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Creating Future Leaders

HEDGING IN THE MULTIDISCIPLINARY POSTGRADUATE THESES OF STUDENTS IN A GHANAIAN UNIVERSITY

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DECLARATION

I, Dorian Odolina Oyewale-Johnson (student #18022915) hereby declare that the thesis for the PhD studies at the University of Venda, hereby submitted by me, has not been submitted previously for a degree at this or any other university, that it is my own work in design and in execution, and that all reference material contained therein has been duly acknowledged.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents Mrs. Vida Esinam Akrong (nee Demanya) and Mr. Emmanuel Mensah Akrong who laid the foundation of hard work, diligence, and confidence in my life, and also encouraged me to pursue my academic career.

To my brother, Mr. Cedric Akrong, and Mr. Henry Ndubisi-Nwokoye thank you for your holistic support.

This dedication also goes to my supportive and caring children: Senyo, Oyefemi, Oyekemi, Oyeyoni,Boare, Eyram and my Naana, King-Worlase you are a blessing to me.

To the blessed memory of my beloved sister, Daisy: Rest well.

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ABSTRACT

Research on hedging in recent times has concentrated on works of expert writers to the exclusion of neophytes in academic writing. The limited research on hedging in students' academic writing could thus impede language instructors' efforts to determine how appropriately novice writers who happen to be students, employ caution in the making of their claims. There is minimal research on hedging in the Ghanaian context, therefore, the aim of the study was to explore hedging in postgraduate theses across seven disciplines in a Ghanaian university. It explored linguistic strategies that are employed as hedging in the Findings/Discussions, Interpretation/Analysis and Conclusions/Recommendations sections of theses from seven departments of the Schools of Languages, Arts and Performing Arts from a Ghanaian university. The qualitative research method was employed and the study sample comprised postgraduate students' theses. Forty-two (42) thesis chapters of postgraduate students were selected through multi-stage sampling. Only those who had more than two pages of Findings/Discussions, Interpretation/Analysis and Conclusions/Recommendations were considered. Content analysis was employed to analyse the data; and the findings revealed variations in each rhetorical section and confirmed variations across disciplines in the appropriation of hedges. The results also revealed that the most used categories of hedging were modal auxiliaries and compound hedges. It was also established that the Findings/Discussions sections were the most heavily hedged sections; and the most hedged discipline was Philosophy/Classics. The study can be used to enhance postgraduate students' appropriate use of hedging in writing in Ghana and in other non-native English speaking countries.

Key words: hedging, rhetorical devices, across disciplines, postgraduate theses.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ESL - English as a Second Language

EFL- English as a Foreign Language

ESP- English for Special Purposes

FATS- Face Threatening Acts

PhD-Doctor of Philosophy

IMRAD-Introductions, Methods, Results and Discussions

PP-Politeness Principles

IP-Irony Principles

CP-Cooperative Principles

CC-Current Conversational

BA-Bachelor of Arts

MA-Master of Arts

L1-First Language

L2-Second Language

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the Study

According to Salager-Meyer (1994), Hyland (1998) and Vold (2006) hedging is an important rhetorical strategy in academic writing. Hyland (1998), defines hedging as the use of cautious language by scholars. Hedging tends to be a significant characteristic of academic writing among other important features: citation, complexity, formality, precision, accuracy, responsibility, objectivity and explicitness. Several researchers, such as Skelton (1986), Crompton (1997), Hyland (1998), Varttala (2001) and Hinkel (2004), have carried out extensive studies on what constitutes hedging. Their studies sought to understand the function and purpose of hedging in academic writing. But their research focus has been on expert writings to the neglect of students' writing. Researchers' focus on hedging on expert articles to the neglect of students' writing creates a barrier to finding the appropriation of hedging in students' writings by researchers.

Several academics believe that academic writing is factual writing, and thus statements in academic writing should remain as neutral as possible and must be devoid of personalism. Other scholars, such as Bolsky (1988), Varttala (2001) and Chris & Zawacki (2006), are of the view that writers should apply cautious language in the making of their claims. The scholars who subscribe to the notion that academic writing should maintain its neutrality and thus be devoid of the use of hedges, object to any form of vagueness in all forms of academic writing. These scholars rather advocate exactness in academic writing as they are convinced that imprecise expression will leave some sort of doubt in the reader's mind. These scholars further assert that certainty and credibility should rather characterize the claims of the writer. Undeniably, these scholars consider that hedges are objectionable in academic writing and, consequently, should be avoided.

Despite the entrenched position of scholars who do not subscribe to hedging, it is imperative that researchers hedge in their claims because hedges are:

1) Rhetorical devices, which enable writers to neutralize the strong force that is embedded in their claims;
2) Used by writers in order to avoid criticism and opposition from the academic discourse community.

3) Strategies, which unvaryingly guarantee the acceptance of writers into the discourse community.

Musa (2014) notes that authors who prefer to hedge in academic writing derive their motivation from a classically established rhetoric position which operates on the theory that texts in academic writing are not only content-oriented and informative but also are usually aimed at convincing and influencing audiences and readers. Thus, the correct use of hedging will reliably enable researchers to make their stances on their claims while creating a barrier or a shield for themselves against opposition from their audiences/readers. Hyland (2000) agrees that hedging in academic writing allows for a thoughtful and non-categorical approach to the presentation of research results, which in turn enables academics to gain acceptance for their work.

Undeniably, hedging has an immeasurable function in academic writing. Therefore, scholars such as Crompton (1986), Skelton (1997), Hyland (1998) and Hinkel (2004) in their studies emphasize that frequently researchers employ hedging in academic writing because they want to bring to light their level of commitment to their proposition. According to these scholars, hedging expresses caution, and the truthfulness of claims made by writers. The scholars further argue that appropriation of hedges in writing projects politeness, caution, honesty and deference to the opinions of others. Numerous studies in academic writing have also established that hedging statements and claims is one of the most indispensable characteristics of formal writing (Crompton, 1986; Adel, 2006; Bonyadi.etal 2012). This then validates the fact that hedging cannot be ignored in academic writing.

There exists a range of areas of taxonomies of hedging devices in writing. For instance, Hyland (1998) stated that hedging is mostly expressed as: a) lexical verbs (to think, argue indicate, propose, and speculate appear, believe, assume, suggest, estimate, tend,); b) epistemic adverbs (practically, likely, presumably, virtually, apparently possibly, probably); c) epistemic adjectives (un/likely probable, possible); and d) modal verbs (may, might, can, could, would, should).

Salager-Meyer (1997) also categorized hedging devices as introductory phrases rather than lexical devices (our view is that; we feel; to my knowledge; I believe; to our knowledge; that) and if-clauses. Furthermore, Lewin (2005) asserts that writers can meet the requirement of gaining commitment to their propositions through the use of rhetorical strategies and theories which provides admission to lack of knowledge.

A specific area of hedging in academic writing that has not been given much attention is students' interdisciplinary study. There are studies on hedging in countless types of academic genres like textbooks, research articles, reports, conference paper presentations but not much consideration has been given to students' writing. The specific subject area that has been ignored is students' disciplinary study, particularly postgraduate students' theses (Hinkel, 2004). Postgraduate students' ability to function in the academic context depends on their ability to recognize hedges and employ them appropriately when necessary in their research work. Consequently, if much attention is not paid to how postgraduate students' hedge in their theses, it will be difficult to ascertain how these novice writers are functioning in academic writing in relations to the appropriation of hedging. That is why the current study's focus is on investigating the types and the appropriateness of hedges employed by postgraduate students in a Ghanaian University

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Minimal attention has been dedicated to research on how postgraduate students effectively appropriate hedging skills in their theses across disciplines. Hidayati, et.al (2008) and Hinkle (2015) reveal that there is an insufficient study on how hedging is appropriated by students' in their writing in general. Specifically, they indicate that postgraduate students' writing across disciplines has been negligible yet a substantial number of studies in academic writing have investigated experts' usage of hedging in research articles. Since a study cannot be carried across all disciplines in a particular university, the current study explored hedging in postgraduate theses across seven disciplines in a Ghanaian university in an effort to fill the gap of insufficient studies of hedging across disciplines. Also, less attention has been given to the study of hedging in African countries, including Ghana. The study was thus intended to add to the body of knowledge of hedging across disciplines in the Ghanaian context

Studies on academic writing reveal that foreign students who study English language [EFL] and student who study English as a Second Language [ESL] often find it problematic to express commitment and detachment to their propositions through hedging. Hyland (2006) and Hinkle (2004) assert that inappropriation of hedging by EFL and ESL students can badly impede their participation in a research world which is dominated by English. The current study ascertained how challenging it was for postgraduate students to hedge appropriately in their theses across seven disciplines in a Ghanaian university.

1.2 Objectives

The aim of the study is to explore *hedging* in postgraduate theses across seven disciplines in a Ghanaian University. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to

1. Examine the extent to which hedging is included in postgraduate theses across seven disciplines.

2. Investigate the forms and types of hedges found in postgraduate theses across seven disciplines in a Ghanaian University.

3. Ascertain whether or not postgraduate students effectively craft their claims through hedging devices across seven disciplines.

4. Examine the complexities of hedging in postgraduate theses across seven disciplines.

1.3 Research Questions

The study is in the research area of academic writing across disciplines. It seeks to find out how postgraduate students' employ hedges in their theses across seven disciplines. Specific questions that centre on realizing the objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To what extent is hedging employed in postgraduate theses across seven disciplines?

2. What are variations and the types and forms of hedges that postgraduate students employ in their theses across seven disciplines?

3. How effectively do postgraduate students craft their propositions with hedges across seven disciplines in a Ghanaian University?

4. Which complex taxonomies of hedges are found in postgraduate theses across seven disciplines?

1.4 Assumptions

The basic assumption in studies on hedging in academic writing is that native speakers hedge more appropriately than non-native English speakers because non-native speakers have an influence from their first language (L1). Studies on hedging in academic writing may be based on the assumption that hedging devices that non-native speaker's use for hedging in making their claim is minimal. Thus, with help of research, there can be an improvement and an enhancement on the non-native speaker's ability to select the appropriate mitigations to temper their propositions.

Another assumption is that textbooks for teaching writing in the context of English as a Second Language (ESL) and English for Special Purposes (ESP) writing rarely focus on

hedges of any kind, except for modal verbs (Hyland, 2006). The focus on using only modal verbs for hedging amounts to neglect of study of other linguistic devices that can be used for hedging by ESL learners. This places a limitation on the teaching of relevant linguistic devices. Research on hedging will then create the awareness of those important hedging devices that are not captured in the textbooks. This will further enable instructors to teach students the types of hedging devices, which will, in the long run, positively influence their choice of hedging.

Furthermore, there is the perception that there exist disciplinary differences in the use of hedging devices in postgraduate students' theses. Thus, it is imperative that instructors create awareness of the uses of these rhetorical devices to the students so that the students will identify the differences in hedging among disciplines and be guided in the selection of the appropriate hedges in the softening of their claims.

1.5 Delimitation of the Study

The study seeks to find out how postgraduate students in a Ghanaian University employ hedging devices in their theses across selected disciplines. The study is undertaken in ESL setting. Thus, the focus will be on non-native speakers only. The selected disciplines are limited to the College of Humanities.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study is significant in five distinct ways:

1. It is relevant to the body of knowledge in teaching English for academic purposes at all levels.

2. It is relevant to students in mastering the skills of hedging in the making of their propositions in academic discourse.

3. It is important for the acceptance of students in the academic discourse community.

4. It can enable students to become effective participants in a research world dominated by the international lingua franca of English.

5. It is significant for supervisors as well as authors who write articles for publications.

1.7 Literature Review

Hedging has turned to be one of the frequently discussed issues in academic writing. (Lewin 2005; Vassileva 2001). Hyland (1998) defines hedging as using linguistics devices such as *possible, might, and believe* which indicate the writer's decision to present information as an opinion rather than as a fact. In other words, by the use of hedges, speakers or writers communicate a low commitment to their assertion and seek to distance themselves from what they communicate (Prokofieva and Hirschberg 2014).Koutsantoni (2006) claims that hedging is motivated by epistemological and social factors and help writers and speakers to present their unproven claims with appropriate accuracy and caution and to attach the correct degree of certainty to their statements. Hedging thus enable writers to enter a dialogue with their audience to allow room for alternative interpretations, and tone down their assertions in order to solicit acceptance for them (Myers 1990; Koutsantoni 2006).

The term hedging has been defined and understood in various ways. Lakoff (1973: 471) uses the term to describe "a set of words or phrases that function to make things fuzzier". Hyland (1995: 1) defines hedging as "expressions of tentativeness and possibility in language use", which "indicate interpretations and allow writers to convey their attitude to the truth of the statements they accompany, thereby presenting unproven claims with caution and softening categorical assertions". Hyland (1998: 1) further defines hedging as the expression of "lack of complete commitment to the truth value of an accompanying proposition regardless of whether the author is actually committed". To him, hedges enable writers not only to express their perspective on the precision of their own propositions, but also the propositions of others. Hyland (2004) believes that hedges mark the writer's reluctance to present propositional information categorically. Holmes (1984, 1990) defines hedging as the way that writers seek to modify their claims, toning down uncertain or potentially risky statements, and conveying appropriately collegial attitudes to readers. As these definitions show, by using hedging devices writers avoid to accept complete responsibility of the truth of their propositions.

Numerous researchers including Meyer (1994), Salager-Meyer(1994) and Shakibafar et.al (2014), have noted that non-native students of the English language who lack the important skills needed to construct formal academic texts are likely to be disadvantaged when they compete for academic laurels at the international level with their counterparts who are native speakers. Yeh (2009), Ekoc (2010) and Falahati (2015) claim learners of English can acquire

these hedging skills through the teaching of hedges in their academic writing courses. They further argue that the possible means through which instructors will realize that there is a hedge gap in the students' knowledge of academic writing is through research findings on students' work.

It is not likely that a comprehensive classification of hedges to be achieved. Hyland (1994) claims that hedging can assume unpredictable forms and as a result researcher cannot exhaustively categorize hedged devices. The changeable form of hedging taxonomy has resulted in the complex nature of hedging in academic writing. For instance, Brown & Levinson (1987) perceived hedging as a negative politeness strategy, in their theoretical framework. Accordingly, negative politeness enables scientific writers to avoid face- threatening act which might lead to a possible rejection of their claims by their audiences. Consequently, these scientists, according to Brown and Levinson (1987) need to present claims that look provisional and pending for acceptance in the discourse community. Brown & Levinson therefore concluded that hedging tends to reflect the degree of the probability of statements made between the writer and the reader.

Again, Myers (1989) emphasizes the interpersonal aspect of hedging behaviour, which is used to indicate that writers will not impose their finding on the audience's desires or beliefs but rather present their proposition with the needed caution, which will be much more appealing and acceptable to the audience's desires. When writers are able to present their claims with the needed caution it will then depend upon readers to make an evaluation of those claims to either refute or accept or accept them. With this the writer will be saved from any form of opposition from the audience or readers.

Furthermore, Vold (2006) puts the functions of hedges into two modes: real and strategic hedges. He refers to real hedges as linguistic devices, which are employed by writers to express real caution, principally when the nature of findings from a study will not make it possible for the author to make strong and absolute claims. On the other hand, strategic hedges are those that are employed in situations where writers forestall probable criticism or simply wish to tone down the strong force behind their claims in order to avoid opposition from their audiences. When novice writers consider these two functions of hedges critically, they will make their claims with dexterity, which will unfailingly enable them to gain acceptance in the academic community.

Yen (2007) notes that hedges can perform textual or interpersonal functions. Yen further notes that writers utilize textual hedges when the exact references or precise numeric expression of their proposition is unobtainable or unnecessary in view of the needs of the audience this, implies that writers have the tendency to hedge in an instance when it is almost impossible for them to meticulously propose their claims. Within the interpersonal context Yen explains that, it is applicable when writers aspire to indicate that the explanations given in their proposition should not be taken as the only possible interpretation but that readers/audiences can make an informed judgment on the statements, which will therefore prevent possible rejection of the writer's claims.

Similarly, Varttala (2001) identifies another dimension to interpersonal hedges as that which is applied by authors in order to express positive politeness. He argues that writers with scientific acumen tend to seek to enhance the readership's self-image: As a result, scientific writers employ hedges to provide an expression which is centred on expertise verses expertise relationship rather than on expertise verses non-expertise relationship. Accordingly, when writers employ hedging techniques readers feel respected and their positive face is consequently satisfied. While Varttala (2001) and Vold (2006) make a two-way peculiarity uses of hedges, Hyland (2005) suggests three main functions of hedges that enable writers and readers to gain acceptance of their claims. First, he asserts that writer's hedge to make their stances with a high level of precision in situations when they consider that an opposition will arise that might result in misinterpretation of their claims. The second reason for using hedges is in line with the writer's aspiration to avert potential adverse consequences of being proved erroneous and thereafter a subsequent rejection of the claim. Lastly, hedging contributes to the establishment and maintenance of a healthy writer/reader relationship, which results in the advancement of mutual respect and cooperation between writer/audience.

When theories of hedges by Varttala (2001), Hyland (2005) and Vold (2006) are compared, it could be envisaged that the concept of hedging, to a large extent, covers the same range of purposes of hedging although the theories are of different value. For example, Vold's (2006) real hedges are in congruence with Hyland's (2005) uncertain scientific claims, although Hyland highlighted advantages of precision that can be achieved with hedging be-

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haviour. Like Hyland, Varttala (2001) includes a positive politeness dimension in his inter-personal hedges, but seems to have restricted this aspect to scientific acumen while Hyland relates his theory to general academic writing.

Various scholars have carried out research studies on hedging in academic texts in diverse ways. For instance, Salager-Meyer (1994) mentioned scholarly studies that have been done on hedging in the following areas:

 a) Hedges in conventional academic writing (McKinley, 1983; Powell, 1985; Stubb, 1986; Zuck & Zuck, 1987; Skelton, 1988);

b) Hedging phenomenon in academic discourse (Smith, 1983, 1984);

c) Medical research expertise papers (Kabuki, 1988);

d) Hedging in social sciences (Rounds, 1981, 1982);

e) Hedging in physician/patient oral discourse (Prince et al., 1982);

f) Hedging in economic forecasting (Pindi et al., 1986);

g) Hedging in biomedical slide talks (Dubois, 1987); and

h) Hedging in a corpus of molecular genetics (Myers, 1988).

Hyland (1994) perceives hedging as a meta-discourse element which is limited to textbooks rather than students' writing. Prasithrathsint (2015) analyzed lexical items and their stylistic attributes that are considered as hedges in academic articles in the humanities, written by native   and near-native speakers of English which was represented by Filipino scholars, and non-native speakers of English represented by Thai scholars. Prasithrathsint's analysis was however concerned with research articles to the exclusion of students' writing. Other studies focus on hedging in relation to issues such as pragmatic competence in research articles. For instance, Nugroho (2002) studied political language; Yang (2003) and Hinkel (2005) focused on language teaching; Matsumoto-Gray (2009) looked at cross-cultural difference; Matsumoto-Gray (2009) and Jalilifar & Alavi (2011) studied academic writing; and Fraser (2010) studied gender difference and hedging in academic writing.

Evidentially, a considerable amount of studies has been done in the general field of academic writing like the sciences and the humanities and also on the employment of hedging devices by researchers in various forms i.e. research articles, reports, textbooks and newspapers.

A few researchers have however focused on specific area of academic writing such as the masters' theses. Yeh (2007) added to research on study of hedging in graduate students'

theses through his study of Taiwanese student writers' hedging behaviour. Akbas's (2012) study revealed that non-native speakers used a mixture of their cultural influences in hedging. Musa (2014) investigated the discourse functions of hedges in English and chemistry masters' theses at University of Cape Coast in Ghana. The one aim of these scholars is to find out how hedges are used as rhetorical devices by writers to neutralize the strong force that was embedded in their claims. Furthermore, Atmaca (2016) found the similarities and differences between M.A. theses and Ph.D. dissertations of Turkish students in English Language Teaching in terms of hedges.

Disciplinary study of hedging in students' academic writing is an area which has received little attention. Numerous studies on hedging in countless types of academic writing like the sciences and the humanities (mostly presented in the form of textbooks, research articles, reports and conferences paper presentation) have been thoroughly discussed by researchers. These subject specific studies ignore students' disciplinary study, particularly graduate students' theses despite the fact that it is an area where novice writers are likely to exhibit their understanding of and the appropriate use of hedges.

As a result of the limited study of students' disciplinary writing, Fraser (2010) looked at hedging as an aspect of pragmatic competence in students' interdisciplinary writing. His study revealed that there is a lack of pragmatic competence among second-language speakers, and he noted that lack of pragmatic competence in hedging could create a serious problem for them. Thus, it is necessary for one to master the art of hedging if one wants to communicate effectively in a language, as failure to hedge properly both on the propositional level and the speech act level has a great potential for misconception.

A study by Musa (2014) on the pragmatic analysis of hedging in students' disciplinary writing revealed that there are three major roles pragmatic functions of hedging devices perform in students' theses: firstly, they help researchers to express their claims with precision; secondly, they help researchers to protect themselves against claims made in order to prevent possible future criticism; and lastly, they enable researchers to present claims with the needed humility which enables them to gain reader gratification.

The pragmatic aspect of hedging should be given the maximum attention by researchers when making their claims so that they will not fall prey to disparagement and further refutation in academic discourse community.

Accordingly, to Hyland (1994), Yen (2007) and Halabisaz et al. (2014) models auxiliaries are rhetorical devices that students appropriate frequently across disciplines. Their findings indicate that student writers are more accustomed to the use of epistemic modalities.it implies students are limited in appropriately hedging devices, although there exist other important discourse-based hedging strategies.

Ekoc's (2010) study demonstrates that despite the limited use of hedges by students across disciplines, student academic writing in all disciplines focuses on employing hedging in making their claims to different degrees and in different ways. The different ways in which these hedges are employed, according to his findings, are a factor of the practices of each discipline. The implication of selecting the appropriate hedge is that since each discipline is different, students must follow academic writing conventions that are acceptable in their disciplines.

In an attempt to get further insight into student hedging across disciplines, Akbas (2012) carried out a study that revealed that native speakers of English have preferences for using hedges more in their style of writing whereas non-native writers tend to hedge less in the making of their claims.

There is a clear indication that graduate students use hedges in making their claims. But the research on hedging in graduate students' theses is still not exhaustive, being limited to a certain number of graduates from selected countries who also explored a very limited area of hedges. Scholars agree that more studies on graduate theses are needed in order to confirm the variations in and the uneven distribution of hedging in graduate students' theses, as conventions in different disciplines are likely to be a constraining factor in the types of hedges being employed by postgraduate students.

The full literature review of this study is focused on exploring the concept of hedges in the literature, the importance of hedging, and hedging as a semantic phenomenon with ideation function, hedging as pragmatic phenomenon with inter personal function, the categorization of hedges, hedging in graduate students' writing, hedging in general academic writing and hedging in interdisciplinary writing.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

Hedging functions to avoid face threatening behaviour and demonstrates politeness in particular situations (Hyland, 1996). Therefore, the theory of politeness, especially those espoused by Fraser (1990) and Brown & Levinson (1999) underpins the study.

Yule (1996) sees politeness as a phenomenon that reduces the likelihood of misunderstanding between writers and readers during communication. According, to Watts et al. (1992) the idea of politeness in communication has a correlation with how human beings successfully manage interpersonal relationship in order to achieve both individual and groups goal. Politeness in communication in this regard is made up of kinds of linguistic constructions and practices, which allow members of a socio-cultural setting to achieve individual and group goals. This study will therefore apply the politeness theory to determine how the possibility of conflict is minimized in the academic discourse community when masters' students employ hedging techniques to make their claims.

The idea of linguistic politeness was engrained in Grice's conversational maxims where it was suggested that the politeness maxim should be added to other maxims in order for it to be justified for language use in any context. The cooperative principles of maxims of quality, quantity, relation, and manner were then instituted by Grice's studies.

1.8.1 Fraser's (1990) Notion of Politeness Theory

Fraser's (1990) notion of politeness theory can placed in two: (a) Conversational-maxim and (b) Social-norm.

1.8.1.1 The Conversational-Maxim

The conversational-maxim viewpoint depends entirely on the work of Grice's (1967) classic paper on 'Logic and conversation'. As a focal point for the clarification of a speaker's intended meaning, Grice stipulated that communicators are cogent persons who are principally concerned with the efficacy of their communication. Consequently, Grice proposed the Co-operative Principle (CP), which argues that "Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of talk exchange in which you are engaged" (1975:45).

