlike approximators do not affect the truth value of the propositional content conveyed in the utterance, they pertain to relationship between the content and the speaker. Plausibility shields

show the speaker's commitment to the truth of the propositional content, they make the statement of ideas less categorical and are intended to help the speaker disclaim responsibility for the general truth of the information conveyed in the utterance. To this group belong *I think, I take it, probably, as far as I can tell, right now, I have to believe, I don't see that*, etc. (Frazer, 2010)

Plausibility shields in the interview

Among the plausibility shields found in the interview are *I think, I suppose, I believe, I guess, as far as I'm concerned* and *I assume*. They are widely used by interviewees, which seems quite natural as in the course of the interview people express their own thoughts and opinions that they might want to make them less categorical or straightforward.

The analysis of ten interviews with British actors, TV-hosts, musicians and artists shows that among the plausibility shields attested in literature *I think* is the most common (87%), it either precedes the propositional meaning presented in the form of a clause or follows it, for example:

(29) ***I think*** when you're making an album, as the songs are piling up, one of the good things about it is that you will often write the song that you need.

(30) Actually, I would have said the opposite, ***I think***.

Several instances of *I think* may occur in the utterance.

(31) ***I think*** we in the Beatles had always liked 'Rain', but ***I think*** we thought that as a song, as a kind of radio thing, 'Paperback Writer' was a bit more immediate.

Other plausibility shields are less common in the interview: *I suppose* (6%), *I guess* (4%), *I mean* (2%). *I believe* (1%) has the lowest frequency among the plausibility shields observed in the interview.

(32) So ***I suppose*** the closer a character comes to me, the more challenging I actually – in a funny kind of way, *I think* I'd find it.

(33) So ***I guess*** I try and do things and keep people around me who to an extent normalize what is in one sense a very abnormal situation to be in on that level.

(34) You had to put off filming, ***I believe***, because of availability.

There are instances in the corpus where different plausibility shields are used by the speaker.

(34) No. No, ***I think*** it would – you'd be cutting your nose off to

spite your face if you turned down a fantastic script and a fantastic character simply because it was set 200 years ago. I mean, apart from, I think period films now means anything from ten years ago to the beginning of time. So – you know. I mean, no. I do love period films, personally. I love the fact that you can escape into a completely different reality. I think for me, what I love about film is that it's complete escapism. And I find personally that seeing these costumes, these weird societies, helps me to forget my life, and actually just dive into the story. So I think that's why as an actress, I like being in them, as well. It's a way into a fantastic fantasy world.

The plausibility shields *I assume* and *as far as I am concerned* were not found in our interview corpus, due to their formal character. The interview is for the most part informal, so the use of forms which indicate a high degree of formality would be a stylistic mismatch.

Plausibility shields in political speeches

Despite the evidence found in literature for the infrequency of plausibility shields in political discourse, instances of *I think* and *I believe* were observed in our corpus of political speeches.

(35) But **I think** that in our modern world, in these times of stress and anxiety...the family is the best welfare system there is.

(36) But despite all of them, **I believe** there is in every Conference a general will that seems to emerge almost unknowingly to set its own objectives. And **I believe** this Conference is in the process of doing the same thing.

(37) And it reflects those themes and priorities which the Party established in opposition and which **we believe** are the ones which should now most concern a Labour Government.

The use of the plural form *we* instead of the personal pronoun *I* is frequently used in political speeches to seek common ground (Brown & Levinson, 2014) and build rapport.

Shields: Attribution shields

Attribution shields assign responsibility to someone other than the speaker and affect the degree of the speaker's commitment. Such phrases as *according to her estimates*, *presumably*, *at least to one's knowledge*, etc. can be examples of this kind of hedges. The analysis of the two types of oral discourse, both spontaneous and pre-planned, provide no data on the use of attributive shields.

Discussion

Previous research into the problem of hedging limited the phenomena to colloquial speech only, spontaneous speech with pauses, repetitions and hesitations, conditions, the frequent usage of hedges. This viewpoint may lead to the conclusion of their extremely low frequency of occurrence in utterances pre-planned. This is partially true, as the overall frequency of hedges in political public speeches is lower as compared to interviews. However, it wouldn't be correct to say that hedging is not applicable to public discourse. Certain types of hedges used for suitable purposes are quite common there and contribute to the pragmatics of the utterance.