Applying the CP to hedging, an important fact is that researchers/writers should state their claims in the manner they want to when necessary within the context in which they find

themselves. Thus, postgraduate students should employ hedges to communicate their propositions in a manner that is acceptable and which will in turn minimize or fend off opposition from some members of the speech community.

According to Fraser (1990), although the CP is vital and operates in almost all kinds of conversations, Grice's views of the CP is merely a combination of principal maxims and sub-maxims, which communicators must adhere to. When writers adhere to the cooperative principal and maxims theories, it is assumed that they will be cautious in the following ways:

"Anyone who cares about the goals that are central to conversation/communication (giving and receiving information, influencing and being influenced by others) must be expected to have an interest, given suitable circumstance, in participation in talk exchanges that will be profitable only on the assumption that they are conducted in general accordance with the CP and the maxims." (1975: 49)

Students who observe the cooperative principles throughout, by applying hedging devices must be mindful of the goals of communication suitable in the communication circumstances of their disciplinary communities or sub-communities.

1.8.1.2 The Social-Norm View

Fraser's (1990) politeness position according to the social norm view, espouses a chronological distinction of politeness, which is largely accepted within the English-Speaking communities worldwide. He posits that societies must have their set of social norms that prescribes speech decorum. He further argues that a positive assessment of politeness during communication arises when a particular communicative action corresponds to the societal norms. Consequently, a negative assessment of impoliteness or rudeness occurs when an action is contrary to the prescribed rules of the society.

The application of the social–norm view in the academic discourse community in relation to hedging implies that researchers/writers must follow the norms guiding the making of their claims so that they avoid getting into opposition with readers/listeners. Most importantly, masters' students must realize and be mindful of the set of social norms that guide the making of claims in academic discourse through hedging so that their actions, through writing, will correspond with the social norms of the discourse community.

Fraser (1990) argues that there are codes of conduct that contain maxims that reveal ethics that writers must use in order to avoid getting into opposition with their audience. Some of

these underlying assumptions or ethics are norms like hedging, which guide effective communication. Frazer asserts that a variety of the *Ladies' Manuscript of Etiquette and Handbook of Politeness,* which was written in 1872, suggests a wide range of guidance which is envisioned to manage polite dialogue: avoid topics which may be supposed to have any direct reference to events or circumstances which may be painful. If it happens unintentionally that a lady raises a worrisome subject, she is taught that, in that case, "do not stop abruptly, when you perceive that it causes pain, and above all, do not make the matter worse by apologizing; turn to another subject as soon as possible, and pay no attention to the agitation your unfortunate remark may have excited." Never question the veracity of any statement made in general conversation. If you are convinced a proclamation is false, and it is detrimental to another person, you may not be present when the pronouncement was made, you may quietly and courteously inform the speaker that he/she is mistaken, but if the misrepresentation is of no greater consequence, no action should be taken it should be allowed to simply pass.

A careful application of the Fraser (1990) politeness notion of hedging by postgraduate students in the academic discourse community will not only make them avoid opposition in the discourse community, but will strengthen and enhance their effective communication competence.

1.8.2 The Notion of Politeness: Brown & Levinson's (1999)

Scholars state that the most comprehensive study of interactive characteristics of hedging in the literature of academic writing is politeness. The notion of politeness is thus accredited to Brown & Levinson (1999).

Brown & Levinson (1999) applied "face" analogy to explain their notion of politeness. The "face" model which represents a person's self-esteem, was adopted from Goffman (1967). The model states that "face" is a world-wide concept, which is a socially accentuated by public self-image which every member of a society wants to claim for himself. Brown & Levinson (1999) further described two types of faces which ascribes what communicators aspire for during the commination period and not what the communicator's social norms prescribe.

1.8.2.1 Negative Face

Brown & Levinson (1999:62) see the "negative face" as the want of every "competent adult member" that his action be unimpeded by others. This want is that which enables one to

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have an unhindered action and unimpeded attention. The negative face thus implies an individual's ability to have a free will, which is the need to express him/herself in a language community without any impediment. Therefore, masters' students, by efficiently employing hedging devices in the making of their claims, will freely express themselves without obstacles from or offending members of the academic discourse community.

Bousfield (2008) asserts that in the negative face situation, an individual, the speaker/writer, wants to make his/her statement unhindered and also lessen the imposition of the claim on the hearer and also amends the negative face threat that may arise. The negative face when applied by the masters' student through hedging will grant them the opportunity to freely make their claims while softening the imposition on the hearers at the same time. In relation with the above, Fraser (1990) principally perceives hedging as a negative politeness directive.

1.8.2.2 Positive Face

Brown & Levinson (1999) assert that "positive face" is where members in a given society desire that other members in the society will want their capabilities. These wants or capabilities, which are either actions, acquisitions or values, must be thought of as desirable wants in the society. The implication of the positive face is that individuals in any discourse community long to be understood and accepted by all whenever they make a claim. Bousfield (2008) asserts that the positive face is employed to lessen the threat that may be caused to the hearer's positive face, and also it is an attempt by the speaker to make the hearer have an awesome impression about him/herself. This attempt by the speaker aspires to arouse the interest of the listener in the conversation. Thus, in an attempt to make what they communicate acceptable to all in the academic discourse community, postgraduate students' must employ hedging devices in their writing.

Brown & Levinson (1999) assert that "Face" value can either be lost or upheld; consequently, any threat to the face must be scrutinized in conversation. Since *face* is so susceptible, most participants in the communication process will rather prefer to defend the face if threatened than lose it. Thus, there is an assumption that communicators must strive as best as they can to uphold each other's face during the communication period so that each pe-

son's intention will be explicitly stated. Following the politeness theory, postgraduate students can effectively appropriate hedges in their writing without threatening the face of their hearers/readers.

The establishing code for Brown & Levinson's (1999) politeness theory is the concept that "some acts are intrinsically threatening to face and thus require softening ..." (1999: 24). As a result, language users must acquire politeness philosophies from which they can develop certain linguistics conventions. Going by the principle, application of these politeness approaches is likely to make speakers/writers successful when communicating their desirable message(s) intentions to their audience in the speech community. Communicators thus lessen the loss of their "face" that results from interaction when they apply the politeness tenets.

Brown & Levinson (1999) posit that speech/writing deeds are characteristically face-threatening actions to either the speaker or the hearer, or to both of them. Brown & Levinson then proposed four significant analyses through which speech and writing acts can be threatening to speakers/hearers "faces":

1: Acts that can threaten hearer's Negative Face: include intimidating, warning, ordering and advising acts

2: Acts that threaten hearer's Positive Face: include complaining, criticizing, disagreeing behaviours and raising taboo topics.

3: Acts that threaten the speaker's Negative Face: include accepting an offer, accepting thanks, and giving promises unwillingly.

4: Acts that threaten the speaker's Positive Face which include apologizing, accepting compliments, and giving confessions.

Finally, postgraduate students' must critically take into consideration the speech/writing acts that are likely to be impediments to the 'faces' of their audience; and by carefully selecting appropriate hedging devices when necessary, they will be able to effectively make their claims without a threat to the reader/hearer's face in the academic discourse community.

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1.9 Research Methodology

The research is qualitative in nature. Qualitative study, according to Huberman & Miles (2002) is a methodology that is reliable in making meaning from the viewpoints of the participants. Marshall & Rossman (2006:53) explained it further by stating "Human actions are significantly influenced by the setting in which they occur." It implies that the various activities and events we engage in and practise can principally be deciphered by others when the meaning we attribute to them are made unambiguously. Patton (2008) and Flick (2009) reiterate that the objective of qualitative research depends largely on the experiences people have and how they interpret what happens around them.

The qualitative nature of the study enabled the researcher to obtain first-hand information on hedging in academic writing in postgraduate theses across discipline. It also provided a better understanding of how postgraduate theses give meaning to the acceptance of students' writing.

According to Patton (2008), in qualitative study researchers get closer to nature by studying happenings in their natural environs. In this regard they make efforts to discover understanding from the documents understand instead of the researcher's philosophies on the subject under study. Selinger & Shohamy (2011) note that qualitative study presents the data from the perspective of the participants so that ethnicity and scholarly prejudices of the researcher will not sanction a misrepresentation of data collection, interpretation and presentation of findings. The aforementioned assertions served as an effective way of investigating how postgraduate students employ hedging in the making of their claims in their academic writing.

The qualitative research design was employed because it makes the researcher the main instrument in data collection and data analysis. As a result, the researcher becomes more responsive to the situation and the phenomenon understudy and enables him/her to adapt to any changing condition if need be.

According to Neuman (1994), some noted characteristics of qualitative study are: 1) the use of inductive reasoning, which aims at understanding a phenomenon within a particular context- i.e. it is context- based; 2) seeing behaviour as intentional and creative, which is explainable but not predictable, and the meaning derived is based on the subjects' perspective; and 3) it is exploratory rather than verifiable.

These characteristics attest to the fact that there is no uniformity in approaches when it comes to qualitative research study. Schrunik (1998) and Creswell (2007) mentioned the following as some of the approaches used over the years for qualitative study: phenomenology, ethnomethodology, ethnography, the historical method, applied and action research, clinical methods, symbolic interaction, grounded theory, as well as secondary analysis.

The study adopted phenomenology as its primary field design because the aim was to understand the phenomenon of hedging from the students' theses. Thus, the use of hedging in students' writing was directly investigated without interfering in the process as the tenets of phenomenal study prescribes, according to Creswell (2007). Van Manen (1990) described phenomenology study as a lived experience, live space (spatially), lived body (corporeality), lived time (temporary) and lived human relations (rationality).

The human relationship category best suits the study as hedging is a linguistic rhetorical device, which directly affects the writer reader/listener relationship, if claims are not carefully and appropriately hedged by writers.

1.9.1 Population

Kohari (2004) described the population as all people, objects or events found in a particular group that the researcher is planning to investigate. The target population is postgraduate students' theses from seven departments of the School of Languages, the School of Arts and the School of Performing Arts (English Language, Linguistics, Modern Languages, Philosophy/Classics, Music, The Study of Religions, and Theatre Arts) because theses from these students are the data that best answers the research questions.

1.9.2 Sampling Method

A non-probability sampling procedure, which includes quota, convenience and purposive sampling, was employed in the study to select 42 theses chapters comprising chapters five, six and seven which respectively constituted the findings/discussions, interpretations/analysis and conclusion/recommendation sections. These chapters of the theses are where students are likely to hedge their claims.

Step One: The first step was a purposive selection of the School of Languages, School of Arts and School of Performing Arts out of the following: School of Social Studies, School

of Law, Business School, School of Continuing and Distance Education, School of Information and Communication Studies and School of Education and Leadership because theses from the selected schools best answered the research questions following Cohen & Morrison (2007). The schools that were selected were considered appropriate for the study because it is believed their students predominantly fall within the category of non-native English speakers who have been exposed to continuous prose in reading and writing. As a result, their writing is likely either to be appropriately hedged or not.

Step Two: The second step was quota allocation of seven departments: English Language Linguistics, Modern Languages, Music, Philosophy/Classics, The Study of Religions and Theater Arts. The quota allocation allowed each sub-group to be fully represented following Davis (2005).

Step Three: In the third step, convenience sampling was used to select three theses from each department. The theses comprised those that were written in the academic years 2015 to 2018. The 2015-2018 academic years' these were the most current that were readily and easily available.

 Step Four: The fourth step was a purposive selection of three chapters, specifically chapters five, six, and seven of the theses, which comprised the discussion interpretation/ analysis and conclusion sections respectively. They best answered the research questions because students are more likely to hedge in those chapters.

1.9.3 Source of Data

The data source is secondary. It comprised postgraduate theses from the seven departments as was mentioned in 1.9.2.

1.9.4 Documents

The documents were theses from the School of Languages, School of Performing Arts and School of Arts of a Ghanaian University. The data was collected from chapters five, six and seven of the findings/discussion, analysis/interpretation and conclusion/recommendation sections of theses from seven departments. (English, Linguistics, Modern Languages, Philosophy / Classics, the Study of Religions and Theatre Arts)

1.9.5 Data Collection Procedures

The data was from online sources of the departmental libraries. Soft copies of the theses were downloaded from the University's website. A one-month period was devoted to collection and comprehensive sorting of the data as suggested by Spilioti (2006).

1.9.6 Methods of Analysis

The current study employed qualitative inductive content analysis for analysis.

1.9.6.1 Content Analysis

Researchers like Krippendorff (1980), Downe-Wamboldt (1992), Sandelowski (1995) and Polit & Beck (2004) assert that amongst various analytical methods content analysis appears to be an important procedural means of analyzing written texts. The qualitative and inductive content analysis enable the attainment of an immeasurable meaning of organisation of the text gathered. It provided an understanding the types, characteristics and structure of the theses as a social product from the students' point of view. Krippendorff (1980), Downe-Wamboldt (1992) and Sandelowski (1995) posit that content analysis makes it possible for a methodical and unbiased means of labelling and enumerating objects within a phenomenon in the population. Thus, for the current study content analysis permitted the theoretical issues associated with hedging to be tested. This enhanced the understanding of the data and brought to light the rhetorical devices which were employed as hedges to be grouped into their respective themes and categories. Again, content analysis allowed for new insights and the representation of the categories of hedges found in students' theses to be identified by making valid inferences from the data collected with what pertains in existing literature on academic writing.

Specifically, inductive content analysis was used for the analysis. The approach for the study was inductive because the taxonomy of hedges for the study is centred on a previous taxonomy. Therefore, the analysis moved from the general to the specific (the earlier taxonomy to the patterns that were identified in the current study) as recommended by Burns & Grove (2000). The analytical process was represented in three main stages namely: preparation, organizing and reporting (refer to chapter five).

In the current study a structured categorization matrix of analysis was developed to code the data according to the variations and types of hedges that emerged from postgraduate students' theses. According to Marshall and Rossman (1995), the matrix makes it possible to choose aspects from the data that fit the categorization of hedges found in the data.

A major advantage of content analysis is that it is unobtrusive. For instance, a researcher can, observe a phenomenon without it being noticed by a second party. Fraenkel & Wallen (2000) assert that the unobtrusive nature of content analysis helps researchers not to be observed by other parties during the process of data collection. It is said that information that might be difficult or even impossible to obtain through direct observation can be gained using content analysis without any or much hindrance. A disadvantage of employing content analysis, according to Hoskins & Mariano (2004), is that there exist no specific guidelines for data analysis since each inquiry is distinctive, and the results depend on the skills, insights, analytic abilities and style of the researcher. Braun et.al's (2015) thematic content analysis that presents a recursive six-phase process was also considered for the study.

1.10 Organisation of Thesis

The research is organised into the following chapters:

Chapter one provides an overview of the whole study. As the first chapter, it introduced readers largely to the background, statement of problem, research objectives, research questions, assumptions, and theoretical framework underpinning the study.

Chapter two reviews the literature of the study which is aligned to the research aims

Chapter three develops two theoretical frameworks of the study. It covers Fraser's (1990) two notions of politeness theories, namely the conversational-maxim view and the social-norm view; and Brown & Levinson's (1999) positive face and negative face politeness theories.

Chapter four presents the methodology of the study, which comprises the population, research site data sources, data collection and sampling techniques.

Chapter five presents the findings of the study in the following areas: types and variations of hedges found in the three sections of the postgraduate theses; frequencies of hedges found in the thesis; and disciplinary variations of hedging in the theses.

Chapter Six emphasises the interpretations and discussion of the study in the following areas: analysis of the nine types and variations in the three sections of the students' theses; analysis of the disciplinary variations; and trustworthiness of the study.

Chapter Seven presents the conclusions of the major findings of the study, limitation, recommendations and further studies.

1.11 Chapter Summary

A general overview of the study was presented here. Specifically, the background to the study, the statement of the problem, the study objectives, the research questions and the significance of the study were presented in this chapter. Furthermore, literature on hedging was briefly looked at, after which a fair insight into the methodology used to undertake this research was given. The theoretical framework which underpinned the study was also introduced. The chapter ended with the organization of the entire research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

Academic discourse community is a specialized scholarly community where writers interact with each other's research findings from various disciplines through text (Bailey, 2006). Accordingly, writers must appropriately make their claims by employing hedging skills, which are linguistic rhetorical devices that enable writers to soften their propositions so as to avoid making categorical statements that might call for the opposition of their views by their readers.

Hyland (1998) states that hedges are a linguistic device which is used to depict vagueness, uncertainty, or tentativeness. It is not merely a scheme to complicate or confuse propositions or statements but is simply an academic writing convention which must be adhered to by writers. The term *hedge* is credited to Lakoff (1973) who used it to describe a grammatical or lexical form that designates "fuzziness" in natural language.

The term hedge is credited to Lakoff (1973) who used it to describe grammatical or lexical forms that indicate "fuzziness" in natural language. He used Zadeh's Mathematical Theory as a basis to define a wide range of lexicon and grammar elements in normal language used for lessening any proposition that may express vagnuess."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 refer to such words as `hedges'". (Lakoff, 1973: 471).

Several researchers based their perception of hedges on Lakoff's description. Scholars like Bolsky (1988 Varttala (2001) and Chris & Zawacki (2006) claim that several researchers based their perception of hedges on Lakoff's description. Some scholars agreed that academic writing should not include personal statements; rather, propositions should be kept as neutral as possible. According to Musa (2014), these scholars took an engrained position that linguistic devices which are often referred to as hedges are objectionable in written text and that they should be circumvented completely. However, according to Hyland (1998), there is a group of scholars that prefer written text to be hedged, and as a result they agree that hedging should be encouraged in academic writing. Hyland reiterated that these schol-

ars were inspired by classical rhetoric, which stipulated that academic text aims at convincing and influencing readers to accept propositions which have been made by writers. Thus, these scholars accepted hedging in academic writing. It may be argued that the appropriation of hedging serves as a valuable rhetorical resource for academic writing and thus must be regarded as an imperative feature of academic writing rather than be merely seen as an embellished addition to an informative text.

Countless studies in the genre of academic text ignored disciplinary specification and postgraduate theses. That is why the current study is focused on postgraduate students' theses across disciplines. Fraser (2010) viewed hedging as a feature of pragmatic competence which when focused on can enhance effective communication. Musa's (2014) study of the pragmatic analysis of hedging in masters' theses noted that there are three major roles pragmatic functions of hedging devices perform in the theses. First, they enable researchers to express their proposition with precision; secondly, they empower the researcher to protect him/herself from claims made in order to avert possible future criticisms; and lastly, they help researchers to present claims with the needed self-effacement, which aids them to gain reader gratification.

It thus imperative that practicalization of hedging be concentrated on by researchers in the making of their proposition so that they will not fall prey to criticism and further negation in academic writing.

Hyland (1994), Yen (2007) and Halabisaz et al.'s (2014) observe that, students mostly employ modal auxiliary verbs as hedging devices. Hyland (1998) states that despite the fact students seem to be accustomed to the use of modal auxiliaries, hedging can be expressed by using rhetorical devices other than through the means of epistemic modals.

Salager-Meyer's (1994) study of Medical Discourse by English students revealed that students mostly employ three categories of hedging which are approximators, shields and compound hedges to show deference towards their propositions. Another research on native and Turkish non-native speakers of English graduate students by Akbas (2012) showed that native speakers of English preferred the use of kinds and variations of hedging devices in the abstracts of their theses. Ekoc's (2010) study of lexical hedging strategies employed by cross disciplines demonstrates that all disciplines focus on employing hedging in making their claims in different degrees and in different ways. The different ways in which these

hedges are employed, according to the findings, is as a result of the practices of each discipline. The implication for selecting appropriate hedges across disciplines is that, since there are disciplinary variations, students who desire to be members of a disciplinary community must follow writing conventions that are acceptable to that particular discipline.

There is a clear indication that postgraduate students use hedges in making their claims but the research on hedging in postgraduate students' theses is still not exhaustive as they are limited to a certain number of graduates from selected countries who explored a very limited area of hedges. Scholars have agreed that more study on postgraduate theses is needed in order to confirm the variations in the uneven distribution of hedging in graduate students' theses as the conventions in different disciplines will be a constraining factor in selecting and employing types of hedges postgraduate graduate students employ

The literature review of the study focuses on what hedging is, and its importance in academic writing and then looks at hedging from the pragmatic and semantic perspective. It then reviews some studies that have been carried out in the general field of hedging in expert research articles, and focuses on hedging across disciplines in the academic discourse community. Then, finally, on the various taxonomies and models that can be used to measure the effectiveness of hedging in the academic discourse community.

2.1 What Is Hedging?

Hedging is also known as cautious language. Hedging is perceived as an important rhetorical strategy in writing because it permits researchers to present their claims in an objective manner, which is supported by their strong evidence and presented in a detached unemotional manner. Hedging in academic writing creates a sort of barrier that protects academic writers from making statements beyond the level of their certainty. Lexical items, syntactic structures, and prosodic features are some of the means through which hedging can be appropriated in academic writing.

Hedging can assume both linguistic and pragmatic dimensions Hyland (2001) notes that the linguistic realization of hedging can be words, expressions and/or sentences that are employed by writers to help them present their propositions as accurately and reliably as possible without taking a direct personal responsibility for the content and expressions in the proposition. This, thus, encourages readers' participation in the proposition as they are made to judge it. Varttala (2001), Hyland & Salager-Meyer (2008) and Alonso-Alonso et al. (2012) mention that linguistically, hedging occurs under the following linguistic forms –

adverbs, adjectives, epistemic lexical verbs, nouns, and modal verbs phrases or sentences. However, the decision of choosing specific forms of hedges depends primarily upon the aims and objectives of writers.

Pragmatic realization of hedging, according to Hyland (2001), is made up of two main types: writer-oriented and reader-oriented. According to Hyland, distinctions between the two types depend on the writers' anticipation of a possible opposition from the target audience, since inappropriate hedging of a claim in academic writing may lead to audience opposition of the proposition. Writers employ the writer-oriented hedges to enable them to creates a barrier for themselves against any probable misrepresentation of the proposition by their target audience; while the reader-oriented hedges enable the writer to remove any form of restriction from the audience in terms of analysis and interpretation of the proposition. Thus, by employing the reader-oriented hedging, writers made their propositions reader- friendly thereby allowing readers to make a valid judgment on the proposition.

The next discussion after the phenomena of hedges by Hyland (2001) is categorization of hedges. The literature on hedging in academic writing has presented a varied categorization of hedges by numerous scholars. Examples of the categorisations are: Crompton's (1997) taxonomies of hedging; Salager-Meyer's (1997); model of hedging; Hyland's (1998) model of hedging; Vartalla's (2001); Hinkle (2004); Koutsantoni (2006); Hamamci (2007); Martin-Martin (2008); Frazer(2010); Malášková's (2011) taxonomies of hedging; and Nkemleke (2011). The above categorizations are embedded in categorization and classification of hedging devices set up by the Center for English Learning and Professional Development. Writers' choose any of the categorization as a yard stick for measuring the employment and appropriateness of hedging or the phenomenon of hedging in academic writing. The current study focuses on nine categorizations and classifications of hedging from the Centre for English Learning and Professional Development:

> http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/facilities/support/essay-writing/Hedging-in-AcademicWriting.doc

2.2 Importance of Hedging in Academic Writing

Hedging is perceived as one of the important rhetorical skills that writers must adopt and use in the academic discourse community. It is an academic protocol that enables writers to demonstrate commitment to the strong force behind the claims they make and allows them

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to reduce the threat of opposition in the academic discourse community. Thus, hedging permits a writer's proposition to remain open for interpretation by readers. Hedging is therefore a very important academic writing convention which assists writers to avoid over-stating their results and eventually helps them to gain confidence in academic discourse.

Although some scholars associate hedging with vagueness and therefore discourage its usage in academic discourse, hedging can unequivocally empower researchers to take up responsibility for their claim and provide greater understanding of their proposition in a particular situation. In relation to hedging being related to vagueness, Powell (1985) claims that attributes of vagueness in hedging may authorize researchers to accomplish sometimes a highly subjective, resolute and evaluative function in which they can express judgment concerning the importance of their proposition in academic discourse. Researchers, thus, appear to use hedging as a negotiating strategy to present their state of knowledge on their stance. Again, Serholt (2012) and Chris & Zawacki (2006) explain that the application of vagueness in academic writing is aimed at convincing and influencing an audience on the writer's stance. Hence the connotation of tentativeness, vagueness and impression of hedging in academic discourse is germane and should be encouraged.

Mastering the appropriation of hedging in academic writing will serve as a vital communicative tool for novice writers in academic discourse. According to Skelton (1998), hedging will enable writers to elusively use language to mean exactly what they intend to. This elusive strategy, which hedging permits novice writers to adopt in communication, is very essential as it will encourage their acceptance in the academic discourse and allow them to acquire appropriate strategies for academic argumentation. Another important communicative aspect of the appropriate use of hedges is the establishment of "a relationship with the reader and … with the authorities on the field" (Richards & Skelton, 1991:34). A good reader/writer relationship is a critical factor, which ensures a continual acceptance in academic discourse and promotes success of membership and a cordial relationship amongst members. As Hyland (2005) puts it, hedging enhances the progress of writer/reader relationship, which addresses the need for reverence and solidarity in gaining reader approval of claims. The appropriation of hedging in communication consequently prevents writers from authoritatively imposing their findings on readers. Rather it allows readers to interpret the findings of the research and form their own judgment. As Winkler and McCuen (1989)

state, the idea of hedging is to enable facts to speak for themselves without anyone's imposition. Therefore, using cautious language allows you to indicate that, on this occasion, a finding was true.

Finally, Hyland (2005) states that writers employ hedges in the making of their claims because of the anticipation of being proved wrong in their submission. Thus, it is imperative for writers to employ hedges in the making of their claims so that their credibility will not be compromised. Scholars argue that researchers gain their credibility in the academic discourse by asserting the solidest claims for their evidence while covering themselves against overstating by employing hedging devices. Hedges therefore help writers avoid personal responsibility for their statements and also help to protect writers' reputations and limit the damage which may result from categorical commitments (Hyland, 2005:25).

This section concludes by reiterating that, despite the fact that some scholars attribute hedging to vagueness and even emphasise its unacceptability in academic writing, it is evident that hedging plays a crucial role in the academic discourse as it establishes the reader/writer relationship, enhances the progress of reader/writer and enables writers to gain credibility in academic discourse community.

2.3 Hedging: A Pragmatic Phenomenon in Academic Writing

Effective communication is one of the key factors of communication. The one aim of any communicator is not to be misconstrued by the receiver. A necessary tool that can facilitate readers/writers to effectively communicate in a language is pragmatic competence. Frazer (2010:1) claims that "the ability to communicate your intended message with all its nuances in any socio-cultural context and to interpret the message of your interlocutor as it was intended is the application of pragmatic competence". He continued that pragmatic competence is "critical as its ability is for communication success". Hedging is an area that can permit one to achieve pragmatic competence in order to avoid prospective miscommunication of thoughts. (Frazer, 2010). It, thus, implies that writers, especially novice writers, must master the appropriation of hedges. As Tang (2013:6) reiterates, the indecorous use of hedges leads to pragmatic failure as "hedges are often mutually confirmed with pragmatic principles and they reflect the speakers' attitude towards the degree of the credibility, details, relevance and clarity of the information provided in the communication"

The pragmatic study of hedges started in the 1980s. Scholars (Fasker, 1975; Kasper, 1981; Prince, 1982; Brown & Levinson, 1978; 1987) focused their study of hedges on pragmatic

competence. Halliday (1973), by affirming the pragmatic phenomenon of language, asserts that language is not only used to make right grammatical choices for the world around us, but rather right grammatical choices are made to improve communication with people around us. He claims that, in addition to the ideational component of language, there also is an interpersonal element of communication in which the speaker's role has a personal commitment in interaction with others. Halliday and Hassan (1989) view hedging as a pragmatic phenomenon, which contributes to the interpersonal function of a language and invariably "recognize the speech function, the type of offer, command statement, or question, the attitudes and judgments embodied in it, and the rhetorical features that constitute it as a symbolic act" (Halliday & Hassan, 1989:45).

The pragmatic phenomenon of hedging, which deals with the interpersonal aspect of communication, has been given much prominence by some scholars. For instance, Zuck and Zuck (1985:172) defined hedging as "the process whereby the author reduces the strength of what he is writing" when he addressed hedging in news writing. He claimed that it is germane for news authors to adopt a hedging strategy so that, in case something goes wrong with the communication, they will be shielded by hedging and their images will not be dented. In Markkanen and Schroder's (1987:48) cross-linguistic study of hedges in a philosophical text, they describe hedging as a strategy use for "saying less than what one means". Here again hedging permits writers to give readers the opportunity to decipher and interpret the meaning of the text. The writer will invariably be protected by any unintended meaning. There will then be a modification to the writer's attitude, truthfulness and definiteness towards the proposition (Vartalla, 2001). Further, Crismore & Vanda- Kopple (1998:185) see hedges as an item that signals tentativeness of the truth of information. This then allows writers or senders to reduce their responsibilities towards the information and permits readers to share in responsibility for the information.

Furthermore, on the "pragmativeness" of hedging, Musa's (2014) study on the pragmatic analysis of students' writing in which he used Hyland's (1998) poly-pragmatic model to determine the discourse functions of hedging, revealed that there exist pragmatic motivations for hedging by the students. These motivations, according to Musa (2014), are summed up in three categories:

a) the objective of the researcher to make claims which are convoyed by some amount of improbability.

b) the necessity for communicators to prevent any future criticism that is capable of damaging their image during the communication process.

c) attempt by writers to get readers to accept their claims by presenting them

   as tentatively as possible

Again, the findings confirmed the main tenet of the poly-pragmatic model, which posits that hedging can cover an array of purposes that weaken the force of statements, contain modal expressions, express deference, signal uncertainty, and so on (Hyland, 1998:160). The study, thus, revealed that writers employ pragmatics in hedging among other things to create a social and interpersonal relationship with their readers.

In another study, Tang (2013) focused on pragmatic functions of hedges from the politeness perspective. The study used types of hedges for example: (a) approximators (b) rounders(c) plausibility shield and (d) attribution shields to investigate pragmatic functions of hedges in the realm of politeness. The study revealed that the use of "approximators" in communication tends to make speakers express themselves indirectly with hedges. The purpose of implicit use of hedging is for communicators to avoid being too categorical and also to make room for their words to sound more polite before their audiences. Hedges such as "kind of", "to some extent", "somewhat", "quite", "entirely", "more or less", "really" and "almost" are some of the operative means of showing pragmatic politeness to the hearers/audience in conversations. Secondly, Tang's research shows that mostly "rounders" are used by writers because they want to bring to light the diverse nature of hedging in academic writing and also to measure the frequency of the occurrence of "rounder" in communication. Again, speakers adopt "rounders" because they intend to show the approximation in text forms so as to give a range of alternatives in communications through their statements. Audiences on the other hand, are supposed to understand the words of the communicator within the confines in the range of communication. Tang argues further that "rounders" usually include hedging devices like; "approximately" "in utmost respects", "roughly" "essentially" "about" "over". Furthermore, Tang asserts that "plausibility shields" normally demonstrate the speaker's reservations they hold back during communication. Some of the types of plausibility shields that depict speakers' reservation are: "I think so", "it is hard to say", "as far as I can foretell", "it seems that" "I deem it necessary to believe" "to assume", "I suppose", and "I'm happy that". These plausibility shields, according to Tang, are used when a speaker is not very confident with the true value of their proposition and are unconvinced to make

categorical statements. Plausibility shields invariably enable the writer to show respect to readers. Finally, Tang mentions that "attribute shields" are kinds of hedges that speakers use to show their reservation, and also that they tend to apply "attribute shields" during direct presentation of facts and ideas of a third person. The speakers are however, protected when they use the attribution shield. Since whether or not the quote is right, it does not conform to the speaker's point of view, if the speaker employs an "attribute shield", whether the quotation is right or wrong, it will not impact negatively on the hearer's view, and neither will it rescind the communicative relationship of the two parties involved in communication. Tang's study agrees with Leech's "agreement maxim", which encourages a minimal disagreement between writers and readers. The minimization becomes possible because probably, speakers might appropriate attribution shields to report their claims. Even if the claims, which were conveyed, happened to be right or wrong information in the words, they do not influence the relationship between speakers and hearers badly, and this results in maintaining politeness between the communicators. The study concludes that improper use of hedges does not augur well for the maintenance of politeness between communicators and hence leads to pragmatic failure.

Another area in which the pragmatic function of hedges can be realized is through Hyland and Tse's (2004) metadiscourse model of hedging.

> Metadiscourse, is based on the view of writing as social and communicative engagement between the writer and the reader. It is typically used as an umbrella term to include the heterogeneous array of cohesive and interpersonal features which help relate a text to its context by assisting readers to connect, interpret and organize the material in a way preferred by the writer and with regards to understanding the values of a particular discourse community.

(Hyland and Tse ,2004:3)

The metadiscourse model of the pragmatic function of communication views writing as a societal assignment by which writers get involved in the communicative activities of their discourse communities in order to signal their attitudes and commitment to their proposition. Hyland (2004) sees the metadiscourse model as an interpersonal resource which is required in order to present propositional material appropriately in different disciplinary and genre contexts. Hyland's view thus emphasises the social and relational importance of communication in discourse communities, which implies that communication is not supposed to be

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only shared but that it should be a mutual and reverential activity. The metadiscourse model of pragmatic function of hedging, according to Hyland, can customarily be perceived as a tool for unearthing the linguistic and societal uniqueness of academic disciplinary communities. Hyland (2005) suggests that all metadiscourse is interactive in that it takes account of the reader's knowledge, textual experiences and processing needs which provides writers with an armoury of rhetorical appeals needed to achieve communication goals.

Hyland and Tse's (2004) model of meta-discourse differentiated between two sub-groups of metadiscourse in pragmatic function of hedging, which follows Thompson's (2001) interactive and interactional metadiscourse. Hyland and Tse's interactive categorization encompass a writer's ability to organize smooth operation interaction, which tends to guide readers through using appropriate text by applying rhetorical features like transitional devices, language structures, and endophoric and evidential code glosses, which allow arguments to unequivocally establish the writer's favoured interpretation. Accordingly, writers employ the linguistics devices that are embedded in metadiscourse because writers are concerned with ways of appropriately organizing their dialogues rather than showing their experiences with the text. This exhibition of appropriateness in communication nonetheless enables writers to antedate readers' knowledge of their (writers) proposition and allow readers to reflect on writer's assessment of what ought to be made explicit so as to limit and guide that which can be recovered from a given text. Interactional metadiscourse, on the other hand, offers an explicit intervention for readers to comment on and evaluate the material; and includes readers in the argument by notifying them of the author's perspective on both propositional information and the readers as well. Meta discourse is significant because it explicates the context where text is interpreted. Furthermore, it offers useful suggestions for effective communication and for the maintenance of social groups during the communication process.

Akaba (2012) concludes that metadiscourse, which is employed as a rhetorical tool for the operative use of language, facilitates writers' protection, by guiding their readers to effectively convey their ideas. This enables establishing and defining the social distances of the reader-writer relationship. Again, Akaba maintains that metadiscourse allows the style of the writer to be more involve by revealing his/her persona to readers. In this perceptive, metadiscourse allows for interactive resources that permit writers to assist readers to find the information needed, while interactional resources, on the other hand, convey to readers

the personality of the writers and the statements of the writers In addition, using meta-discourse gives a more personal resource to communicators in a way that keeps communicators within the text intentionally. Readers are then urged by writers to interpret what is proposed by the writers and to judge the propositions. Meta discourse thus encourages reader/writer cordiality where neither imposition nor opposition is placed on either of the agent of communication.

Pragmatic competence is a necessary skill for effective and efficient communication. The skill includes mastering hedging devices, which are important features of pragmatic competence. Appropriate hedging thus helps individuals to achieve their communicative goals, and further prevents potential miscommunication.

Another vital means of effective communication is through the poly-pragmatic model of hedging which was formulated by Hyland (1998). The main focus of poly-pragmatic is to account for the multi-functional aspect of hedging. According to tenets of the model, hedges cover a wide range of purposes that are designed to help avoid face -threatening acts and enhance effective communication. The polypragmatic model captures the multi-functional purpose of hedging as:

- Contented-Oriented /Reader oriented
- Accuracy-Oriented/Writer Oriented
- Attribute/Reliability

The tenets of the model indicate that Hyland (1998) put hedges into two main categories in academic writing. These categories are: (a) Content-Oriented Hedges; and (b) Reader-Oriented hedges. Reader-oriented hedges are those that deal with interpersonal interaction between readers and writers. Reader-oriented hedges allow readers to get involved in the dialogue where they are addressed as thoughtful individuals who are permitted to respond to propositions and to judge the true value of such propositions. According to Hyland, certainty and categorical markers, detach the reader from negotiation his or her space during the communicating process. It implies that reader-oriented hedges allow assertions made by writers for possible interpretation of the phenomenon. Finally, claims presented using reader-oriented hedges are all inclusive and suggest that the statement made by the writer necessarily does not require any response.

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Content-Oriented Hedges, however, serve to mitigate the relationship between propositional content and a non-linguistic mental representation of reality; they hedge the correspondence between what the writer says about the world and what the world is thought to be like Hyland further divided Content-Oriented Hedges into Accuracy-Oriented Hedges and Writer-Oriented Hedges. Hyland notes that writer's principal inspiration for using writer-oriented hedges is to create a communicative protective shield for him/herself against any probable misrepresentation from the proposition. Writers achieve this height by lessening their participation in the proposition and keeping a distance from what is communicated.

The Accuracy-Oriented Hedges, on the other hand, refer to a writer's desire to express proposition with greater precision. The peculiarities between writer-oriented and accuracy-oriented hedges are that writer-oriented hedges are mostly concerned with the writer's involvement in the communication rather than using hedging devices to increase precision. Accuracy-oriented hedges, on the other hand, are used to achieve precision in communication. Hyland (1998) indicated that the distinction between models is not absolute as some hedges can have multiple functions. Accuracy-oriented hedges have been sub-divided into two kinds, which are *attribute* and *reliability* hedges. Attribute hedges are linguistic devices that specify how writers can be accurate with their results and, at the same time, protect themselves against potential opposition from others. Reliability hedges, however, acknowledge a writer's certainty or uncertainty awareness of his/her proposition and indicates the amount of confidence that has been invested into the validity of a claim.

2.4 Hedging: A Semantic Phenomenon in Academic Writing

Lakoff's (1973) realized the semantic phenomenon of hedging as words that make things fuzzier or less fuzzy. According Lakoff, the most recorded thought-provoking questions are raised by the study of words who's meaning indirectly involves fuzziness, which either make issues raised in communication fuzzier or less fuzzy.

From Lakoff's view one can perceive that the semantic characteristics of hedging are words that may be said to have two inconsistent functions: (a) words that make things fuzzier; and (b) words that make things less fuzzy. Salager-Meyer (1994) positions that hedging is often linked to purposive vagueness and tentativeness, which is indicative that hedges are typically associated with an increase in linguistic fuzziness. This position is related to Lakoff's (1973) paper, which emphasizes that natural language sentences are not often entirely true or false, or nonsensical, but rather somewhat true and somewhat false, and that membership

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in conceptual categories is not a simple yes-no question, but a matter of degree. Brown & Levinson (1987:145) explained Lakoff's assertion further when they state that "hedging devices may be seen as features that can be used to modify the degree of membership of a predicate or noun phrase in a set". With regard to the truth-value of referential information, hedging from the above analysis can be said to operate on a continuum between absolute truth and falsehood. This is exemplified in Lakoff's (1973) birdiness hierarchy, which says that instead of making a categorical statement like:

1**. Penguins are birds -** a fuzzy element can be infused in the statement in order to hedge the extend at which penguins are members of the category of birds, this then imprecisely placing penguins a vague outer limit of "birdiness". In statement **2.** Penguins are *sort of* birds**.** In statement two vagueness and imprecision are expressed by the hedge *sort of.* This thus solidifies the conception of the status of penguins being a bird as being more ambiguous. However, in practical terms, the statement can be said to be indicating the speaker's wish to shelf his or her commitment to the truthfulness of a penguin being referred to as a bird.

 G. Lakoff (1973) reports R. Lakoff's assertion that some verbs and syntactic classifications are used to express hedged performatives where hedges seem to tone down the illocutionary force of an entire speech act as demonstrated in the following: 3. Kemi smiled. **4. I assume Kemi smiled,** where the embolden   word in (4) can be viewed as reducing the strong force of the claim. In this particular instance, however, it again appears that the hedging device was used to comment on the rationality of the claim, thereby accentuating that the claim might not be truthful.   Some functional similarity can then be established between the hedged statement (4) and (6) below since both of them can be inferred as presenting some aura of fuzziness into the statements. Illustrations of hedging in (6) can somehow also be related with alteration of category membership where, instead of being included within the category of "true" claims, the claim in (6) is not included in the category of absolute truthfulness but it is placed at an unspecified point on the continuum between truth and falsehood. Varttala (2001) commented on the proposition where he reiterates that Lakoff's (1973) work presents to audiences that hedging, when used as an increase in fuzziness, can be an expedient means of expressing less than full commitment as it concerns both membership in a specific conceptual category and the accuracy of entire propositions.

In the second part of Lakoff's (1973) description of the phenomenon, hedges may be thought of as rendering things less fuzzy. In relation to the second statement of Lakoff, Burns (1991: 8) emphasizes that we are sometimes faced with a range of cases where a predicate [or some other element] clearly applies at the one end and certainly fails to apply at the other, but it is not at all clear what ought to be said about the cases in-between. Once again Varttala (2001) corroborated Burn's in-between cases assertion by saying that it happens predominantly in contexts where the information-oriented nature of language use demands conceptual precision. Brown (1995) in agreement with Lakoff, also claims that most often the language of science is exposed to inadequacies of natural language. It can be argued that one of the manifestations of the limited nature of conceptual language is an imperfection seen in statements which have been noted by scholars mentioned above. These imperfections can possibly be corrected by the appropriate hedging devices which may assume peripheral nature in a given phenomenon within natural language category. Lakoff's (1973) analogy of "fruitiness hierarchy" is another example where it can be suggested that one could say that

5. Sugarcane are fruits.

However, if one considers, for instance, Apples as fruits it is obvious that they are more readily connected with the important group of the conceptual category of vegetables and are therefore higher in Lakoff's hierarchy than tomatoes are. In some cases, it may be acceptable to simply describe tomatoes as fruits, but if specification about their "fruitiness", can be arrived at, conceptualization of tomatoes can be hedged as **(6) sugarcane might be viewed as fruits**. Despite the fact that items which increase fuzziness by virtue of their phenomenal placement as hedges in a vague peripheral conceptual category, hedges may be considered as rhetorical devices that decrease fuzziness. Varttala (2001) stipulates that hedges then appear as phenomena that do not necessarily follow the inadequate conceptual category of natural language and as a result, hedging creates a distancing phenomenon from the main point of a given conceptual classification. Hedges thus, essentially, congeals the relationship between the phenomenon of universal and relevant theoretical taxonomies of accuracy. Hedging might then be engaged in to describe the straightforwardness of claims as precisely as possible. Communicators may appear to apply caution in their propositions in order to avoid being too categorical.

From the above discussion, two kinds of motivations for the appropriation of hedging are noted. The first motivation is that hedges increase fuzziness in utterances which allows communicators to tone down their submissions while audiences are allowed to interpret the propositions. The second motivation is that hedges can be used to decrease fuzziness when communicators accept the relevance conception of not being too categorical in their reportage. Salager-Meyer (1994) supports the first motivation as that which pertains during factual discourse discussions. He thus indicates the right representation of the state of knowledge under discussion, that is, to achieve greater precision. Salager-Meyers's position is also connected to Hyland's (1998:162) content-oriented theory, which views hedges as "devices that mitigate the relationship between propositional content and non-linguistic mental representation of reality; they hedge the correspondence between what the writer says about the world and what the world is thought of to be like".

2.5 Empirical Review of Hedging in Students' Writing

Writers are supposed to show commitment and detachment in their writing linguistically by employing hedging techniques. More importantly, novice student writers must employ hedging techniques appropriately in the making of their claims in order to avoid making categorical statements which might be misconstrued by their readers. A plethora of research has been carried out in research articles to the neglect of students' writing. The minimal studies on the appropriation of hedging by students' places a limitation on how to find out whether or not students are effectively appropriating hedging strategies in their writing.

Nivals (2011) carried out a study to determine how novice writers who are mostly students show their "confidence in or their detachment to their proposed ideas" (p. 1). The study used Kaplan's contrastive rhetoric theory to analyze the introduction and conclusion sections of project essays of novice Filipino undergraduate students from two disciplines: Arts and the Sciences. Although the study was on students' writing, it rather focused on undergraduate project essays and not postgraduate theses. According to Nivals, the arts and sciences depict disciplinary variation in writing conventions. Since most universities have more than two disciplines, the study then places a limitation on the findings on how students hedge in their proposition across disciplines.

In classification, Nivals (2011:8) used Mojica (2005) and Hyland's (2004) categorization to determine types of hedges that were employed by the students. The forms of hedges were placed under five sub-categories

Category 1: modal and lexical verbs like; may, might, could: introductory phrase verbs; like seem suggest, appear, other phrases that use any or a combination of these. For example It may seem to appear, It might be suggested.

Category 2: includes tentative adjectives and adverbs like possibly, likely, probably adjective, adverbs like certainly.

Category 3: includes distancing phrases, which are likely to vary from citing authority to using impersonal third person and unnamed agent.

Category 4: imperatives as well as solidarity features and rhetorical questions. Examples are: it is known, it is a fact, as we all know, engagement markers, together with second person pronoun you, and any explicit reference or direct address to readers.

Category 5: Self-mention includes which any reference to the researcher/s, which includes pronouns I, we, or nouns like researchers, writers even when a verb follows it e.g. this researcher believes, we argue.

Nivals' (2011) study depicts writers across the two disciplines that were investigated exhibiting preference for type three hedging devices to the neglect of the other types. A significant point that was noted was the differences shown in the making of commitment and detachment between the two disciplines. From the study, it was revealed that writers had the propensity to use strong language to show commitment probably because they had limited exposure in the academic writing genre of hedging and its convention. Nivals then recommends that there should be English Language lessons which should include hedging in the writing subjects. Also, it was suggested that students should be exposed to the conventions of research writing.

Finally, Nivals (2011) suggests that students should be made aware usefulness of the various rhetorical devices by their instructors or teachers. Especially, Nivals emphasizes a reader-friendly rhetorical device like hedging, which should be used to mitigate claims no matter how controversial they may be. Nivals concludes that hedging is an important feature of academic texts which students must master if they want their claims to be taken seriously in their academic writing.

In another study, Seskauskiene (2013) looked at the use of hedging devices by Lithuanian undergraduate students. The focus was on BA English Major term papers, which were written according to Swales' IMRAD model (Swales, 1990) and thus was limited to the introduction session of the papers. According to Swales (1990), the introduction of a paper is the section that gives the justification of the whole paper as it starts with background of a study through the problems and also identification of the study field by reviewing major sources that are related to the study. Again, the introduction identifies a niche for that particular study and further raises research questions that will solved. The introductions of the term papers that were selected for the study were subjected to peer review where the students got feedback from their peers on their uses of hedging and also on their usage of other varieties or features of academic writing. Seskauskiene used semantic and functional criteria to determine the frequency of hedging in the students' papers after peer review, which was focused on the students' ability to identify and use hedges that are properly related to their proficiency level in writing rather than those that are related to the complexities of the students' learning of hedging.

The finding of the investigation established that the appropriation of hedging by English as a Second Language students has not been less frequent than the average frequency of hedging in the papers of competent users of English language. The study also pointed out that English aptitude of English as Second Language students' tends to contribute to their perfection of academic writing language conventions sufficiently. The students again become sensitive to both positional and non-propositional content of the text. The study thus contradicts the findings of other scholars who had suggested that L2 speakers are likely to hedge less because of first language (L1) interference. For example, Hyland (1995:39) claims that hedging represents a major rhetorical gap for L2 students as they end up transferring hedging strategies from their L1 to their writings irrespective of their language proficiency level. Seskauskiene (2013) however assets that the tendency of L2 students to hedge highly might be as a result of conscious teaching of hedging by language instructors to the Lithuanian undergraduate students. Thus, the training the students received in the employing of hedging in their lessons enabled them to hedge their propositions efficiently. The implication is that English Language instructors must include the teaching of hedging in their curricula.

An important aspect of findings from the study is that the results bear similarity to Hyland's (2006) findings from a study on articles of competent English speakers drawn from eight

disciplines in the hard and soft sciences. Although Hyland's study did not offer a differentiation between native and non-native writers of English, nor did he limit his research to particular sections of research papers, his findings confirmed that efficient teaching of hedging to students by language instructors increases students' competence level of hedging and thus results in getting the students to hedge appropriately in their propositions.