Interviews representing oral spontaneous speech abound in adaptors (*kind of, sort of, a little bit*), which makes the utterance less categorical, less certain, this adds a touch of casualness to what is being said. They are used in various contexts and modify different parts of speech. There are examples where adaptors are used several times in the paragraph. The discourse nature of interviews accounts for the low frequency of rounders (*approximately, something between, etc.*). On the other hand, their functional specificity makes rounders communicatively justified in political public speeches, they are used for efficiency. The use of shields in the material subjected to analysis is stylistically and functionally marked. The colloquial plausibility shields (*I believe, I think*) are used in texts of spontaneous interviews, while their more formal variants (*I assume, as far as I am concerned*) prove to be zero frequent. Political public speeches provide additional data on the use of plausibility shields (*I think, I believe*). These hedges reinforce the speaker's involvement, which contributes to the positive perception of the speech by the audience.

Conclusion

Hedging is a multidimensional phenomenon combining semantic, pragmatic and cognitive aspects. The pragmatically correct use of appropriate types of hedges serves as a natural instrument of language.

The findings obtained in the course of the present research allow to suggest interpretations of hedges in two types of oral discourse, namely interviews and political public speeches. Interdependence between the type of the hedge used, its stylistic reference and communicative message of the utterance is a proven fact.

Adaptors tend to be avoided in political discourse due to their high degree of casualness. This class of hedges is used as a stylistic device

adding intrigue and increasing expectation. In the interview, on the contrary, adaptors prove to be frequently used as this type of discourse presupposes a certain degree of spontaneity and casualness.

Rounders are more commonly used in political speeches than in interviews due to their informative character. Politicians prefer to use approximate figures instead of giving exact information in their speeches. In interviews rounders accompanied by measures appear less frequently which can be explained by the absence of facts and statistics in this type of discourse. Nevertheless, rounders turned out to be commonly used in the interview with adjectives or verbal actions making the statement vague or less certain.

Plausibility shields tend to be most frequent in interviews, which is quite accountable, as the interview is organized as a string of questions asked in order to get interviewees' personal answers which are mostly spontaneous. When used in political public speeches they emphasize the involvement of the speaker and their authority.

Attribution shields are rarely used in interviews and political public speeches.

Interviews as an example of oral spontaneous/quasi-spontaneous speech are expectedly full of hedges of various types used in combination with different parts of speech. The variety of hedging devices is accounted for by the nature of the given type of discourse. The interviewees tend to use them to mitigate the utterance and demonstrate a low degree of certainty in order to protect themselves from possible criticism from the part of the interviewer and the audience. The choice of the hedging device is determined by the speaker's communicative aim, the function of the hedge and the linguistic item it modifies. The appropriate use of hedges enables the speaker to realize their communicative goal in a way most appropriate to defend themselves and save face.

The data obtained in the course of the analysis proves that political discourse, especially political public speeches, do not deny hedging. By using hedges politicians aim to produce a desirable effect on the audience and evoke a desirable emotional response from them. These hedges have the following functions: limiting the truth value of the proposition to the speaker's opinion and judgments, shifting responsibility, attenuation the impact of the speech act, mitigating the proposition, supporting the statement with facts and statistics in an

unostentatious way.

The conducted research demonstrates the role of hedging awareness in building effective interpersonal communication. The hedges under analysis in the two types of oral spontaneous and pre-planned discourse prove to be stylistically and functionally marked. Being a vast controversial area of modern communication, the topic under investigation presents interest for further linguistic analysis.

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ВЫРАЖЕНИЕ ПРЕДПОЛОЖЕНИЯ В РАЗГОВОРНОМ АНГЛИЙСКОМ

В статье представлен сравнительный анализ средств выражения модального значения предположения на английском языке. Предположение представляет собой эпистемическую модальность, которая является одним из наиболее распространенных модальных значений в языках, включая