Yeh (2007) investigated L2 Taiwanese graduate students' employment of hedging in their writing with a specific focus on the epistemic modality marker because these modalities have been recognized in academic literature by scholars, as among the most important and most frequently used hedging devices in academic text, as well as familiar hedging devices to students (Hyland, 1996a; Varttala, 1999; Vold, 2006). The exploratory nature of the study implies that further research can be done in the area of exploring hedging in graduate writing, in order to bring out evidential issues of students' usage of hedges in the composition of their text.

In the study, Yeh (2007) compared graduate students' hedging behaviour in writing to that of expert writers in research articles. The findings revealed that although students hedge more in their writing than expert writers, the former depended mostly on restricted ranges of linguistic items to hedge and thereby ignored other hedges like epistemic nouns, which are also considered as vital tentative markers. Again, it is noted that graduate student writers focused more on certainty than tentative markers to make non-categorical commitment. The results, according to Yeh, may imply a need for awareness-raising among graduate students about hedging functions in academic writing. In addition, the result was compared with the findings of Hyland & Milton (1997) and Chen (2005) on reports on hedging in the literature, that similarities and differences among the corpora were found. The findings suggest that lack of confidence in the students' arguments caused them to hedge less in academic writing as they depended mostly on modal auxiliaries. It was found out that the graduate writers used more modality markers at the certainty end. This trend was also noticed in studies on non-native writing by Hyland & Milton (1995). The study finally revealed that students who were the focus of the study were relatively inexperienced in writing for research purposes. As a result, it was not far-fetched that their appropriations of hedging exhibited a divergence from academic writing. Thus, to help the students to appropriate the use of hedging devices in types and ranges, Yeh recommends that instructors should design tasks which demand that students compare and determine the amount of force conveyed by modality markers in

different epistemic categories like certainty, probability and possibility. Yeh further suggests that an awareness should be created in performing tasks that intends to instil in the students an appreciation of the complexity of epistemic meanings.

In a related study, Hyland and Milton (1997) compared the expression of doubt and certainty in essays written by L2 Cantonese high school graduates and British native speaking learners of similar ages and of educational levels. The data was student examination scripts rather than graduate theses. An emphasis on graduate theses certainly would have been be in order as it would helped to determine how graduate students who are at the lower and junior level in the academic community employ hedging rhetorical devices to express personal attitudes, commitment and detachment towards their proposition in academic discourse. The result of the study indicated that both categories of students depended on narrow ranges of hedges like modal verbs and adverbs in the making of their proposition. But the L2 students had problems with hedging, which prevented them from conveying a precise degree of certainty, as it emerged that the students might not have been introduced to enough types of hedging. Hyland & Milton believe that the lack of familiarity with the all-important hedging convention in academic writing on the part of the students will serve as a detriment to their success in the academic community and to their professional opportunities in academia. They continue that, although the L2 students in the study were Hong Kong students, the difficulties they encountered might not be limited to only Cantonese students but other L2 students as well. They are of the view that the teaching of English language and research-related teachings might have largely overlooked the importance of epistemic language in hedging and a neglect of teaching it to the students. They recommended that since there are likely to be greater numbers of L2 students who are pursuing courses at English-medium universities, it is critical that characteristics of hedging are included in their course outlines. They further argue that when these taxonomies of hedges are exposed to students, they will permit the students to gain control over areas of rhetorical competence in relation to challenges of hedging. These challenges of hedging, when overcome by the students, will in turn increase the effectiveness of their communication in the academic community.

Ekoc (2010), in his investigation of the use of lexical hedging in the disciplinary variation of the abstracts of Turkish MA theses from four different fields extended the corpus of study to thirteen universities. Ekoc asserts that analyzing texts from a single discipline usually does not reveal much about disciplinary variation, and that is why the corpus was from four

fields. Although the study investigated hedging in graduate students' theses, it was limited to only the abstract section of the theses to the neglect of other sections of the theses. Another noticeable inattention is the range of hedges that were investigated. It was revealed that only lexical hedges were focused on despite there being other forms of hedges in the academic literature. The study focused on Koutsantoni's (2006) taxonomy of hedges, such as pronouns and impersonalization strategies, which were modelled after McEnery and Kifle's (2002) 100 items classification of hedging in academic writing and Hyland's (2000) list of items that express doubt and uncertainty. The results indicated a clear usage of hedges among the disciplines in different degrees and in different ways. It also revealed that practices of each discipline in hedging mirrored the view that each discipline is different in the appropriation of hedging which students must take cognizance of. In a related study, Halabisaz et al. (2014) investigated the employment of hedges in the abstracts of English and Persian Masters' students. Although the focus was on master's theses, it was not an interdisciplinary study; rather it was a native and non-native comparative study. The study was limited to investigating the abstracts over other sections of the theses. Categorization of hedges was done using Crompton's (1997) taxonomy of hedges. The data were analyzed by two-way Chi-Square, SPSS version 16. The findings of the study indicated that there were significant differences between native and non-native speakers' employment of hedges in the abstracts of their theses. According to the result, native English students used more hedging devices, while non-natives (Iranian) students employed fewer hedging devices in their M.A. thesis abstracts. Halabisaz et al. attributes these differences to the degree of rhetorical sensitivity and modality, awareness of audience, purpose, and cultural background of the learners. Native English-speaking students' efficient use of hedges is evidence of their familiarity with the interactiveness feature of academic writing as was noted by Atai & Sadr (2008). Halabisaz et al. claim that non-native English speakers who have intentions of functioning effectively in academic discourse must be able to identify hedging devices in written text and thus employ them appropriately in the making of their propositions in their research. These hedging devices can only be recognized by students if they are included in the syllabi and taught in class.

Halabisaz et al. (2014) point out that their findings contradict Dafouz's (2008) findings, which reveal that both native and non-native Spanish students follow parallel rhetorical conventions in the articulation of persuasion by means of metadiscourse hedges. They conclude

that there should be appropriate academic instructions and pedagogical programs, which would increase the consciousness of L2 students in the appropriation of hedging devices.

Farrasi (2015) also conducted a study on how graduate students in a state university in Bandung appropriate hedges when addressing questions during the discussion session in their presentation. Although this study is about graduate students' employment of hedges, its focus was on the interaction between the students and their audience during a presentation. The study is thus interactional. As a result, an interaction analysis is the method used for analysis together with the theories of the function of hedging devices, which were proposed by Jallifer & Alavi-Nia (2012). Farrasi's personal interpretation was used as the grounds for codification and categorization of the data.

The results, according to Farrasi (2015), demonstrated that hedges were employed by the students in addressing all of their questions. The students mostly used introductory phrases and function to attenuate epistemic commitment. Farrasi stipulates that the predominance of the use of the introductory phrases in hedging by the student may be due to the characteristic of academic context, which requires students to support their statements with theories or data. Farrasi contends that other findings from the study about the students' appropriation of hedging in addressing their questions tend not to be in accordance with characteristics of academic contexts. The conclusion drawn by Farrasi is that, although the students used hedges when addressing questions in a discussion session of a presentation, the hedges do not fit completely with some conventions of academic contexts. The following recommendations were, thus, made: 1) that further research on the use of hedges in academic contexts should be conducted; 2) teachers and lecturers should raise students' awareness of the importance of pragmatic competence; and 3) teachers and lecturers should give more attention to provide students with pragmatic competence.

Atmaca (2016), in a related research, carried out a comparative study to determine "the similarities and differences in the appropriations of hedges in the conclusion and discussion sections between MA theses and PhD dissertations of Turkish students". Content analysis was used to analyze the data after which it emerged that M.A. students hedged less than the PhD students. However, modals followed by passivization were the leading hedging devices used, while nouns were given little consideration. This inclination of hedging, Atmaca asserts, demonstrates the point that novice writers have not mastered the skills and techniques

of hedging, unlike expert writers. Atmaca recommends that graduate and postgraduate students should improve their writing skills and also be familiar with the philosophies of academic writing so that they will be able to succeed in their future careers. The findings confirm that hedging is a vital tool for academic writing and also it can be portrayed as an essential element for effective communication and for academic success amongst students as well. Thus, English instructors/teachers need to provide written tasks that vary in both purpose and audience and are connected to hedging to the students so as to help create an awareness of appropriate writing conventions.

From the above discussion it is evident that scholars have tried in various ways to investigate the appropriation of hedges by students in range and variability but the studies are not exhaustive. For instance, most of the study could not address full graduate theses as their investigations were either limited to term papers or to students' examination scripts. Those studies that attempted to investigate students' theses focused on just the abstract section of the study or on just the discussion section, which resulted in a very limited investigation on how students employ hedges in their writing. Again, little focus was placed on exclusively postgraduate theses in disciplinary variation. Another important factor is the limitation of the forms of classifications or taxonomies that were used for analysis. Furthermore, vital to the recommendation made to the student by the scholars was that the students should engage in tasks that will allow for extended studies in the use of hedges. Another significant point to note about the studies is that most were carried out in Asia and Europe, to the exclusion of Africa. That is why the current study is set in Ghana and specifically investigates the appropriation of hedging in the three chapters of postgraduate theses across disciplines in a Ghanaian University.

2.6 Hedging in Academic Writing: Disciplinary Variation

Since graduate students' study in various disciplines, study of how hedges are employed by postgraduate students across disciplines will bring to light the argumentative strategies that these students use in the different disciplines. Disciplinary variation occurs in academic writing because of the types of problems studied and how they are addressed. Furthermore, since academic writing assists students to advance in knowledge, the differences in the type of issues they study and solve explains the disciplinary variation. These consistencies shed light on the knowledge building of the various disciplinary communities and largely reflect the types of intellectual inquest and knowledge patterns that are specific to either the hard

or soft disciplines. Researchers, such as Vartalla (2001), Vold (2006) and Hardjanto (2016), have carried out empirical studies in disciplinary variation on hedging. The findings of the studies signal either similarities or differences in the employment of these important rhetorical devices (hedging) in the writings of the scholars. Another significant factor that the finding of the study revealed was   that each discipline has its peculiar style of language in relation to hedging and that it is very important that writers become conversant with disciplinary variation in hedging since results from a particular discipline cannot spontaneously be transferred to other disciplines. As Hyland (2005:106) puts it, writers must shape their evidence, observations, data, and flashes of insight into the patterns of inquiry and knowledge valued by their community, framing their arguments in ways that conform to disciplinary expectations concerning appropriate involvement and interpersonal conduct. Finally, the findings reveal that the focus of the study was restricted to specific types of hedges although there are types and variations of hedging in academic writing that can equally be investigated into.

Vold (2006) investigated the use of epistemic modality markers, which happened to be a frequently employed type of hedges in academic writing. Research articles from two disciplines (Linguistics and Medicine) written by three different speakers: (English, French and Norwegian) were considered for the study. Motivation for the study sprang from the point of view of a minimal study in disciplinary variation in academic writing. Vold used an electronic corpus of the KIAP project which aids with Cultural Identity in Academic Prose to compile the data and also a statistical analysis of the data from Kruskar-Wallis and Mann-Whitney tests to analyze the data. The results revealed that Norwegian and English-speaking expertise used significantly more epistemic modality in hedges than their French-speaking colleagues. The differences in the employment of hedges, according to Vold, are because English and Norwegian authors were more persuasive and expressed themselves more clearly in their propositions than French speaking authors. With regards to disciplinary variation, Vold noted differences and frequencies of the appropriation of each epistemic modality marker by each discipline. She cautions that although these disciplinary variations are evident, the comparison was between just two disciplines, and thus it might not paint a bigger picture between disciplinary variations as there are other disciplines available in the academic discourse. Another important point that Vold makes with respect to disciplinary variations is that disciplines do not comprise a unified culture. However, sub-disciplines may be embedded in each discipline, which can result in the representation of difference

even contradicting linguistic traditions and methodologies. Thus, it is advised that in order for an appropriate question on variation in hedging across disciplines to be answered, more careful sub-disciplinary features of academic writing should be involved in the comparison since these sub-disciplines may have their unique writing culture also.

Again, Vold (2006) is of the view that the study just focused on an explicit group of hedges known as epistemic modality markers, and that hedging strategies such as references to restricted knowledge or methodological limitations, which were cited by Hyland (1998) have not been considered. She concludes that it is imperative that the teaching of hedging devices be done in concurrence with the disciplines associated with the students as students need to learn the terminologies of "their field" and the lexemes that are traditionally used in the discourse of their discipline and those that are not used.

Hardjanto (2016) investigated the use of the modal auxiliary as an expression of hedging in academic writing among five disciplines (Linguistics, Economics, Engineering, Natural sciences and Medicines), which were sub-categorized into three groups as the soft sciences, hard sciences and health science (Medicine). Hardjanto noticed a significant variation in the use of hedges across disciplines. According to the findings, the soft sciences hedged more using modal auxiliaries than the hard sciences, while there were no substantial differences in the use of modal auxiliaries in the health sciences. The findings, however, support Vartalla (2001) in that the use of hedging in Economics is less than in the sciences. Hardjanto asserts that the disciplinary variation is as a result of the differences in research tradition, where Linguistics and Economics happened to be more discursive, interpretative, cautious and tentative in the presentation of their claims than Engineering, Medicine and Natural Sciences. There was also variation in the use of individual modals like, *may could*, *would* and *might*. It was evident that the study was inconsistent with Ventola (1990), Hyland (1999) and Vartalla (2001) on disciplinary variation on hedging. Hardjanto concludes that writers must equip themselves with the mastery of other means of expressing tentativeness than the use of modal auxiliaries in order to convey the knowledge of their claims to their audience and, also in turn, increase the acceptance of their proposition so that their claims can be ratified by members of their discourse community. This gesture will increase their credibility as writers in the academic discourse both locally and internationally.

Hariri (2015) explored disciplinary variation in the use of hedging in research articles across three distinct disciplines, which are Chemical Engineering, Medicine, and Psychology. The

study was an attempt to find out whether or not different segments of research articles were hedged differently across disciplines. The results of the study indicated that different disciplines are not uniformed in hedging in relation to frequencies, forms, and varieties of hedges. Hariri, however, recognized two disciplinary variances in the incidence of hedges among the three disciplines. The first was variation in the overall frequency of hedging, where it was noticed that writers in Psychology hedged more than the others and Chemical Engineering writers hedged the least. This result, Hariri asserts, is an outcome of the nature of the three disciplines that were investigated. Since chemical engineering and medical issues deal with fact it will be a bit more difficult to apply tentativeness in their claims; thus, their claims appear to be based on certainty rather than uncertainty. Psychology, on the other hand, is considered as a softer area of research and thus it will be more difficult to state with certainty when it comes to issues on the human mind and nature. Hariri continues that the differences in the hedging between psychology and the hard sciences are not to a very great degree and that the sciences are hedged to a notable degree. The second variation is in the relative share of the categorization of hedges in the three disciplines. The categories of hedges, which were distinguished in the disciplines, were that the primary means of hedging were full verbs in medicine and psychology, while chemical engineering employed adverbs to hedge. The differences in hedging are due to the culture and tradition in each discipline. Writers are therefore advised to know the acceptable norms of their discourse community so that they will be guided by the rhetorical device used to show commitment, caution and tentativeness.

In conclusion, the studies from the various scholars in the review noted forms of disciplinary variations in forms and types of hedges by the students across disciplines but the motivation for the variations differs from discipline to discipline. Each discipline has its peculiar style of language in relation to hedging and that it is very important writers become conversant with disciplinary variations in hedging as results from a discipline cannot automatically be transferred to other disciplines.

2.7 Categorization of Hedges.

According to the Center for Learning and Professional Development, hedged words account for approximately one word in every 100 words in scientific articles. The Centre posits that to hedge means engaging in any of the following:

- To deliberately use statements that are non-committal.

- To deliberately use a vague language in your reportage.
- To avoid answering questions directly.
- To be assuredly uncertain.

The Centre further reiterate that reasons for hedging are as follows:

- Writers hedge to tone down the strong force behind their proposition because they want to reduce the risk of opposition from their audience.
- Writers want to assure their readers that they (writers) do not appear to have the final words on the subject but rather, readers can pass their comments on the claims.
- Hedges may be understood and perceived as devices that serve both positive and negative politeness strategies in which the writer tries to appear modest rather than arrogant.
- Hedging has become conventionalized and as a result when writers hedge they intend to follow an established writing style in English.

The Centre for Learning and Professional Development has enumerated types, kinds and variations of linguistic devices to hedging.

Table 1: Linguistic Rhetorical Devices

Source: Centre for Learning and Professional Development

Type	Form	Example in Sentences
Modal auxiliary verbs	may, might, can, could, would, should	Such a measure might be more sensitive to changes in health after specialist treatment.
Modal lexical verbs doubting and evaluating rather than merely describing	to seem, to appear (epistemic verbs), to believe, to assume, to suggest, to estimate, to tend, to think, to argue, to indicate, to propose, to speculate	In spite of its limitations, the study appears to have a number of important strengths.
Probability adjectives	possible, probable, un/likely	It is likely to result in failure.

Source: Centre for Learning and Professional Development

Nouns	assumption, claim, possibility, estimate, suggestion	We estimate that one in five marriages end in divorce.
Adverbs	perhaps, possibly, probably, practically, likely, presumably, virtually, apparently	There is, perhaps, a good reason why she chose to write in the first person.
Approximators of degree, quantity, frequency and time	approximately, roughly, about, often, occasionally, generally, usually, somewhat, somehow, a lot of	Fever is present in about a third of cases.
Introductory phrases	believe, to our knowledge, it is our view that, we feel that	We believe that there is no simple explanation.
If clauses	if true, if anything	
Compound hedges	seems reasonable, looks probable	Such compound hedges can be double hedges (it may suggest that; it seems likely that; it would indicate that; this probably indicates); treble hedges (it seems reasonable to assume that); quadruple hedges (it would seem somewhat unlikely that, it may appear somewhat speculative that) and so on.

Source: Centre for Learning and Professional Development

The categorization of hedges by the Centre for Learning and Professional Development is in consonance with models and taxonomy of hedges of scholars like Prince et al. (1982), Salager-Meyer (1994), Hyland (1995), Crompton (1997), Salager-Meyer (1997), Vartalla (2001), Heng and Tang (2002), Hyland (2004), Hinkle (2005), Koutsantoni (2006), Hamamci (2007), Jalifafar (2007), Martin-Martin (2008), Frazer (2010), Malášková (2011), Nkemleke (2011) and Anh (2018). The current study focused on the categorisation of hedges from the Centre for Learning and Professional Development for the analysis because it has an all-inclusive in-depth kinds and variations of hedging devices, which explicitly answered the research questions. Furthermore, the categorization is comprehensive and covers most of the cases of linguistic rhetorical devices that are identified as hedges. The implication is that any researcher can employ any of the models in their writing depending upon the purpose and the variations and range of hedges that is needed to investigate in a particular study.

2.7.1 Prince et al.'s (1982) Taxonomy

Prince et al. (1982) conducted a study on empirical research on oral medical discourse. Based upon the outcome of the study they classified hedges into two main categories, namely rational hedges and propositional hedges. The two sub-categories were further broken down into four types. They refer to the classification as sub-divisions and functional hedging. The hedging devices that they apportioned to each category are approximators and shields. Accordingly, approximators refer to hedging devices that affect the propositional content, whereas shields refer to hedges that allude to the fact that speakers do not commit fully to the truth of their proposition.

Table 2: Rational and Propositional Hedges

Categories	Rational / Propositional	Examples
Approximators	Rounders, Adaptors	About, roughly, approximately, Sort of, kind of, seems like
Shield	attribution shields, plausibility shields,	Seems like, appears to be
-	-	According to

Source: Prince et al. (1982).

2.7.2 Salager-Meyer's (1994) Classification

Salager-Meyer (1994) built on Prince et al.'s (1982) functional taxonomy after investigating the contextual analysis of written Medical English Discourse. A formal-functional classification which has five sub-divisions was developed. Table 3 summarizes the classifications.

Table 3: Formal-Functional Classification

Type	Classification	Examples
Shields	All Modal Verbs Expressing Probability	Might
	Probability Adverbs And Derivative Adjectives	Probably

Type	Classification	Examples
	Semi-Auxiliaries;	Seem, Appear
	Epistemic Verbs	Suggest, Speculate
Approximators	-	Approximately, Somewhat, Often, Occasionally
Authors' Personal Doubt	Expressions Of The Authors' Personal Doubt And Direct Involvement	I Believe, To Our Knowledge
Emotionally-Charged Intensifiers	-	Extremely Difficult, Absolutely Interesting, Of Particular Importance, Surprisingly
Compound Hedges	-	It May Suggest That …, It Would Seem Likely That

Source: Salager-Meyer (1994)

2.7.3 Hyland´s (1995) Taxonomy

Hyland (1995) claimed that hedging devices should not serve only functional and formal functional purposes but rather there should be lexical and non-lexical attributes of the functions that hedges perform. He thus put hedges into two categories as the major realization of hedges in research.

Table 4: Major Realization of Hedging

Categories1: lexical hedges	Examples	Sentences
Modal verbs	would, may, could	The rose flower *may* be highly fragranced
Epistemic lexical verbs	Indicate, Suggest, Appear, And Propose	It *appears* the rose flower is highly fragranced
Epistemic adjectives	likely, possible, apparent	It is possible the rose flower is highly fragranced
Epistemic adverbs	apparently, probably, relatively, generally	*Apparently,* the rose flower is highly fragranced
Epistemic nouns	Possibility	There is the *possibility* that the rose flower is highly fragranced

Categories1: lexical hedges	Examples	Sentences
Category 2: strategic/ non lexical hedging	Personal attribution Ascription	Reader Appointment Constructions Conditions, Reference to Test, Admittance of Lack Information

Source: Hyland (1995)

2.7.4 Salager-Meyer´s (1997) Taxonomy

Salager-Meyer (1997) studied what appropriation of hedges in scientific English are and then came out with an additional realization of hedging devices. He then made an extension to the classification he made in 1994.

Table 5: Hedging in Scientific English

Types	Examples	Sentences
Auxiliary Verbs	may, might, can, could, would, should.	It might *rain* since the clouds are gathering.
Lexical Words	to seem, to appear, to believe to suggest, to assume, to indicate.	*To assume* it will rain because the clouds are gathering is unacceptable.
Adjectives, Adverbs	probability adjectives e.g. possible, probable, un/likely adverbs: perhaps, possibly, probably, likely, presumably	It is *possible* it will rain because the clouds are gathering.
Noun Phrases	assumption, claim, possibility, estimate	The *assumption* that the clouds are gathering is not feasible.
Approximations	approximately, roughly, about, often, generally, usually.	It rained for *approximately* six hours.
Introduction Text	I believe, to our knowledge, It is our view that, We feel that	To our *knowledge* it rained less than five hours.
If's	If true, If anything,	*If it is true* that it rained for six hours then there will be floods all over
Compounds	It may suggest, It seems reasonable to, Assume that, It would seem, somewhat Unlikely that,	*It seems reasonable to assume* it rained for less than an hour since the roads are very dry.

Source: Salager-Meyer (1997)

2.7.5 Crompton's (1997) Taxonomy

Crompton (1997), after a careful study of hedging in academic text, proposed a sentence pattern categorization of hedges as he thought that it was not appropriate to focus on just a-one-word classification as a hedge.

Examples are as follows:

1. Statements with copulas other than.

2. Claims that contained modals.

3. Statement clauses relating to the probability of the succeeding claims being true.

4. Statements with assurance adverbials that relate to the probability of the proposition being true.

5. Sentences containing reported propositions where the author(s) can be taken to be responsible for any tentativeness in the verbal group, or non-use of factive reporting verbs such as show, demonstrate and prove. These fall into two sub-types: a. where authors explicitly designate themselves as responsible for the proposition being reported; and b. where authors use an impersonal subject but the agent is intended to be understood as themselves.

6. Statements containing a reported proposition that a hypothesized entity X exists and the author(s) can be taken to be responsible for making the hypothesis.

2.7.5.1 Basic Kinds of Hedges in Each Type of Hedged Proposition

Each of sentences below contain hedging device which illustrates the pattern of categorisation of hedges which was proposed by Crompton (1997).

1. The cathedral *appears to be* built of paper straw.

2. The cathedral *might be* built of paper straw.

3. *It is likely* that the cathedral is made of paper straw.

4. The cathedral is *probably* made of paper straw.

5. I *suggest* that the cathedral is made of paper straw.

6. These findings *suggest* that the cathedral is made of paper straw.

2.7.6 Varttala's (2001) Taxonomy

Table 6: Full Verbs, Adverbs, Nouns and Adjectives Hedges

Catego-ries	Sub-categories	Examples
Adverbs	Probability adverb Indefinite frequency Indefinite degree Approximate adverbs	Apparently,ostensibly Commonly,frequently,oftentimes Massively,fairly,dramastically
Nouns	Non-factive assertive noun Tentative cognition Tentative likelihood	Argument, claim, implication Conceptualization, construct Alternative, appearance
Adjectives	Probability adjective Indefinite frequency Indefinitive degree Approximative adjec-tive	Implausible, potential, occasional, nor-mal, Devastating, immerse Rough, gross, virtual

Source: Varttala (2001)

2.7.7 Heng and Tang's (2002) Categorization

In 2002, Heng & Tang came up with a categorization, which is built on an earlier categori-zation of Zuck and Zuck (1985) that included a detailed description of the exact appropria-tion of hedges. According to Heng & Tang, that appropriation of hedging should be accom-panied by the precise description of the rhetorical device that has been used to hedge.

Table 7: Description of Exact Hedges

Categorization	Examples	Functions
Adverbials	Generally,	modify an adjective, follows verb
Epistemic verbs	throw, catch, drink	
Modallities	had better, should have, could, might	express probability, suggestion or possibility
Cognition verbs	We could perceive that	display one's stance in the con-versation
Hypothetical Con-structions	if clause	utterances that provide condi-tions
Anticipatory it-clause	It appears that	the dummy subject

Source: Heng and Tang (2002)

2.7.8 Hyland's (2004) Categorization

In addition to the extensive elaborated categorization which was emerged in 1995, Hyland (2004), developed a simplified categorization, of hedges which compressed hedging types into only three kinds. A careful study of both categorization (1995; 2004) revealed that, little or no significant changes have been affected in the second categorizations in 2004. It is just that the types have been compressed, but the rhetorical devices that serve as hedging are the same in both instances.

Table 8: Extensive Elaborate Categorization

Types	Examples
1: Tentative verbs and modals	may, might, could, seem, suggest, appear,seems to, should
2: Tentative adjectives and adverbs	possibly, likely, probably, certainly, definitely
3: Distancing phrases, impersonal third person, and the unnamed phrases	This study, the study, he/she, it, they, the researcher

Source: Hyland (2004)

2.7.9 Hinkel's (2005) Taxonomy

Hinkel (2005) categorized hedges into the following types

Table 9: Epistemic, Lexical, Downtoners and Assertive Hedges

Categories	Examples
Epistemic hedges	According to (+noun), actually, apparent(-ly), approximate(-ly), broad(-ly), clear(-ly), comparative(ly), essential(-ly), indeed, likely, most (+adjective), normal(-ly), potential(-ly), probable(-ly), rare(-ly), somehow, somewhat, theoretically, the/possessive pronoun very (+superlative adjective + noun, e.g., the/his/their very best/last minute/moment/dollar/penny/chance), unlikely
Lexical hedges	(At) about, (a) few, in a way, kind of, (a) little + noun, maybe, like, many, more or less, more, most, much, several, something, like, sort of; possibility hedges: by (some/any) chance, hopefully, perhaps, possible, possibly, in (the) case(of), if you/we know/understand (what [pronoun] mean(s)), if you catch/get/understand my meaning/drift, if you know what I mean (to say)
Downtoners	At all, a bit, all but, a good/great deal, almost, as good/well as, at least, barely, basically, dead (+adjective), enough, fairly, (a) few, hardly, in the least/slightest, just, (a) little (+adjective), merely, mildly, nearly, not a (+ countable noun, e.g., thing/person), only, partly, partially, practically, pretty (+adjective), quite

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Categories	Examples
	(+adjective), rather, relatively, scarcely, simply, slightly, some-what, sufficiently, truly, virtually
Assertive pro-nouns	Any-words (anybody, anyone, anything), any, some pronomi-nals (somebody, someone, something), some
Adverbs of fre-quency	Annually, daily, frequently, monthly, per day/hour/year occa-sionally, often, oftentimes, seldom, sometimes, sporadically, regularly, usually, weekly
Common inten-sifiers and uni-versal and neg-ative pronouns	all, each, every-pronominals (everybody, everyone, everything), every, none, no one, nothing
Amplifiers	Absolutely, a lot (+comparative adjective), altogether, always, amazingly, awfully, badly, by all means, completely, definitely, deeply, downright, forever, enormously, entirely, even (+adjec-tive/noun), ever, extremely, far (+comparative adjective), far from it, fully, greatly, highly, hugely, in all/every respects/ways, much (+adjectives), never, not half bad, positively, perfectly, se-verely, so (+adjective/adverb), sharply, strongly, too (+adjec-tive), terribly, totally, unbelievably, very, very much, well
Emphatics	A lot (+noun/adjective), certain (-ly), clear (-ly), complete, defi-nite, exact(-ly), extreme, for sure, great, indeed, no way, out-right, pure(-ly), real(-ly), such a (+noun), strong, sure(-ly), total

Source: Hinkel (2005)

2.7.10 Hammci's (2007) Taxonomy

Hammci (2007) created a simple taxonomy that depicts both lexical and functional hedges.

Table 10: Lexical and Functional Hedges

Kinds	Examples
Modal	can, could may, might should
Verbs	believe, appear assume, think claim, appear, seem.
Adjectives	possible, likely, common, probable, primary, general
Adverbs	Perhaps, mainly, potentially.
Nouns	belief, view, expectation, claim, idea perception, argument.

Source: Hammci (2007)

2.7.11 Jalifafar's (2007) Categorization

Jalifafar (2007) realized that the most common hedging device is utilized for reporting results, accounting for findings, and for the making of inferences. He then proposed nine types of hedging devices that can be appropriated for the deference of propositions.

Table 11: Inference Hedges

Types	Examples
Introductory words	Look, like, seem, appear, indicate, suggest
Certain lexical verbs	Believe, assume, think
Certain modal verbs	May, will, should, could, shall
Adverbs frequency	Often, usually, sometimes
Adverbials	Perhaps, probably, clearly – certainly
Adjectivals	Certain, probable – possible- definite
Nominals	Assumption, possibility, probability
Clauses ….	It can be suggested that ……, there is a hope
To-clause + adjective	It may be possible to …, It is significant to

Source: Jalifafar (2007)

2.7.12 Martin and Martin's (2008) Taxonomy

Table 12: Modal Auxiliary, Semi Auxiliaries and Verbs of Cognition

Categories	Examples	Sentences
Epistemic modality		
Modal auxiliary verbs	may, might, can	The tree might fall on the vehicle
Semi-auxiliaries verbs	to seem, to appear	To appear healthy one must be conscious of hygienic conditions
Epistemical lexical	to suggest, to speculate, to assume	Oyekemi appeared before the council of elders to suggest that her family is represented fully during the marriage ceremony
Verbs of cognition	to believe, to think	To believe in the authenticity of the document, you must get the original one
Modality adverbials	perhaps, possibly, probably	Abena probably stood the lecturer up
Modal nouns	possibility, assumption, suggestion	There is the possibility that the students will all graduate in September 2020.

Categories	Examples	Sentences
Modal adjectives	possibly, probably, likely	Genesis said that it is likely to rain this evening, so carry an umbrella with you
Approximators of quantity, frequency, degree	-	
Strategy of Subjectivization	(I, We) think, believe, suppose, suggest	Yoni retorted We think that it is a shopping mall
Quality-emphasizing Adjectival/adverbial expressions	extremely interesting,	Femi answered the story is extremely out of context
Depersonalization	it seems/appears that suggest/reveal, these data indicate	Senyo agreed that the chart reveals that Rose is very athletic

Source: Martin and Martin (2008)

2.7.13 Frasar's (2010) Classification

According to Frasar (2010), there could be no limitation to linguistic terminologies that can be termed as hedges as any linguistics item or manifestation can be inferred as a hedge. This unlimited functional definition and classification of hedges makes it very difficult to limit hedging to a single linguistics item. Fraser's assertion implies that there cannot be straight forward lists of hedging expressions that can possibly be referred for the realizations of hedging. He again stated that linguistic hedging devices assume both morphological and syntactic forms.

Table 13: Unlimited Classification

Types	Examples
Adverbs/Adjectives	about, often, occasionally, approximately, generally, roughly
Impersonal pronouns (one, it, . . .)	one can imagine that...
Concessive conjunctions	although, though, while, whereas, even though, even if
Hedged performative	use of modal to hedge performative verb, I must ask you to sit down.
Indirect speech acts	could you speak a little louder?
Introductory phrases	I believe, to our best of knowledge, it is our view that, we feel that

Types	Examples
Modal adverbs	perhaps, possibly, probably, practically, presumably, apparently, I can possibly do that
Modal adjectives	possible, probable, un/likely, It is possible that...
Modal nouns	assumption, claim, possibility, estimate, suggestion, . . . The assumption here is that …
Modal verbs	might, can, would, could, . . . John might leave now.
Epistemic verbs	to appear, to believe, to assume, to suggest, . . . It seems that . . .
Negative question convey positive hedged assertion	didn't harry leave? [I think Harry left] I don't think I'm going. vs. I'm not going.
Agentless passive	many of the troops were injured (. . .)
Conditional subordinators	such as, as long as, so long as, assuming that, given that. unless the strike has been called off, there will be no trains tomorrow
Progressive form	I am hoping you will come
.Tentative inference	the mountains should be visible from here.
Conditional clause refers to the condition under which the speaker makes the utterance.	if you're going my way, I need a lift back.
Metalinguistic comment	Such as (strictly speaking, so to say, exactly, almost, just about), he has an idea, a hypothesis, if you will, that you may find interesting.

Source: Frasar (2010)

2.7.14 Malaskova's (2011) Classification

Malaskova (2011) classified hedging into two sub-categories, namely semantic and formal. According to Malaskova's classification, hedging can be used to perform both a semantic and formal function in the content of the text and it will seek to shield or provide a barrier for both writers and readers. Malaskova's classification is similar to Hyland's (1998) poly-pragmatic model of hedging, which focuses on pragmatic functions of hedging as content oriented, writer oriented and reader oriented. This confirms the assertion from scholars that hedging can assume a complex nature.

Table 14: Semantic and Formal Classification

Semantic Classification of Hedges		
Participant oriented		
Content oriented	**Writer oriented**	**Reader oriented**
Aims at greater accuracy (precision)	Protects the writer	Appeals to readers by involving them through varied hedging strategies
Aims at extent of applicability and generalization	Depersonalizes claims	Protects writers through personalization of information
Formal Classification of Hedges		
Participant oriented		
Content oriented/types of hedges	**Writer oriented/types of hedges**	**Reader oriented/types of hedges**
Precise adverbs	Impersonal structures referring to	Personal engagement structure
Epistemic lexical adjectives	Model/method/theory	Reader engagement
Epistemic lexical noun	Experimental condition	Attributions refers to structures
Epistemic modal nouns	Abstract rhetors	Assumptions
Limited knowledge	Epistemic lexical verbs	Conditional questions
	Attribution to literature	Refers to testability

Source: Malaskova (2011)

2.7.15 Nkemleke's (2011) Classification

Nkemleke (2011) came out with a very simple classification, which describes both the lexical and functional purposes of hedging.

Table 15: Lexical and Functional Hedges

Types	Examples
Modals	May, might Could, would
Adjectives	Likely, possible, clear Probable, obvious Evident, certain
Adverbs	Usually, probably Certainly, apparently Possibly perhaps Typically
Evidential Verbs	Seem, appear, tend
Judgment Verbials	Suggest, think Assume, indicate
Nominals	Possibility, probability Assume"

Source: Nkemleke (2011)

2.7.16 Anh's (2018) Classification

Anh (2019) developed a convenient classification of hedging forms and functions, which is modelled on frameworks of Swales & Feak (1994), Hyland (1996) and Salager-Meyer (1997). Anh's reason for combining the three frameworks into one model is that there is likely to be a completely covered categorization of hedges, which can result in a comprehensive set of hedging forms and functions.

Table 16: Comprehensive Hedging

Types/forms	Examples
Reliability: Modal auxiliary verbs Reliability: Modal adjectives, nouns, and adverbs:	may, might, can, could, would, should possible, possibility, probably
Content disjuncts	presumably, apparently, virtually, practically
Limited knowledge	It is not known whether, poorly understood
Downtoners	in some ways, quite, partially, barely, roughly, essentially, slightly
Approximators	generally, approximately, around, often, somewhat, somehow, usually, significantly, relatively, most, a majority of, in many cases
Qualification	viewed in this way, from a practical point of view, based on, according to, in the view of, many people think that

Types/forms	Examples
Impersonal expressions and compound Hedges	-
Modal lexical verbs	indicate, assume, predict, propose, appear, seem, imply, suggest, believe, estimate, tend, think, argue
Impersonal reference	Under these conditions, the prediction of this model, despite the limitations of this method, on the limited data available
Personal attribution	-
Hypothetical conditions	if we assume that, if true, if anything
Rhetorical questions	Why do such temporal changes occur? Could such a putative interaction have a physiological significance?

Source: Anh (2018)

Table 17: Progressive Order of Hedges

Author	Year	Process	Recognized as
Prince et al.	1982	Taxonomy	Rational hedges and propositional hedges.
Hyland	1995	Taxonomy	Major realization of hedging in research articles
Crompton	1997	Categorisation	Proposed sentence pattern
Salager-Meyer	1997	Taxonomy	Hedging in scientific English
Varttala	2001	Taxonomy	Full verbs, adverbs, nouns and adjectives hedges
Heng and Tang	2002	Classification	Description of exact proposition
Hyland	2004	Categorisation	A simplified categorization
Hinkle	2005	Classification	Epistemic, lexical, downtoners and assertive hedges
Jalifafar	2007	Categorisation	Inferences hedges
Hamamci	2007	Taxonomy	Lexical and functional hedges
Martin-Martin	2008	Taxonomy	Modal auxiliary, semi auxiliaries and verbs of cognition
Frazer	2010	Classification	Unlimited classification
Malaskova	2011	Taxonomy model	Semantic and formal classification
Nkemleke	2011	Classification	Simplified forms and functions
Anh	2018	Classification model	Convenient classification of forms and functions

Source: Field Data, (2020)

The above table is a summary of the categorization/taxonomy/classification of hedging devices by various authors.

2.7.17 Identification, Recognition and Realization of Hedges

Uysal (2014) identified three major categories of hedges: (1) rhetorical devices (2) syntactic markers (3) lexical markers and referential markers. Uysal further opined that rhetorical devices are recognized in constructions in a sentence that suggests denials, disclaimers, ambiguity and vagueness, which permit writers to gain academic credibility in academic writing, by shielding themselves against any strong force behind their claims and at the same time covering themselves from overstating these claims. Hedges used on this trajectory further provide assistance for writers who yearn to avoid personal responsibilities for their propositions with a view to protecting their reputations and limiting the damage that may result from any categorical statement. According to Uysal, syntactic markers also serve the same purpose in writing as rhetorical devices, but their linguistic items differ. These syntactic markers are perceived as passive voice forms and *if* conditionals. Lexical and referential markers, as noted, are linguistic devices that function as point of view for distancing one's self from one's proposition. Examples are downtowners, demonstratives, discourse, particles, diminutives, and indefinite pronouns, which also protect the reputations of writers by preventing them from making categorical claims. The varied taxonomies/categorization and classification of hedging in the academic literature, which have been grouped in different sub-headings, as presented in Table 17, support Uysal's claim.

An earlier discussion in section 2.7 reveals that there are hedges that can be collectively identified by their sub-grouping; yet the function of the hedging devices in a text is not limited to any particular sub-group as there is noticeable overlapping within the sub-groups. This observation confirms the literature on academic writing that states that the taxonomies of hedging assume a complex nature. Despite the complex nature of the sub-groupings, the hedging devices under each grouping remained unchanged; thus, any researcher can choose any of the taxonomies for analysis purposes depending upon the nature and the objectives of the study. I therefore perceive hedging as a modest way of presenting information to people, which allows them to critically   think about what is communicated and conceivably consider whether or not to take action on the issues presented to them. Through hedging you allow people to share their point of view while sheltering yourself from criticism.

2.8 Chapter Summary

The chapter examined hedging amongst scholars in the academic discourse community. The discussion revealed that scholars in the academic discourse community need to effectively hedge their claims in other to avoid misinterpreting their thoughts by their readers. It also traced the definition of hedges from the 1970's to date. The chapter discussed the importance of hedging in academic writing and mentioned that, although there is a debate among some scholars concerning the unacceptability of hedging in academic writing because it connotes vagueness, academic literature shows that the debate on the imprecision and unacceptability of hedging in the academic discourse could not hold, because it was revealed by other scholars that hedging is very vital in academic writing as it establishes cordial reader/writer relationship and enhances effective communication. Again, hedging enables writers to gain credibility in the academic discourse.

The chapter brought to light the pragmatic and semantic dimension of hedging. The pragmatic entails invocation of an interpersonal relationship among writers and readers, while the semantic dimension emphasises how fuzzier or less fuzzy a text can be through hedging. Hedging in students' writing was also focused on. It was revealed through literature that, although much has been done on hedging in the general field of academic writing, postgraduate students' theses have not been given much attention. Another important area that was taken into consideration was interdisciplinary variation of hedging in students' theses. It was revealed from the review that each discipline adheres to a writing style that is unique in relation to hedging. As a result, writers must choose hedges that relate to the writing culture of each discipline.

Lastly, taxonomies and models of hedges from scholars like Prince et al. (1982), Salager-Meyer (1994), Hyland (1995), Crompton (1997), Salager-Meyer (1997), Vartalla (2001), Hang & Tang (2002), Hyland (2004), Hinkle (2005), Koutsantoni (2006), Hamamci (2007), Jalifafar (2007), Martin-Martin (2008), Frazer (2010), Malášková (2011), Nkemleke (2011) and Anh (2018) were reviewed. Writers can investigate the appropriateness of hedging in academic writing by using any of the taxonomies, categorizations or classifications for analysis purposes.

The following chapter focus on the theories which underpins the study.

<div align="center">**CHAPTER THREE**</div>

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.0 Introduction

Politeness theories of Fraser (1990) and Brown & Levinson (1999), which are related to hedging, are the theoretical frameworks that underpin this study. Before the theories are expatiated upon, the concept of politeness as explained by Grice (1975) is outlined.

3.1 The Concept of Politeness

The idea of linguistic politeness received recognition first, after Grice's (1975) study on conversational maxims. In the study, Grice posited that if one wants a justification for the context in which language is used, then a politeness notion should conversely be added to the widely known maxims of quantity, quality, relevance, and of manner theories, which are shrouded in the cooperative principle maxim theories. The cooperative principle maxims as explained by Grice (1975) are as follows:

1) Quantity: If you are assisting me to fix the wheels of a vehicle your contribution should be expected to be what is required and nothing less or even more than the expectations: for instance during the process if I need six bolts, I expect you to give to me six bolts rather than seven or ten. As any quantity of bolts lesser than what I requested for, will cause the vehicle to derail from the road after a certain period of driving.

2) Quality: Your contribution is expected to be honest and not fallacious. For instance, if vinegar is required as an ingredient for my meat pie and I asked you to hand over a bottle of cider vinegar I expect you to hand over cider vinegar to me and not oil. Again, if I need spatula for mixing the floor, I do not expect you to hand over to me a glass of water, as the wrong ingredients and items will compromise the quality of the meat pie.

3) Relevance: a partner is expected to make an appropriate and relevant contribution towards a worthy cause during any situation.

4) Manner: a partner is expected to make an unadulterated contribution and perform his/her task reasonably well, when needed for him/her to do so.

The quantity level of Grice's cooperative principles maxim implies that, any information that is communicated must not be misconstrued by the audience. Both the audience and communicator must be clear in their thoughts, thereby meeting each other's need in the long run. The quality level posits that there should be credibility in communication between both

parties. The parties' thoughts should not be shrouded in doubt and disbelief. The relevance level on the other hand, calls for the absence of digression during communication. Each topic under discussion must be relevant for the purpose of the discourse. Finally, the manner level postulates that communicators must avoid ambiguity and vagueness in their discourse. Precision of thought should be established at every stage of communication. In reality people do not hold on to the tenets of Grice's maxims since their face will be at risk if they are compelled to give information that they are unwilling to divulge, thus a politeness maxim has to be added to the cooperative maxim.

Yule (1996) perceive politeness as a phenomenon, which reduces potential contradiction between people during communication. The reduction of a potential contradiction aims at preventing any undesirable threat to the face or public persona of communicators during interaction. Watts (2003) identifies two kinds of politeness: linguistics and semantic. Watts states that the idea of linguistic politeness has a correlation with how people successfully manage interpersonal relationships to achieve both individual and the group's goal, while semantic politeness comprises a wide range of language structures and usage, which permits members of a social group to achieve individual and group's aims and objectives. Goffman (2005) asserts that politeness enables participants in a social community to focus on the self and the public image; and in order for the participants to be polite, they must acquaint themselves with two features of cautiousness, which are self- considerateness and self-respect. According to Goffman, politeness strategies can be attained properly through the above-mentioned means. Furthermore, Richard & Schmidt (2002) viewed politeness from two phases. First, politeness was seen as how communicators use language to express social distances between them and also the different roles that politeness creates in their relationship. Secondly, politeness is seen as means through which the face analogue is upheld, that is, efforts made by communicators to establish, maintain and save their face during the communication process and also to manage how to successfully transmit messages in the speech community. Sadeghoghli & Niroomand (2016) assert that politeness strategy is important in effective communication. However, Makejeva's (2017) claim differs from Sadeghoghli & Niroomand's assertion. Makejeva posits that the acquisition of politeness strategy is culturally and socially bound instead of being language bound. Makejeva's assertion confirms Spencer-Oatey's (2000) claim which states that one of the important features of politeness is built on human interaction in the society, which promotes interpersonal relationship.

Wang (2014) perceives politeness as a sociocultural phenomenon which aims at showing consideration for others during the communication process.

The discussion from the aforementioned scholars indicates that linguistic proficiency does not guarantee the acquisition of a politeness strategy but that politeness is cultural and societal bound. This means that members in a particular society are likely to attain politeness when they heed the cultural and societal norms that rule the society, and not just being linguistically proficient. In the light of these assertions, this study applied the politeness theory to determine how the possibility of conflict is minimized in academic discourse of postgraduate students' when they employ hedging techniques to make their claims.

3.2 Fraser's (1990) Politeness Theory

Frazer's (1990) politeness theory encompasses four views: the conversational-maxim view, the social-norm view, the face-saving view, and the conversational-contract view.

3.2.1 The Conversational-Maxim View

Frazer (1990) modelled the conversational maxim on Grice's (1967) classic manuscript on logic and conversation. According to Fraser, in an effort to explicate how speakers can say one thing but mean another thing, Grice contended that communicators are perceived as rational individuals who, indisputably, are principally interested in competent ways of transmitting messages during the communication process. Subsequently, to enhance appropriate means of communication, Grice (1975) proposed a collective Cooperative Principle (CP), which provides that you make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of talk exchange in which you are engaged.

By applying the CP to hedging, it provides that writers should state their claims in the manner they want to when necessary within the context in which they find themselves. Thus, postgraduate students should employ hedges to communicate their proposition in an acceptable manner in academic writing when necessary in order to avoid being miscomprehended by their readers from the academic community.

Fraser (1990) reiterates that the CP is of supreme significance during the communication process; therefore, it is anticipated to be operationalized fully in most communications. Consequently, Grice's association with the CP is merely seen as a convention of more specific maxims and sub-maxims, which communicators are expected to adhere to. According to

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Grice (1975), the CP and maxims are considered to be observed reasonably along the following lines: Anyone who cares about the goals that are central to conversation/communication (giving and receiving information, influencing and being influenced by others) must be expected to have an interest, given suitable circumstance, in participation in talk exchanges that will be profitable only on the assumption that they are conducted in general accordance with the CP and the maxims.

Fraser (1990) argues that, although Grice believes that almost every communicator observes the CP and any seeming violation of the maxims signal an implicature in conversation. However, the situation differs during the communication process, as most communicators tend not to fulfil one or more of the philosophies of the maxims. For example, if a recommendation which states that Master Keliyevah is a team leader and pays attention to details is supposed to be given to a student for the attainment of scholarship, but there happened to be a violation of the maxim "be relevant". Therefore, according to Grice's theory, this violation gives an indication that implies that the speaker does not think highly of Master Keliyevah. Fraser again argue that the conversational maxims could be seen as a process for the rational use of language in a dialogue, which is qualitatively and relatively different from the concept of linguistic rules associated with grammar. The implication is that maxims, rather than providing a justification for a well-formedness of grammatical structure, instead provides a philosophical constraint for the use of language, whereas the violation of a grammar rule results in ungrammatical formed structures. Although several maxims' philosophies can be applied by communicators in a given situation, the challenge that communicators face is, determining which one to adhere to within a particular situation. Since Grice (1975) noted that the relative significance of the maxims differs, he gave the suggestion that:

> There are, of course, all sorts of other maxims (aesthetic, social, or moral in character) such as 'Be polite' that are also normally observed by participants in talk exchanges, and these may also generate nonconventional (i.e. conversational) implicatures. The conversational maxims, however, and the conversational implicatures connected with them, are specially connected (I hope) with the particular purposes that talk (and so, talk exchange) is adapted to serve and is primarily employed to serve (Grice 1975:234).

Lakoff (1973) was one of the first advocates of Grice's concept of Conversational Principles (Frazer, 1990). Lakoff's advocacy for the CP was in an effort to give further elaboration to politeness, but Lakoff (1973) subsequently applied the notion of grammatical rule and well-formedness to pragmatism. He stated that speakers should be willing to have some kind of pragmatic rules, dictating whether an utterance is pragmatically well-formed or not, and that speakers should know the extent to which the rules deviate, in case any form of deviation happens. In the area of politeness, there was reflection on the form of specific sentence constructions that might either be polite or not. In Grice's (1973) paper "The Logic of Politeness" he did not explicitly define what politeness is. But then, it can be inferred from the paper that he perceives politeness to be the avoidance of offence. Grice makes an effort to differentiate between conflict, clarity and politeness in his writing. He states that politeness usually supersedes all others as it is considered more important in a conversation and thus helps to avoid offense and promotes clarity.

Lakoff (1973) became clearer with her definition of politeness in her 1979 manuscript when he defines politeness as a device used in order to reduce friction in personal interaction (Frazer, 1990). He later recommended two rules that can be followed when communicators are applying pragmatic competence in communication. These rules are the need to be clear and the need to be polite. The two rules are however, perceived as contradictions. The contradicting or the opposing nature of the rules made them not to be consistently reinforced during communication. Lakoff (1979) then presents the subset for sub-maxims known as sub-rules for sub-maxim which intends to solidify pragmatic competence in communication. The rules are as follows:

Rule 1: Do not impose. Lakoff stipulates that this sub-maxi rule is applied when formal and impersonal politeness ideology is required and when the imposition is more psychological than physical then there must be a respect of establishing social distancing between the audience and the speaker during the communication process. As an important rule, communicators must take into consideration the context, setting and choice of words during communication in order to avoid imposing each other's point of view on each other.

Rule 2: Give options: Lakoff states that this sub-maxim is used when informal politeness is required and that it is germane for communicators to give options in their statement to

avoid stating the absolute of their propositions. He suggested that the employing of hedging devices will permit the speaker not to impose the claims on the hearer and thereby it will enable the hearer to make an informed decision on the proposition instead of the claim being enforced.

Rule 3: Make one feel good: Lakoff asserts that this sub-maxim is used when intimate politeness is required. The intimacy allows for a sympathy bound to be established between the communicators so that neither of them receives opposition from the other.

Fraser (1990) contends that Leech (1983) gave politeness theory a different outlook with an impressive development of the Conversational Maxim approach. Leech also espoused the framework which was originally set out by Grice, and states that the communication of a cogent speaker can be directed at a given point and can be constrained by a set of maxims and sub-maxims at another time, just as Lakoff (1979) established in his work. On the other hand, Leech states that goal-directed linguistic behaviour was purposed to study politeness within the field of rhetorical pragmatics. More importantly, Leech's theory tends to distinguish between two sets of communicators, which are: first, speaker's illocutionary goals and second, speaker's social goals. He further advanced two sets of rhetorical principles, which are interpersonal rhetoric and textual rhetoric. Each of the rhetoric's was established by a set of maxims, which socially limited people's communicative behaviour in explicit ways. Leech did not expressly define politeness but rather he treated politeness in the purview of interpersonal rhetoric, which contains three sets of maxims: (a) Cooperative Principle (CP), (b) Politeness Principles (PP), (c) Irony Principles (IP). Each of these interpersonal principles had similar statuses in Leech's pragmatic theory, which CP and other related maxims use to offer explanation on how an utterance may be interpreted during the communication process, in order to convey an indirect message in that particular direction. Furthermore, PP and its maxims are used to explain why such an indirect message might be used.

> Politeness does not serve here as a premise in making inferences about S's communicative intention. Thus, the PP does not seem to help in understanding S's intention although, obviously, it plays a role in S's choosing the appropriate expression of his communicative intention. Thus, the PP may help to understand reasons S had for choosing the particular content and form of what he said, but usually does not help to infer S's intentions. (Leech,1983:38-39).

Leech's (1983) adoption of the politeness principle thus implies that communicators should either minimize or maximize beliefs that are either favourable or unfavourable to each other. Leech argues that when CP and PP are perceived as interpersonal rhetoric they do not operate in isolation. Instead they create tension for a speaker who must purposely determine which messages must be conveyed within a particular speech context. He, thus, writes that the CP enables one participant in a conversation to communicate on the assumption that the other participant is being cooperative. In this the CP has the function of regulating what we say so that it contributes to some assumed illocutionary or discourse goal(s). It could be argued that the PP has a higher regulative role than this: to maintain the social equilibrium and friendly relations which enable us to assume that our interlocutors are being cooperative in the first place.

Like Grice (1973), Leech (1983) provided an improved differentiation within his principles, which indicates that there is a politeness principle which has conversational maxims besides the cooperative principle that is needed in an interaction. He proposed seven interpersonal maxims that are listed below:

a) Tact Maxim: this maxim minimizes the cost that hearers will incur and maximizes the hearer benefit.

b) Meta Maxim: this maxim stipulates that people should not be placed where they might break the Tact Maxim principle.

c) Generosity Maxim: Generosity maxim allows for the minimization of the speakers' benefit and the maximization of the hearers' benefit.

d) Approbation Maxim: this maxim minimizes hearers' dispraise and maximizes speakers' praise.

e) Modesty Maxim: Advocates minimization of self-praise and maximization self-dis-praise.

f) Agreement Maxim: this maxim minimizes disagreement between speakers/hearers and maximizes agreement between communicators.

g) Sympathy Maxim: this maxim minimizes antipathy between speakers/hearer and maximizes sympathy between writers/readers

Leech (1983) proposed a set of scales that must be followed when considering the aforementioned interpersonal maxims:

a) Cost-Benefit Scale: the scale that represents the cost or benefit of a communicator to both the speaker and hearer.

b) Optionality Scale: this scale represents the significant illocutions which are ordered

, by the amount of choices, the speaker allows the hearer.

c) Indirectness Scale: this scale represents the important illocutions, which is ordered in terms of hearer 'work' to infer speaker intention.

d) Authority Scale: this represents the relative right enable's speakers to impose wishes on the hearer.

e) Social Distance Scale: this represents the degree of familiarity which exists between speakers and hearers.

Fraser (1990) states that Leech's principles can be observed as follows: As the hearer costs, the hearer authority relative to the speaker, and the social distance increases, the greater will be the need for providing the hearer with options and the greater the need for indirectness in the formulation of the expression conveying the message. Again, Leech distinguished between the Relative Politeness, which refers to politeness in specific situation, and Absolute Politeness, which refers to the degree of politeness intrinsically connected to specific actions during communication. This implies, that, certain characteristics are associated with semantic procedures that communicators used to influence their dialogues so as to attain politeness. Within Leech's (1983) description, Negative Politeness entails curtailing discourteousness of loutish dialogue, while Positive Politeness entails advancing courtesies of polite dialogue. Leech (1983) continues that some expressions might influence different levels of politeness. Thus, he suggests four main illocutionary functions according to how they are related to the social goals of establishing and maintaining comity:

a) Competitive: competitive involves acts such as asking, ordering, demanding, and begging, in a situation where negative politeness is required so as to minimize the discord implicit in the competition between what the speaker wants to achieve and what is 'good manners is.

b) Convivial: it is related to acts such as inviting, offering, greeting, thanking, or congratulating in situations where positive politeness may be necessary.

c) Collaborative: it involves acts like asserting, reporting, announcing, or instructing, in situations where the illocutionary goal is indifferent to the social goals, and politeness is seen to be largely irrelevant.

d) Conflictive: involves acts such as threatening, accusing, cursing, or reprimanding, in situations where politeness is out of the question, because conflictive illocutions are, by their very nature, designed to cause offence.

Fraser (1990) claims that Kasher (1986) projected a modification of Leech's conversational maxim perspective in what is termed as a "mercantile" view of politeness because Leech's proposal on politeness seemed too strong and had a lot of conflicting maxims. Kasher's (1986) business-like view of politeness is as follows: Politeness of speech acts is a matter of their costs, as determined by certain scales of values. An ordinary speech act is presumably rational and as such its justification and reconstruction involves considerations as to which course of action would be of the least cost, from certain points of view. One such point of view, or cluster of points of view, is politeness. Another one is time. Under certain conditions, additional scales of values are used, such as ones involving considerations of commitment. Therefore, by observing the cooperative principle in academic discourse community through the employment of hedging devices by postgraduate students, they must be mindful of the goals of communication that will be suitable in the communication circumstances in the discourse community.

3.2.2 The Social-Norm View

Fraser's (1990) social-norm view of politeness reflect a historical understanding of politeness, which was largely embraced by communities within the English-speaking world. According to Fraser, there is a notion that societies have their unique set of social norms, which consists of explicit rules that prescribes acceptable behaviours, state of affairs, and specific thought of patterns in a given context. He continues that a positive evaluation of politeness arises when an action corresponds with the norms of the society whereas a negative evaluation of impoliteness arises when an action goes contrary to the accepted norms of the society.

Fraser (1990) provided a protocol manual, which contains maxims that exposes the underlying assumption of social-norm views. The 1872 version of Ladies manuscript Etiquette and Kasher's (1986) Manual of Politeness present a range of rules which are intended to govern polite discourse in the social-norm view. Amongst others, the rules stipulate that

communicators are to avoid topics which are likely direct reference to circumstances which may be painful to the speaker and the hearer. Again, the rules specify that if a lady advances a bothersome topic unintentionally, she is instructed not to sharply end the conversation, if she perceives that it may cause pains to the hearers. Neither is the lady supposed to apologize else it might worsen the situation; rather she should turn to a different subject which will be more pleasing. She is also advised to pay attention to any agitation that her unfortunate remark may have caused. Furthermore, the rule says that ladies should not ask question about the veracity of the statements they make during conversation. However, when they are certain that the statement is false, and thus might be detrimental to those present they [the ladies] may quietly and politely inform the hearers that it was a mistake. However, if a misrepresentation of the issues does not pose any danger the ladies can let it pass. Fraser quotes Vanderbilt & Baldridge (1978:47) as follows: "Women do not yet cut in on men, unless the dance is announced as a 'women cut-in', or unless wives and husbands who are all close friends cut in on each other." to emphasize that politeness, which consists of proper conducts, persists even today.

This normative view, according to Fraser (1990), historically perceives politeness to be associated with rhetoric where an advanced degree of formality specifies greater politeness. Again, Fraser reports that a nineteen-century politician, Carl Schurz, observed that the normative view, historically, anticipates politeness to be associated with speech style, where a higher level of formality implies greater politeness. In 1864, President Lincoln wrote:

> I grant that he lacks higher education and his manners are not in accordance with European conceptions of the dignity of a chief magistrate. He is a well-developed child of nature and is not skilled in polite phrases and poses. But he is a man of profound feeling, correct and firm principles and incorruptible honesty.

The application of the social-norm view in academic writing in relation to hedging implies that researchers/writers must follow the norms guiding the making of their claims so that they can shield themselves from possible misconception from readers/listeners. Most importantly, postgraduate students must realize and be mindful of the set of social norms that guide marking of claims in academic writing through hedging so that their actions through writing will correspond with the social norms of the discourse community.

3.2.3 The Face-Saving View

Brown & Levinson (1987) see face as something that is emotionally invested, and can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction. Fraser (1990) postulates the face-saving view from Brown & Levinson's (1987) face analogy Fraser (1990) argues that politeness theory was advocated as a wide-ranging correction for Grice's opinion of the conversational interaction view, which overtly says that at the heart of Grice's proposals, are assumptions made by conversationalists who describe the rational and the efficient nature of dialogue in a given community. It is through these assumptions that polite ways of dialoguing were seen as a deviation from the social norms of conversation. The conversationalist, however, requires a rational explanation from speakers who finds considerate politeness reasons as irrational or inefficient.

Fraser (1990) claims that according to the conversational maxims, for one to ensure that a politeness strategy is enforced, communicators tend to have a form of resistant enthusiasm, which prevents them from talking strictly. In contrast to Leech, Brown & Levinson (1987) maintain that Grice's CP has diverse eminence in their politeness theory. The CP, however, clearly stipulates a socially neutral framework where communication occurs. The functionalist assumption is that there is no form of deviation from cogent competence without any reason. Fraser said that a consideration of politeness offers principled reasons for such deviation. It is then argued that linguistic politeness ought to be communicated clearly since it constitutes vital messages through which the conversationalist view was proposed by Grice. Furthermore, it was suggested that the inability on the part of communicators to articulate their intentions to be polite may be taken, as "ceteris paribus" [all other things being equal] and seen as the absence of the required polite attitude. For instance, if a speaker says "I would really like it if you would open the gate", that speech implicates not only a request but also implicates politeness intention. However, if a speaker commands one to "Shut the gate" under the same circumstances that speaker may be perceived as conveying lack of politeness intentions. Fraser (1990) positioned the explication for the politeness stance within a framework that, rational Persona has "face", which represents one's self-esteem. This notion was, however, adapted from Goffman (1967). The rational persona "face" is seen as universal face notion, that communicators want to ascribe to themselves, notwithstanding a culturally elaborated public self-image, that every member of a particular society may want to claim for himself/herself. Two types of faces, which depends upon the participant's wants rather than social norms are categorized as follows:

a) Negative Face: the want of every responsible person's actions to be unobstructed by others in the society.

b) Positive Face: the desire of people that their needs will be desirable.

A detailed review of the face act will be discussed in **3.3.0** under Brown & Levinson's politeness theory.

3.2.4 The Conversational-Contract View

The conversational-contract view to politeness was presented by Fraser (1975). Frazer adopted Grice's notion of a Cooperative Principle and Goffman's notion of face to elaborate on the conversational-contract view. Fraser (1990) posits that under the conversational-contract view, communicators are allowed to renegotiate their terms of agreement, which might be rights and obligations set at the onset of the communication during the course of interaction, without negatively affecting the flow of communication. Since the dimensions upon which communicators establish their rights and obligations vary, Fraser advises that speakers use mutually intelligible language to speak clearly and seriously. He further states that social institutions impose certain terms of conditions on a speaker, which must be seriously adhered to if a participant in the communication process wants to be accepted in the social institution. Again, Fraser said there may be other terms of communication that are determined by previous encounters or a particular situation.

Fraser (1990) posits that when one enters into a conversation with someone and continues within the conversation with an understanding of "Current Conversational", (CC) at every point during the conversation, politeness will constitute operating within the terms and conditions of the CC. He again asserts that politeness is then incumbent on the participants in the communication process as they are likely aware that they are supposed to operate within the negotiated constraints, and generally they adhere to the principles of politeness. Politeness then becomes the rationale that one expects to exhibit in every conversation. With this in mind, participants then realize that being polite is the norm of the conversation process. Fraser concludes that being polite does not necessarily make the hearer feel good, but rather it simply involves getting the hearer to continue with tasks at hand in accordance with the terms and conditions of the CC. Being polite is taken to be a hallmark of abiding by the CP while being cooperative involves abiding by the CC.

3.3.0 Brown & Levinson's (1999) Notion of Politeness

Scholars like Fraser (1990), Watt et al. (1992), Yule (1996), Brown & Levinson (1999), Richard & Schmidt (2002), Watts (2003), Goffman (2005), Wang (2014**)** and Sadeghoghli & Niroomand (2016) agree that Brown & Levinson's (1999) politeness phenomenon is the most comprehensive theory that describes the interpersonal relationship of hedging in academic writing. Brown & Levinson's (1999) politeness theory is perceived as the negative and positive face analogies.

3.3.1 The Face Analogy

Brown & Levinson (1999) used the face analogy to explain their notion of politeness. The face model they claimed stands for a person's self-esteem. They adopted the idea of the face from Goffman (1967) who states that the face is a world-wide concept, although it is a socially particularized public self-image that every member [of a society] wants to claim for himself (1987). Brown & Levinson claim that the face is a sensitive feature, which signifies emotional attachment that needs to be upheld constantly during communication. Largely, people cooperate during interaction because of the venerability of the face, which they will want to maintain. They would not hesitate to protect their face when threatened during interaction and by so doing they can threaten the face of others as well. Thus, it is advisable that participants during the communication process intentionally maintain each other's face so as to avoid undesirable conflicts. Although the content of the face might differ from culture to culture, it is prudent to make universally available the mutual knowledge of each participant's self-image and social necessities for orienting the self, and which is demanded for interaction.

3.3.2 The Notion of Face Wants

Brown & Levinson (1999) state that we treat the aspects of face as basic want, by which every member knows every other member's desire, which in general is in the interest of every member to partially satisfy. The face, thus, becomes the individual's self-esteem, which every participant in the society will like to uphold. Brown & Levinson posit two face wants: first, they prefer Weberian terms: the **zwreckrational** model of individual action, which deals with the face at the organizational level rather than the moral level, to the **wertrational** model, which focuses more on the moral aspect of the face because the moral level of the face want does not account for the fact that the face respect is not an unambiguous right. Secondly, Brown & Levinson think that the face is routinely ignored not because of

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social breakdown but it is done when there is a need for urgent cooperation or it is in the interest of efficiency during communication. Based on the aforementioned, Brown & Levinson thus divided the face into two categories: *positive face* and *negative face*. They further described the two types of face according to the wants of participants in communication and not the social norms of the participants.

3.3.3 Intrinsic Face Threatening Acts (FTAs)

Brown & Levinson (1999) assert that, instinctively, certain acts threaten the face naturally. These acts they referred to as Face Threatening Acts (FTAs). The FTAs are acts, actions or activities that do not conform to the expected demands of the speaker and/or addressee in communication. According to Brown & Levinson the act in this instance, is verbal and non-verbal communication in a given situation.

There are two categorizations of negative and positive FTAs.

3.3.4 First Distinction of the FTAs

According to Brown & Levinson (1999), the first distinction of the FTAs comprises negative and positive wants, which are eventually linked to the Negative and the Positive politeness theories.

3.3.4.1 Negative Face Threatening Act:

These are acts that threaten audience's (hereafter referred to as **H**) Negative face-wants by demonstrating that the speaker, (hereafter referred to as **S**) is resolved to curtail H's independence.

Table 18: Negative Face Threatening Act A

Kinds of Act	Explanations
Ordering and requesting	S directs H to perform certain acts
Suggestions and pieces advice	S thinks H must perform some actions
Reminding orders	S reminds H of important orders

Source: Brown & Levinson (1999)

3.3.4.2 Negative Face Threatening Acts: B

Acts that predict positives future action from **S** to **H**, which put constraints on **H.**

Table 19: Negative Face Threatening Act B

Source: Brown & Levinon (1999)

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Kind of Acts	Explanations
Actions of offers	**S** directs **H** to pledge to act correctly towards **S**
Keeping promises	**S** avows to perform tasks for **H's** profit

3.3.4.3 Negative Face threatening Acts: C

Acts C: S envisions some attitudes towards H, which H decided whether or not to honour.

Table 20: Negative Face Threatening Act C

Kinds of Acts	Explanations
Compliments: Resentment or Appreciation	**S** specifies what he desires from **H**
Expresses of strong apathy	**S** shows possible damaging motivations towards **H**

Source: Brown &Levinson (1999)

3.3.4.5 Negative Face Politeness

There is an indication from the presentation in the tables of acts A, B and C that there is the potential **"S"** trying to get "**H**" to perform acts that the latter is not comfortable with and thus it will end up impeding his action. Meanwhile Brown & Levinson (1999) posit the "negative face" as the want of every "competent adult "member" that his action be unimpeded by others. Thus if we do a critical analysis of what the negative face connotes and juxtapose it with acts **A, B** and **C** in the table, we would agree with Brown & Levinson that they are indeed Negative face threatening acts because the speaker seems to impose his action on the addressee's freedom so as to impede the addressee of his actions although, rather he is expected to respect the addressee's action. Primarily, one can argue that negative politeness is regarded as the protection of addressee's self-effacement, enforcing formality and restraint action, with an intent to restrict vital activities of the addressee's self-image. According to Brown & Levinson the addressee can achieve the negative politeness by employing hedging devices and other softening linguistic mechanisms. The negative face, thus, implies an individual's ability to have the free will, which is the need to express him/herself in a language community without any impediment. Therefore, master's students, by efficiently employing hedging devices in the making of their claims, will freely express themselves without obstacles from the academic discourse community.

For further elaboration, Bousfield (2008) asserts that, in the negative face situation, a writer/reader requires complete freedom to make claims but, at the same time, he/she wants

to soften any strong imposition that the claims might have on the hearer, which might rec-ompense the negative face threat.

The negative face, when applied by postgraduate students' through hedging, will grant them the opportunity to freely make their claims while softening the imposition on the hearers at the same time. Thus, hedging is principally perceived as a negative politeness strategy by Fraser (1990).

3.3.5.1 Positive Face Threatening Acts:A

They are acts that threaten the positive face of a speaker by indicating that the speaker is bothered about the addressee's feelings and wants.

The acts that show that **S** has a negative evaluation of some aspects of **H's** positive face.

Table 21: Positive Face Threatening Act A

Kind of Acts	Explanations
Disapproval/criticisms/accusations/reprimand/contempt/complaints.	**"S"** expresses a dislike to-wards **"H's"** individuali-ties.
Incongruity/ divergences /trials	**"S"** points out some of that **"H's"** wrong doings.

Source: Brown & Levinson (1999)

3.3.5.2 Positive Face Threatening Acts: B

Those that show that "S" does not care about "H"s positive face.

Table 22: Positive Face Threatening Act B

Kinds of Acts	Explanations
Manifestation of fierceness sentiments	**S** provides likely reasons to conceivably frighten **H**
Impertinent references, unreasonable subject matters	**S** specifies **H** reasons for fearing **H's** actions
Conveying of depraved information about **H** or virtuous facts about **S**	**S** expresses intentions to that he is willing to cause misery **H**
Nurturing diabolic acts.	**S** advances "face threatening acts"
Concealed activities toward **H**	**S** shows unconcerned gestures towards **H**
Expressions of concerns	**S** misidentifies **H** unintentionally

Source: Brown & Levinson (1999)

3.3.6 Positive Face Politeness

Brown & Levinson (1999) assert that the positive face is the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others. From Brown & Levinson's assertion, the explanation of the FTAs to the positive face in the table above shows a contrary situation with the theory of positive politeness. The FTAs thus serve as a sort of caution to the participants in any social community. The implication of the positive face is that individuals in any discourse community long to be understood and accepted by all whenever they make a claim. Bousfield (2008) asserts that the positive face is employed to reduce threat to the hearer's positive face, and intends to make the hearer feel good, or make the listener take interest in the conversation in the speech community. Thus, postgraduate students, in an attempt to make their claims acceptable to all in the academic discourse community, must employ hedging devices in their writing.

According to Brown & Levinson (1999), value of the face can either be lost, be upheld, or be enhanced, and that any threat to face must be persistently monitored during the conversation process with the parties involved. Since the face is susceptible, and most communicators will presumably and perceptibly like to defend their faces when threatened, so there

is an assumption that it is generally in everyone's best interest to maintain their face and ostensibly, act in ways that other parties are made aware of everyone's intention. Following the politeness theory, postgraduate students' can effectively use hedges in their writing without threatening the face of their hearers/readers.

The organizing principle behind Brown & Levinson's (1999) politeness theory is the rationale that "some acts are intrinsically threatening to the face and thus require softening ...." (1987:24). Conversely, every society must develop politeness ideologies from which they can derive certain linguistic strategies. Indications from the aforementioned principle show that the use of politeness strategies is likely to make speakers/writers succeed in communicating their desirable message(s) intentions to their audience in the speech community. And in doing so, they have the tendency to reduce "face loss" that results from the communication.

Brown & Levinson (1999) suggest that speech/writing acts are inherently face-threatening to both speakers and hearers, or to both of them. They then proposed the four-way analysis through which speech/writing act can threaten the face of communicators.

(i)   Acts that threaten the hearer's Negative Face: ordering, advising, intimidating, and warning acts.

(ii) Acts that threaten the hearer's Positive Face: irritability, disparaging disagreeing, and raising of taboo topics;

(iii) Acts that threaten the speaker's Negative Face: accepting an offer, accepting thanks, promising unwillingly;

(iv) Acts that threaten the speaker's Positive Face: apologizing, accepting compliments, declaring.

Finally, if postgraduate students critically take into consideration the speech/writing acts that are likely to threaten the "faces" of their audience and thereby carefully select appropriate hedging devices when necessary, they will be able to make their claims effectively without a treat to reader's/hearer's face in academic discourse community.

3.3.7 Second Distinction of the FTAs

The second distinction of the face-threatening act as posited by Brown & Levinson (1999) are acts that mainly threaten both **H** and **S** face (the addresses/the speaker). In other words, when both S and H feel threatened by the same act, the act is referred to as a peril to **H and S** as well. As a result, it engenders cooperation between the two participants **H** and **S,** in

order to maintain and save each other's face. As "**S**" and " H cooperate to maintain each other's face, the latter FTAs also potentially threaten **H**'s face. FTAs that threaten "**S's**" "**face**" include:

3.3.7.1 Negative Face Threatening Acts: A

Acts that offend **S**'s negative face.

Table 23: Second Distinction of the FTAs A

Kinds of Acts	Explanation
Gratitude	**S** admits a commitment.
Recognition of **H's** remorse	**S** obliged to decrease **H's** responsibility
Justifications	**S** shows that there is enough reason to criticise H
Approval of offer	**S** is forced to receive an obligation and to encroach on **H's** negative face
Reaction to H	**S** humiliates **H**
Reluctant assurances	**S** willingly shows acceptable countenance

Source: Brown & Levinson (1999)

3.3.7.2 Negative   Face Threatening Acts: B

Acts that directly damage **S**'s positive face.

Table 24: Second Distinction of the FTAs B

Kinds of Acts	Explanation
Apologizing attitudes	**S** shows regret
Approving of commendation	**S** maligns H
Emotion leakage	Non- control of laughter or tears.

Source: Brown & Levinson (1999)

3.3. 8 Classification of Face Threatening Acts (FTAs)

Brown & Levinson (1999) posit a classification for conceivable strategies for performing FTAs. According to the strategies in the classification and rationalization, participants who feel that there is the susceptibility of their face to being threatened by the various acts that have been discussed above, will either endeavour to avoid the face threatening acts or will employ strategies that will help them to minimize the threats to their individual face.

Strategies that can be employed to save the individual's face are summarized in the diagram below.

Figure 1: FTAs Strategies
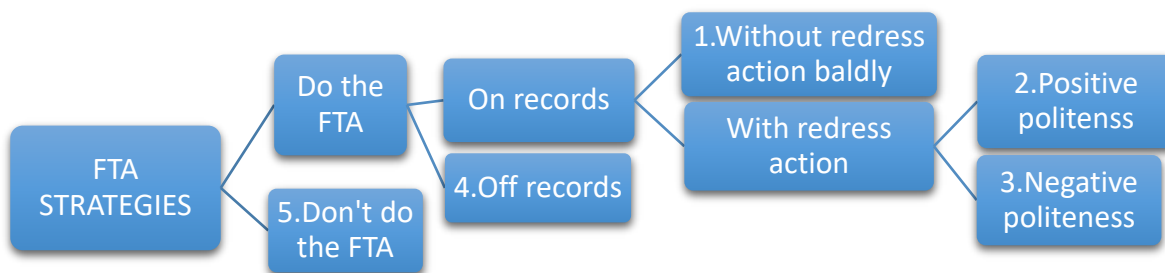
Figure 1 above portrays the wants of both positive and negative politeness. The first want is to communicate the content of the FTA. The second want is to be efficient and the third want is to maintain **H'**s face to any degree. These possible strategies have been schematized into: a) on record in doing face threatening acts; b) off records in doing face -threaten acts; and c) baldly without redress for doing face- threatening acts.

3.3.8.1 Bald On-Record FTAs

"Bald on-record" is when the participant goes on record for communicating or performing the face threatening act (Brown & Levinson, 1999). According to Makejeva (2017), the actor in the communication does not decrease the impact of words during the process. She continued that the actors use this strategy because of familiarity between the actors as they are likely to feel very comfortable with their friends, relatives, and others in a matter of urgency.

Table 25: Bald On-Record FTAs

Circumstances	Manner
Nervousness	Stop that!
Competence	Yoni, come alone with me.
Task-oriented	Senyo, take the next swing.
Maintaining faces	Razark, don't forget to pay for the drinks
Face-threatening acts	Eric, your car engine is off!
Greetings	Selorm, have a seat.
Proposals	Femi said "I will revise the schedule soon"

Source: Makejava (2017)

From the above table, we realize that the bald on record strategy does not differentiate between the addresser and the speaker: it places both of them on the same pedestal not withstanding sex, age difference or social status. This strategy depicts a matter of urgency and in most urgent situations it is almost impossible to apply vocatives or good-natured remarks

or formalities, which will show politeness. Despite the proper employing of politeness strategies, the bald on record can be applied in most situations. It is not as discourteous as it sounds or looks.

3.3.8.2 Off Record Strategy FTAs

According to Brown & Levinson (1999), actors go "off record" when they are trying to communicate the content of the FTA, and when they have more of an unambiguous intention. As a result of their unambiguous intentions they [actors] cannot be held responsible for committing themselves to some particular intents. It implies that the words that an actor might use to perform an act may be subjected to many interpretations by others. Brown & Levinson stipulate that this strategy mostly focuses on speakers rather than the hearers as hearers are those who try to give diverse meanings to the communication. Thus, even if a speaker commits FTAs it is the hearer who might determine its magnitude based on the interpretation that was accorded the speech.

Table 26: Off-record or Indirect FTAs

Circumstances	Manner
Give hints	The weather is stormy outside
Give association rules	The sun refused to rise this morning
Presumptions	I have given out all of my share again today
Overstating	The fuel level is satisfactory
Using tautologies or redundancies	The ATM machine is out of order
Using contradictions	The answer is between cold and warm
Being ironic	Sure Rose is a genius: she just got her sum wrong
Using metaphors	Garlician is a cassava stick. He cannot run
Using rhetorical questions	I honestly believe we are here to wait forever
Being ambiguous	She left the wallet in the shirt and washed it.
Being vague	I am waiting here for forever
Overgeneralization	Teenage mothers never get support from others
Displacing H	There should be a perfect solution for your problem
Being incomplete	I think I will……

Source: Makejava (2017)

From the above table it can be realized that the speaker is mostly making indirect statements. Thus, the hearer must decipher the statement. For instance, if a speaker says *I am waiting here forever,* the hearer can interpret it as the speaker waiting to receive something or get something done for him no matter how long it will take.

3.3.9 Positive Politeness and Negative Politeness Strategies

Politeness strategy are divided into two main categories: positive and negative politeness. Positive politeness is the wish of every member in a particular speech process that his /her wants will be desirable to other communicators. The negative want on the other hand is a strategy which protects receivers in the communication process from feeling threatened by the writers or senders of the communication.

Table 27: Positive Politeness Strategies

Types/Circumstances	Manner
Attending to H's welfares, wants, needs	Worlase, you look sad. Can I do anything for you?
Embellishing interest	How delightful!
Deepening interest	I entered my room, and found a huge mess all over the place, like an albatross over my head
Identity indicators	Sweetie - companion, beloved - Keliyevah
Seeking for an agreement	The bird chirped outrageously. Did it?
Avoiding disagreement	Yes, it's relatively heavy; nothing unquestionable.
Presume/increase/proclaim common ground	I certainly had an unbreakable period learning to drive, didn't I?
Jokes aside	Amusing climate we are having. It is hamarttan already and we still have a temperature of 35 degrees.
Proclaim or presume S's knowledge of and concern for H's wants	I understand you can do it yourself, but this time, do what I suggested you do.
Proposition / assurance	Nii Odoi will be the winner.
Be optimistic	Naa Dzama will tell Skelly that she made it to the top.
Include both S and H in the activity	Convey the goods to us. (you and me)
Give (or ask for) reasons	Ahimako why not lend me your car for the safari?
Accept or assert exchange	Rose will tell you what it looks like if you tell John where Lilly is now.
Give gifts to H (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation)	I'm sorry to hear that.

Source: Makejava (2017)

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Table 27 above depicts circumstances that can lead to the application of positive politeness strategies and the manner in which the strategies can be applied

Table 28: Negative Politeness Strategy

Circumstances	Manner
Being indirect	Is it possible to you know where Oxford University is?
Asking questions using evaders	She wonders whether or not you could pass the kenkey, please?
Being unenthusiastic	So I suppose someone might help us out of the question, then?
Minimising the imposition	Could I talk to you with for two minute?
Circustances	**Manner**
Giving reverence	Pardon me, Brigadier. I think I might have taken a mistaken path
Apologizing	Sorry for inconveniencing you, but..?
-	A: That car is parked in a no-parking area. B: It's mine, officer. A: Well, it'll have to have a parking ticket
FTA as a general instruction	Parking in a dual carriage lane is illegal, so I'm going to give you a fine.
Nominalising	Being involved in an unlawful protest is punishable by law. Could I have your name and address, Madam?

Source: Marta (2017)

Table 28 above depicts circumstances that can lead to the application of negative strategies and the manner in which the strategies can be applied.

3.4 Chapter Summary

In light of these considerations, hedges may be regarded as politeness strategies, not necessarily because of their protective value in relation with writers and readers, but because they promote interaction as part of the obliging attempt that characterizes communication in academic discourse. The chapter discussed two politeness theories that underpin the study. Fraser (1990) and Brown & Levinson (1999), in each of the theories categorically established how hedging is related to politeness.

The following chapter focuses on the methodology of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

4.0 Introduction

The main aim of the study is to explore hedging in postgraduate theses across disciplines in a Ghanaian university. This chapter discusses methodology of the research, the research design, research site, the population of the study, the multiple stage sampling process, data source, data collection procedure and also trustworthiness of the study.

4.1 Research Methodology

Usually, methodology answers question on how the data was generated and how it was analysed. Kothari (2004) argues that research methodology provide means which are used to systematically solve the research problem from a generated data. Kothari further stated that research methodology usually comprises research methods and also logics behind methods which are employed within the framework of a study. Furthermore, methodology also explains the rationale for selecting particular techniques and how results are evaluated either by the researcher or by other persons.

From Kothari's (2004) assertion, a research methodology cannot be mentioned without considering the research methods otherwise known as research techniques, which were used in the study. In this regard, research methods can be said to be a tool that is used to offer a description of important actions taken to investigate research problems and also serves as a cogent for the selection of particular techniques, which are utilised by researchers to identify, select, process and analyse the data and, subsequently, apply understanding to the problem. Kothari (2004) reiterates that researchers employ research methods or techniques to perform various operations in their study. Researchers, however, use the term methodology interchangeably with methods as there seems to be no consensus among scholars regarding what counts as methodology.

For instance, McGregor & Murnane (2010) assert that, although researchers commonly use the term 'methodology' as heading that which is actually recorded under the heading is a description of the methods or techniques employed in their study. Brewer (2000:2) stipulates that "methodology is the broad theoretical and philosophical framework into which…procedural rules [methods] fit", while "methods are merely technical rules, which lay down the

procedures for how reliable and objective knowledge can be obtained": this then is an indication that the terms methodology and methods are used interchangeably. Pole & Morrison (2003) emphasised that methods can be seen to relate to the tool bag from which the researcher selects the most appropriate instrument with which to gather data and subsequently to analyse those data. Paltridge & Starfeild (2007) aver that methods refer to concrete research instruments and materials used, while chosen methodology apprise the choice of methods and what can be determined as data. These assertions go to suggest that methodology sets or detects the ground rules as to how the research should be conducted and methods implement these rules.

A methodology can be said to be qualitative, quantitative or a combination of these two, which researchers refer to as a mixed method. Qualitative and quantitative methods have special features, which distinguishes them. Thus, there is a subtle difference in how researchers perceive the nature of each design. To begin with, Strydom (2005) claims that when selecting research designs, quantitative researchers consult lists of possible designs that are within their study. They then select a design that is applicable to their study or develop a new suitable design, if none of the available models suits their purposes. Qualitative researchers normally do not depend on existing models, but rather endeavour to develop their own designs using available tools as a guide. Strydom (2005) further states that qualitative research design differs fundamentally from quantitative research design because qualitative design does not customarily provide researchers with procedural plans or fixed recipes. He noted that, quantitative researchers consult available designs to determine choices and actions of the study, whiles qualitative researchers make choices and actions dependent on the designs or strategies they formulated. Burg (2001) and Vanderstoep & Johnston (2009) reiterate that qualitative research is characterised by connotations, notions, definitions, structures, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things studied and thus, the researcher does not aim at generalizing the findings to a population and therefore does not also aim at collecting data that is representative of any population. Primarily, this approach helps the researcher to find out and gain an insight into a phenomenon being studied. Quantitative research on the other hand, refers to calculations and measures of items, where the researcher collects data that is immense enough to represent a population so that findings of the study can be generalized to a population that the sample embodies. For this reason, data collection in quantitative studies is rigorous and highly scientific and endeavours to be sure that the sample selected truly represents the population under consideration.

Another distinctive feature between the two paradigms is in method of inquiries. Creswell (2007) identifies five approaches that fall under the qualitative method of research design, which are narrative research, phenomenology research, grounded theory, ethnography and case study. In collecting data for qualitative approaches, some of the forms of data used are interviews, observations, field studies and documents and visual materials. On the other hand, the quantitative design aims at arriving at cause and effect relationships or establishing a correlation between two variables; and the types are experimental research, causal comparative research, correlational research and survey research.

Furthermore, there exist differences in the mode of analysis between the paradigms. These differences are evident in text analysis or document analysis. There is school of thought that the nature of an analysis of a particular study determines whether or not it is qualitative or quantitative. Berg (2001) agrees that there has always been a debate over whether or not the analysis of a text should be termed as qualitative analysis or quantitative analysis. For instance, Abrahamson (1983) argues that content analysis can successfully be employed to examine virtually any type of data either, quantitative or qualitative. But Silverman (1993) objects to content analysis being used to analyse both qualitative and quantitative data. Rather, he opines that content analysis can best be used to analyse quantitative analysis. Berg (2001), on the other hand, argues that, although there are counts of textual elements in the analysis of text content, text analysis in general should be a merger of both qualitative and quantitative analysis. Berg argues further that "…the quantitative aspect of the analysis is how researchers create tally sheets to determine specific frequencies of relevant categories and the qualitative aspect of it being how researchers examine issues such as ideology, themes topics and other similar phenomena from the data that they use"(Berg,2001:242).

Vanderstoep & Johnston (2009) opine that the focus of attraction in text analysis is a concentration of different meanings and the role of the researcher is to adequately interpret the selected texts either quantitatively or qualitatively. These assertions that text analysis can be done both qualitatively and quantitatively are shared by researchers in studies that involve the analysis of text.

Although researchers use the term methodology and method interchangeably, this study will keep the two terms distinct. According to Brewer's (2002) distinction of the two terms, methodology is perceived as theoretical and philosophical approaches that define how the

study is conducted and method is seen as technical rules, which determines how a reliable and an objective knowledge can be obtained from the procedure.

The current study adopted the qualitative methodology because the analysis of the study examined issues such as ideology, themes topics and the phenomena from the data, which are unquantifiable facts from the setting of the study.

Figure 2: Research Methodology

QUALITATIVE

APPROACH: Inductive

GOAL: Depth, local meanings, generate hypotheses

SETTING: Natural

SAMPLING: Purposeful

DATA: Words, images; narrow but rich

DATA ANALYSIS: Iterative interpretation

VALUES: Personal involvement partiality (subjectivity, reflexivity

MIXED METHOD

QUANTITATIVE

APPROACH: Deductive

GOAL: Breadth, generalization, test hypotheses

SETTING: Experimental/Quasi

SAMPLING: Probabilistic

DATA: Numbers; shallow but broad

DATA ANALYSIS: Statistical tests, models

VALUES: Detachment and impartiality (objectivity)

Source: Young and Hren (2017)

Figure 2 above graphically display the characteristics of qualitative and quantitative methods. From the figure one can perceive that the principal feature for each method is the same. However, there is a distinction between the sub features which determines how a study is carried out. For example, the approach to each of the methods differ. Whiles the approach to qualitative study is inductive, that of quantitative is deductive. The intersection of the figure depicts the mixed method. The mixed method is a blend of qualitative and quantitative approaches which some researchers employ for their study. The current study focused on the qualitative aspect.

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4.2 Qualitative Research

The research is qualitative in nature as mentioned in Section **4.1**. Qualitative procedures are employed when the prime aim of the researcher is to access unspecifiable facts about participants. In this direction, researchers observe and talk to people and make references to documents such as letters, photographs, newspaper, accounts, diaries, articles and theses that detailed information can be garnered from. Berg (2001) explicates that qualitative techniques allow researchers to understand the perceptions of their participants which allow the researchers to explore their participant's structure and give meaning to their daily activities. These researchers end up using qualitative techniques to examine how people learn and make meaning of themselves and others.

The qualitative nature of the study was necessary as it made it possible for the context in which postgraduates apply hedging in writing to be understood. As Creswell (2005) states, people say what they want to say according to the context in which they find themselves be it at the workplace, home or an institution. The study adopted the qualitative method because the researcher was the main instrument in data collection and data analysis. Huberman & Miles (2002) argue that qualitative research is one trustworthy methodology that permits researchers to understand the perceptions of their participants. Marshall & Rossman (2006:53) explained it further when they said "Human actions are significantly influenced by the setting in which they occur". Assertions from these scholars emphasise that human experiences which include, activities, events, will likely not be understood, unless the meaning that are ascribed to these experiences is understood by all and sundry. Patton (2008) and Flick (2009) reiterate that the major objective of qualitative methodology is for the interpretation of the diverse experiences of people to be understood in a given setting.

The qualitative nature of the study thus enabled the researcher to get first-hand information on hedging in academic writing in postgraduate theses across disciplines. It invariably gave the researcher a better understanding on how hedging in postgraduate theses give meaning to the response of students' writing in academic discourse and how appropriate hedging by postgraduates influences their behaviour in a natural teaching setting, without any form of artificiality. Patton (2008) in agreement with the first-hand information that qualitative study gives, asserts that, qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings because they endeavour to discover the meaning of information from the participants' perception

rather than the researcher's view point. Selinger & Shohamy (2011) confirmed Patton's assertion by stating that qualitative study presents data from the perspective of the participants so that the cultural and the intellectual biases of the researcher will not distort the collection, interpretation and presentation of the data. These precepts, however, served as an effective way of investigating how postgraduate students employ hedging in the making of their claims in academic writing in order to avoid opposition from listeners/readers.

The qualitativeness of the study made the researcher responsive to the situation and the phenomenon understudy since the researcher was solely responsible for collecting the data and analysing it. As a result, it was possible for the researcher to adapt to and do any changes needed. Some noted characteristics of qualitative study according to Neuman (1994) are:

- The use of inductive reasoning, which aims at understanding a phenomenon within a particular context: it is context based.
- Seeing behaviour as intentional and creative, which is explainable but not predictable: its meaning is derived based on the subjects' perspective.
- It is exploratory rather than verifiable.

These characteristics attest to the fact that there is no uniformity in approaches when it comes to qualitative research study. Schrunik (1998) and Creswell (2007) mentioned the following: phenomenology, ethnomethodology, ethnography, the historical method, applied, action research, clinical methods, symbolic interaction, grounded theory, and case study as well as secondary analysis as some of the approaches used over the years in qualitative research.

Figure 3: Qualitative Research Enquiry Design
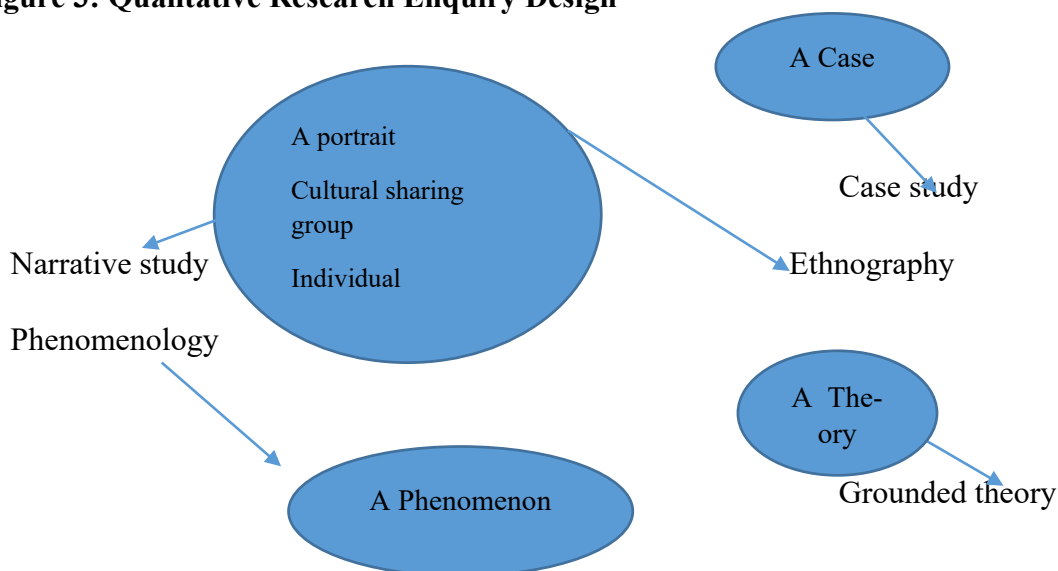
Source:Creswell (2007)

The figure depicts Creswell's (2007) five approaches to qualitative study. This study, however, adopted the phenomenology technique as its primary field design because the phenomenon of hedging was understood from the participants' perception. Predominantly, phenomenological study hypothesises that one's life is constructed socially and that the experiences one has is interdependent socially and coherently. The phenomenologist has a legitimate source of data, which comprises the views and experiences of the participants in the study whenever he/she is focusing on the process of enquiry. This, however, suggests that the participant's interpretation is regarded as the fact. Furthermore, Goulding (2005) espouses that it is only, participants who have solely lived under the experience which is under study who are selected for the research. As a result, the sampling technique used for the study was non-probability purposive.

4.2.1 Research Design

As Ritchie & Lewie (2003) put it, phenomenology design enables the understanding of the concept surrounding people's daily activities, which compels them to derive meaning from their world, through bringing out the implications which are contained in their text or conversation. Thus, the employing of hedging of postgraduate students was uncovered through analyzing the use of hedges in the theses of the students. The appropriation of hedging by the students in their theses was directly investigated without interfering in the process as the tenet of phenomenology study prescribes (Creswell, 2007). According to Christensen, Johnson & Turner (2010) the principal objective for a phenomenology design is to expound the meaning, structure and essence of lived experience of a person or a group of people around a specific phenomenon by trying to understand the phenomenon through the eyes of the participant without any interference by the researcher. This objective is referred to as ***verstehen***, which is a German interpretative understanding of human interaction from the person's perspective. The phenomenology design was used because phenomenologically-based research allows for a wide range of research methods, which includes, interviews, conversations, participant observation, action research, focus group meeting and document study and analysis of texts. Document study and text analysis method is the aspect that the current study chose and the document that was studied was postgraduate students' theses from seven departments of a Ghanaian University, and content analysis was employed for the text analysis.

Phenomenology study falls into two broad categories: hermeneutic phenomenology which was theorised by Van Manen (1990) and empirical transcendental or psychological phenomenology which was propounded by Moustakas (1994). Van Manen (1990) described hermeneutical phenomenology study as a lived experience, which interprets texts of life. Van Manen argues that phenomenological research has a dynamic interplay among six research activities. First the researcher will focus on a researchable phenomenon which is of much interest to him/her. After that the researcher will reflect on the essential themes that will emanate from the study and then he/she will reflect on the constituent of a lived experience. After the first three have been done successfully, the researcher will then write a vivid description of the phenomenon and at the same time maintain a strong relationship with the topic and balance and synthesize parts of the information into a unified whole.

Moustakas (1994), on the other hand, focuses empirical transcendental phenomenology on a reduced amount of interpretation of the researcher and more description of the experience of the participant. He also focused on epoche or bracketing, which behoves researchers to shield their experiences as much as possible in order to consider a renewed perspective towards the phenomenon. Van Manen (1990) further categorized the lived experience as live space (spatially), lived body (corporeality), lived time (temporality) and lived human relations (rationality). The human relationship category best suits the study as hedging is a linguistic rhetorical device, which directly affects the writer reader/listener relationship, if claims are not carefully and appropriately hedged by writers. Thus, the study was placed within Van Manen's lived experience.

4.3 Research Site

The research site for the current study is University of Ghana. Ghana is a West African country, popularly acclaimed as the first African country south of the Sahara to have gained independence from her colonial masters, the British, on 6th March, 1957. The country prides itself on education, thus aims at ensuring that all citizens regardless of gender or social status, are functionally literate and productive at the minimum (Ghana: Vision 2020). Consequently, one can infer that literacy is key and this has reflected in the educational sector of the country as it is 'endowed with a splendid education system' (BBC News, 2005).

Ghana serves as a hub of 67 accredited universities. Ten (10) of these are public universities with the rest (57) being private universities. The research is based on Ghanaian university students.

Presently, the University of Ghana practises the collegiate system and it has four colleges:

- College of Humanities
- College of Education
- College of Basic and Applied Sciences
- College of Health Sciences

The university stands out as the oldest and largest of all public and private universities in Ghana. It admits both local and international students from about 70 countries. Currently, the university has a student population of over 42,000 made up of both undergraduate and graduate students from the regular, sandwich and distance education programmes.

4.4 Population

The population for any study refers to entities in the universe within the setting of the research who can afford to release the utmost pertinent and comprehensive information to answer the research question (Gravetter & Forzano, 2003; Ritchie & Lewie, 2003). Arkava and Lane (1983) distinguished between the term universe and population. The term universe, according to the earlier mentioned scholars, comprises prospective subjects who have attributes that are pivotal to the study. According to the scholars, population on the other hand, is a term that creates boundaries on elements of a specific study. These elements are individuals or objects in the universe that have distinctive characteristics needed for the study. This study used the term population as a jurisdiction in which the sample was selected. Seaberg (1988) describes a population as an over-all set of samples from which the participants or subjects of the study are chosen. McBurney (2001) refers to the population as a sampling structure, which constitutes the entirety of persons, events, organisation units, case records, documents and other objects which concerns the research problem**. Kohari (2004) also described the population as all people, objects or events found in a specific group that the researcher plans to generalize.

The population for the current study are postgraduate students' theses from a Ghanaian university. The focus is on postgraduate students because they are engaged in thesis writing and have spent a longer period in the academic community, and as a result they are more exposed to academic writing protocols and characteristics, which includes, among others, hedging. Since it was not possible for the entire postgraduate population of the university to be studied, a target population was drawn from the entire population. Alvi (2016) described a target population as members of a research setting who meet a particular criterion indicated

for a research investigation. The target population for the current study is postgraduate students' theses from seven departments of the college of humanities. (English Language, Linguistics, Modern Languages, Philosophy / Classics, The Study of Religions, Music and Theatre Arts) theses from the seven departments provided the best data which answered the research questions.

4.5 Study Sample

A sample is a group of people selected from a larger group or parent population for analysis purposes. Due to time, cost and practicality issues, the sample for the study was selected from a target population of theses from seven departments of the College of Humanities, from a Ghanaian University. Miles & Huberman (1994:27) posit that "as much as you might want to, you cannot study everyone everywhere doing everything". Thus, it is germane to make choices as to whom to talk to, where, when, how and why. This is what translates into what is referred to as sampling. According to Alvi (2016), sampling refers to the selection of a group of people, who are reasonably smaller in number, of those selected from the entire population for the research. These members represent the sample that is referred to as participants, and are a sub-set of the population, which reveals the characteristics of the phenomenon the researcher is interested in. The aim of the selected sample was to effectively answer the researcher questions and also to contribute to the body of knowledge of academic writing instead of just being a general representation of the study. Flick (1998) emphasises the notion of 'relevance' of a sample to the research topic in a qualitative study and not the sample's representativeness. It implies that the sample that is chosen for the study must be relevant to the research topic and duly answer the research questions. Neuman (2007) posits that for qualitative researchers, representativeness of samples receives less attention; instead, concerns are geared towards the ability of the sample, as small as it may seem, to reflect the complexities of social life and contribute to knowledge. Guided by this supremacy of 'relevance' over 'representativeness', the study sample was drawn from seven departments of the College of Humanities from a Ghanaian University.

4.5.1 Sampling Techniques

It is vital that researchers decide on the process they will use to select items for their sample. This procedure is known as sample design. According to Kothari (2004), the sample sizes and a given cost of a study inform researchers to select their samples from a variety of sample designs. Waliman (2001) states that there are two types of sampling procedures

which comprises (a) the random (b) non-random sampling techniques. He claims that random sampling techniques presents to researchers most trustworthy representation of the whole population, while non-random techniques depend on the judgment of the researcher and cannot largely be used to make generalizations about the whole population. Kothari (2004) stipulates that the selection of any sampling procedures depends on two main features: the representation basis and element selection techniques. Kothari argues that the representation basis is either probability or non-probability sampling. Probability sampling, he further states, is dependent on the notion of random selection, whereas non-probability sampling is dependent on non-random selection. Furthermore, the element selection basis, presents either unrestricted or restricted sampling. Thus, every researcher has a choice between the random sampling and non-random sampling. Since there maybe time or resources constraint on researchers when they are attempting to analyse the entire population, it is germane that they resort to sampling techniques in order to cut down on sample size.

Figure 4: Probability and Non-Probability Sampling Techniques
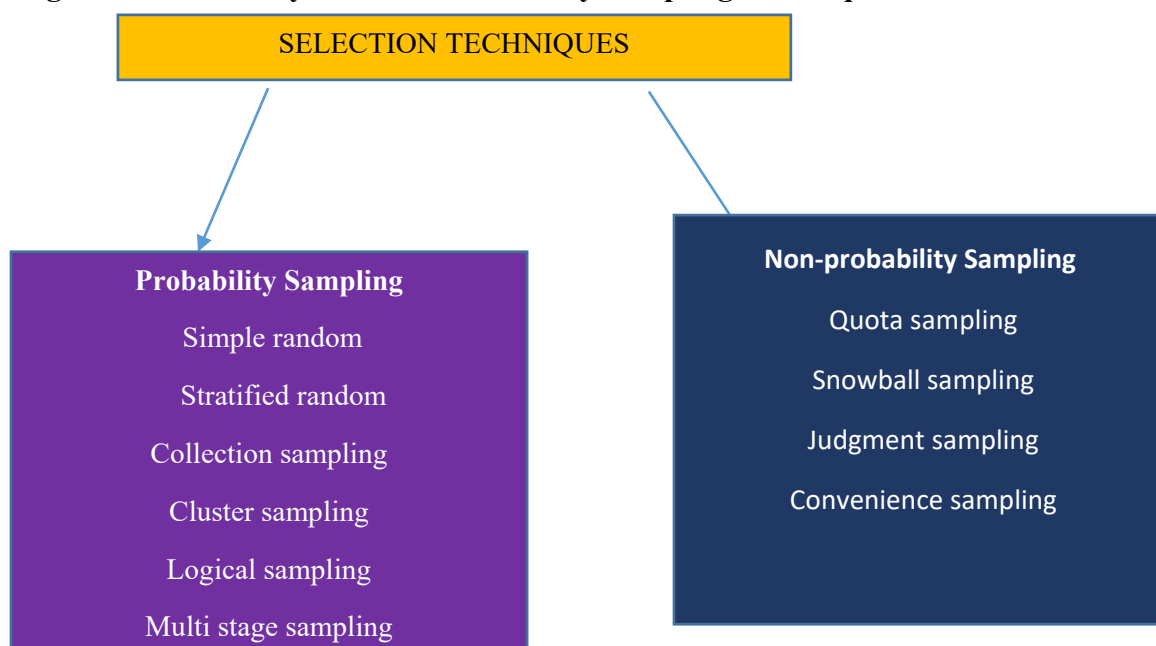
Source: Alvi (2016)

Figure 4 shows the types of probability and non-probability sampling designs that researchers can choose from.

Non-probability sampling was used in the current study to aid in the achievement of the objectives of the study. Kothari (2004) states that non-probability sampling procedure does not give assurance of the probability of including every item in the population; as a result,

researchers are allowed to estimate items that need to be included in the study. Non-probability sampling is also termed as deliberate or judgemental sampling. The non-probability sampling techniques was chosen because the researcher deliberately selected the target population. The target sample enabled the researcher to arrive at the sample that best answered the research questions. The specific non-probability sampling techniques that were employed to select 42 theses chapters are: quota sampling, convenient sampling, and purposive sampling (discussed in the subsequent section). Specifically, chapters five, six and seven of the theses, which, respectively, comprise the Findings/Discussions, Interpretations/Analysis and Conclusions/Recommendation sections of the students theses, were considered for the study because these chapters are where students are likely to hedge their claims.

4.5.2 Samplings for the Study

Purposive sampling, which, according to Patton (1990), starts with the formulation of clear criteria on the kind of data to collect and the kind of participants who are capable of exposing the researcher to rich information, was used to select the School of Languages, the School of Arts and the School of Performing Arts out of others from the College of Humanities as theses form the selected population are those that best answered the research question. Again, purposive sampling was used to select three chapters of each thesis from the seven disciplines from the departmental libraries, specifically chapters five, six, and seven of the theses, which comprises the Findings/Discussions, Interpretation/Analysis and Conclusions/Recommendations sections of the theses respectively. The theses best answered the research questions because those chapters are where students normally practice hedging. As Cohen & Morrison (2007) reiterate, purposive sampling authorises the researcher to hand-pick respondents that will categorically answer the research questions. It is believed that students from the selected schools are exposed to continuous prose, reading and writing and, as a result, their writings are likely to be hedged. The judgemental nature of the purposive sampling technique is another reason why it was chosen because the researcher employed a judgement on the selection of the data, which was convince (Neuman, 2007). Purposive sampling allowed the researcher to particularly select the setting for the study, which is a Ghanaian University; and the documents, which are the postgraduate theses. These provided the researcher with vital information, which is limited to postgraduate theses.This is in accordance with Taherdoost (2016), who asserts that purposive sampling is a stratagem where

specific settings, persons or events are selected calculatedly to provide important information to answer the research questions which cannot be acquired from other choices. At this point, the researchers include cases or participants in the sample because they believe that those participants deserve inclusion.

4.5.2.1 Quota Sampling

Davis (2005) perceives quota sampling as a non-random sampling procedure where participants or subjects for the study are selected on the basis of prearranged features. Davis reiterates that the prearranged feature is the total sample, which arguably has the same distribution of characteristics as those found in the wider population. There was, therefore, a quota allocation of the seven departments of the School of Languages, School of Arts and School of Performing Arts (English Language Linguistics, Modern Languages, Philosophy and Classics, Music, The Study of Religions and Theater Arts) in relation to Davis' assertion, which allowed for each sub-group to be fully represented. Quota sampling was used because it represented significant characteristics of the wider population and gave a proportional weighing to the selected strata. Three stages of quota sampling, which was stipulated by Cohen & Morrison (2007), were followed:

Stage 1: The researcher identifies characteristics that appear in the wider population which has been divided into homogeneous and into discrete groups and must also appear in the specific sample. For example, in the current study, postgraduate students' theses from a Ghanaian university was the wider population and then the specific sample is (42) theses chapters from the seven departments of The School of Languages, School of Performing Arts and School of Arts were selected for the study.

Stage 2: The researcher identifies the proportions in which the selected characteristics appear in the wider population: in the present study, the proportion is two theses each, selected from seven theses of each departmental Library's online database of the School of Humanities from a Ghanaian university.

Stage 3: The researcher ensures that the proportions of the characteristics selected from the wider population appear in the sample. The assurance was attained in the currents study when the researcher was certain that postgraduate students had written theses in the various disciplines during the 2016/2017 and 2018/2019 academic year.

A table was then created to represent the stratum. The theses that were selected were those that had the characteristics and attributes that answered the research question of the study (Berg, 2001). **See Table 29**

4.5.2.2 Convenience Sampling

Convenience sampling, which is known as opportunity or accidental, is a type of sampling that involves choosing individuals or objects that can serve as respondents who will continue with the research process until the required sample size has been obtained. Convenience sampling was used to select two theses from the departmental libraries of each of the seven disciplines. The theses comprised of those that were written in the academic year 2016/ 2017 and 2018/2019. These theses were selected because they were the most current theses and were readily and easily available and close at hand for the study. The rationale for using convenience sampling stems from the fact that it represents itself, rather than representing other groups and does not seek to provide a generalization about the wider population. (Berg, 2001; Cohen & Morrison, 2007). Convenience sampling was used because the documents for the study were close to the research site (Vanderstoep &Johnson, 2001**).**

4. 5.2 3 Participants and Sample Size

De Vos et al. (2011) describe a sample as a representative of an entire population which is carefully selected to ensure that members of the said population are fairly represented. The fundamental consent of sampling is the sample size and representativeness of the sample. They further suggest that the choice of a sample size can influence statistical tests; therefore, the selection of a well representative sample of a population should consider the comparative homogeneity or heterogeneity of the population, as well as the level of reliability which is desired by the researcher. Purposive sampling was used to select forty-two chapters of postgraduate theses from seven departments of the School Languages, the School of Arts and the School of Performing Arts of the College of Humanities from a Ghanaian University, which were written and submitted in the academic year 2016/2017 and 2018/2019. The reason for purposive sampling for this research was to get only participants who can provide the needed information (Dawson, 2007). Creswell (2007) explains that purposive sampling selects only individuals and locations that are of relevance to a study. To support this, Teddlie & Tashakkori (2003) stated that the individuals selected should have certain specific attributes and be representative of the population relevant to a particular situation.

Table 29: Sample Size from the Seven Departments

Departmental library	Number of theses	Number of theses chapters
English	2	3
Linguistics	2	3
Study of Religions	2	3
Theatre Arts	2	3
Morden languages	2	3
Philosophy / Classics	2	3
Music	2	3
Total	14 theses	42 theses chapters

Source: Field Data,(2019)

The table above gives a breakdown of the sample size from the seven departments of the College of Humanities from a Ghanaian University.

4.6 Data Collection

Data can be termed as raw facts that have not been processed, organized or analysed. Mahajan (2016) posits that data on their own have little or no meaning and are of no benefit to the researcher's decision-making until they are processed. These data, Mahajan continued, appears to be un-constructed resources, which researchers focus their choice on. The researcher's choice of data may depend on certain facts, which include anything known to be true or that which is in existence. Data are items of valuables that are in either text or numerical format (sequences of numbers, letters, pictures, etc.). These items appear to be worthless in themselves, and are specified by a set of "unconnected" intent about events of the study. According to Osorio (2014), researchers can identify and use relevant data at the following stages of the data life: study concept, indicating key elements, definitions and concepts.

- Data collection stage, which includes administrating documents, questionnaires and coding instruments.
- Data processing stage, which comprises enclosing the information into its specified content.
- Data archiving stage, which indicates measures taken to keep confidential information safe
- The data distribution stage, which indicates language used and citations therein:
- The data analysis stage where the researcher provides replication codes and publication of the data.
- The data stage, which includes repurposing.

The current study subjected the data to the six mentioned data life stages according to Osorio (2014). Kothari (2004) classified data into two kinds: (a) primary and (b) secondary data. Primary data are original data which are collected by the researcher. Whiles secondary data, are those that have already been processed which the researcher collects and analyses. Researchers, however, collect either primary or secondary data depending upon the nature of their methodology. The methods for collecting primary and secondary data differ because of their diverse characteristics.

The data source for the current study is secondary. Secondary data can be categorised as internal or external depending upon the source where they are collected. Information from internal secondary sources are gathered from within the organization of the study; while external secondary data are gathered from outside the organisation of the study. Secondary sources are either published or unpublished (Smith, 2008).

Smith (2008) stipulates that usually, published data are available in the following categories: (a) various publication documents from local governments; (b) numerous publications of foreign governments or of international bodies and their subsidiary organizations; (c) technical and trade journals; (d) books, magazines and newspapers; (e) reports and publications of various associations connected with business and industry, banks, stock exchanges; (f) reports prepared by research scholars, universities, economists, in different fields; and (g) public records and statistics, historical documents, and other sources of published information.

Sources of unpublished data are many; they may be found in diaries, letters, unpublished biographies and autobiographies; and may also be available with scholars and research workers, trade associations, labour bureaus and other public/ private individuals and organizations. Data for the study were from an internal secondary source and were collected within the setting of the study, which is from seven departmental libraries of the College of Humanities from a Ghanaian University. The data were unpublished data in the form of postgraduate theses from the seven departmental libraries of The School of Humanities (English, Linguistics, Modern Languages, Philosophy and Classic, Music, The of Study Religions and Theatre Arts).

4.7 Document Study

Bell (2005) states that document is a general term used for describing an impression that is left on a physical object by a human being and that the intention for writing most documents

is not   for research purposes; rather they are written for personal purposes. Types of documents which are written for personal purposes include letters to friends or family, diaries, and autobiographies. Bell further said that there are other kinds of documents which are non-personal and these include documents like proceedings of meetings, programmes, in-house office memoranda and a wide range of document from educational institutions which includes student theses. It is believed that these non-personal documents are written with intents of them being used in institutions and organizations to aid with continual functioning of the organization or for the implementation of a precise business idea in an institution. Bell (ibid) claims that there is a third group of documents which are targeted towards social media. Such documents are newspapers, magazines or newsletters that are primarily written with the intention of informing the general public or a selected section of the public with vital communique. Despite the above-mentioned purposes for documents, Bell argued that documents can be studied and analysed for research purposes be it scientific or non-scientific.

Classifications of sources of document study are found in relevant academic literature. For instance, Forcese and Richter (1973), Arkava and Lane (1983), Tripodi (1983), Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Denzin and Lincoln (1994) focused their classification on sources which determine whether or not a document is personal or official. Creswell (2003) made a distinction between private and public documents. While Ritchie & Lewis (2003) distinguish between public documents (like government publications), procedural documents (like minutes of meetings) and personal documents (like letters or diaries), Bells (2005) also recognizes documents as educational research, which are written as printed or manuscript sources.

Since it is usually not very possible to study everything under a particular document, it is imperative to select the quantity of document that is required for a particular study that is dependent on the availability of time for the particular study. Thus, one will have to familiarize oneself with the categories of documents which are available in order for one to make a well-informed decision on the matter. The documents that were studied for the current study were postgraduate theses from the School of Languages, the School Arts and Performing the School of Arts of the School of Humanities (English Language, Linguistics, Modern Languages, Philosophy / Classics, Music, The study of Religions and Theatre Arts) from a Ghanaian university. The data were from chapters five, six and seven of the theses, which

comprised Finding/Discussions, Analysis/Interpretation and Conclusions / Recommendations sections, respectively. Theses from the seven departments (English, Linguistics, Modern Languages, Philosophy/ Classics, The Study of Religions and Theatre Arts) fall within the educational research genre of document as was mentioned by Bells (2005).

4.8 Events to Data Collection

Prior to the process of data collection, a proposal was designed, which was presented through a seminar to the Department of English, and then to the School of Human and Social Sciences' Higher Degree Committee of the University of Venda. Upon their recommendation and acceptance, the proposal was then presented to the University for Final Approval. Upon making enquiries from each of the seven departmental libraries where the data were kept, it emerged that the theses can be found from an online webpage of the University. Following Spilioti's (2006) position of comprehensible data sorting and grouping, the researcher downloaded the theses and devoted a week for working on each disciplined by sorting out the data according to their various sections and categorization.

4.9 Trustworthiness

As with all methods of analysis, trustworthiness is pivotal as it positions the audience for acceptance of the research report. Trustworthiness in content analysis is established when the results are unequivocally descried in adequate detail to enable readers to have a clearer understanding of the study and how the analysis brings out the strengths and limitations of the study (GAO, 1996).Trustworthiness in the study was achieved by describing the results within the content of the categorization of the variation of hedges found in postgraduate theses. Again, the data were analysed and simplified from the types and categories of rhetorical devices that postgraduate students employed as hedges in a reliable manner (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Credibility of research results was ascertained because interpretation of the study dealt explicitly with the categorization, types and variations of rhetorical devices that cover the data (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). A link was established between the results and the data collected in order to increase the reliability of the study (Polit & Beck, 2004). In this direction the analysing process was described in detail during the reporting of the results stage. Tables and figures were also used to demonstrate links between the data and results. Transferability was facilitated because a clear description of the population, data collection, presentation, analysis and interpretation were given in accordance with Graneheim & Lundman's (2004) proposition. Another means through which trustworthiness was

achieved in the study was by authentic citation that pointed out to readers the kind of materials that were consulted for the study and from where it came.

Figure 5: Trustworthiness of the Study

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              ┌──────────────────┐
              │   Credibility    │
              └──────────────────┘
                       │
              ┌──────────────────┐
              │ Trustworthinesss │
              └──────────────────┘
               │                │
    ┌────────────────┐   ┌────────────────┐
    │  Reliability   │   │ Transferability│
    └────────────────┘   └────────────────┘
```
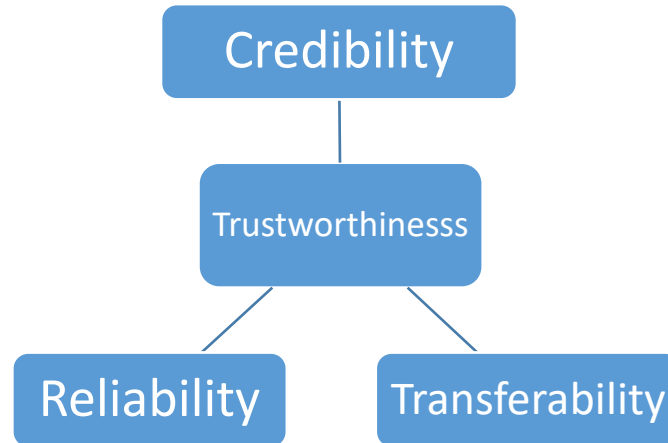
Source: Polit & Beck (2004)

The above figure shows the stages that the study went through to achieve trustworthiness.

4.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter reported on the philosophical beliefs that guided the study. It also talked about how the study was conducted and the tools used in gathering the evidence for the study. In addition, it reported on the study's sampling, the source of documents used, the data collection procedure, and trustworthiness of the study. The following chapter focuses on data presentation and findings.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA PRESENTATION AND FINDINGS

5.0 Introduction

The data that were derived from the study are presented in this chapter. The discussion is in accordance with the examination and process of data collection, which was guided by the study's objectives and the paradigms mentioned in the methodology chapter of the study, Chapter Four. The aim of the study was to explore hedging in postgraduate theses across disciplines in a Ghanaian university. The study employed the qualitative approach to research and specifically adopted phenomenology as its primary field design (See 4.1& 4.4 on pages 90 & 94 respectively).

The data collection tool used was document study. The documents are students' theses collected from an internal secondary source within the setting of the study (See 4.6, 4.7 & 4.9. on pages 104,106 & 107 respectively).

The findings from the data are presented as visual information (tables and graphs). There are three sets of tables, which represents the three sections (Findings/Discussions Interpretation/Analysis and Conclusions/Recommendations) of the postgraduate theses that were considered for the study. Each of the tables presents the types and frequency of hedging that were identified in the students' theses. The graphs, however, augment the findings by giving the percentile distribution of the forms of hedges found in the students' theses.

5.1 Types of Hedges Found in the Findings and Discussion Sections of Postgraduate Theses

The findings are presented in tables and graphs. Three sets of tables, which present the types/variations, frequency distribution and a percentile of hedging that were appropriated by the students, are represented by the visual aids.

Table 30: Types and Variations of Hedges

Types of hedges in the section	English Language	Linguistics	Modern Languages	Philosophy/ Classics	Music	The Study of Religions	Theatre Arts
Modal auxiliary verbs	May seem, May be, Can, would be	May be, May, Could, Can	May, Can, Could, Will	Should, Would be, Could be May be	Would Most will Should could, Might	Can will, Could may	Can, Could, May,
Modal lexical verbs	seems to, required to, seeks to	-	Seem, Seen,	-	Tend, Almost	Seems, Seem to,	Tends, Sought
Adverbs	Mostly, likely	Mostly	-	Merely,	Often, Some mostly,	Some, likely, mainly Undoubtedly some of, most	Mostly
Probability adjectives	-	Possible	Probably, Most probably,	Probability, Possible	Most,	Most largely Undoubtedly Generally, most significant largely	Most, Almost, Most, Many, There is a Probability,

Types of hedges in the section	English Language	Linguis-tics	Modern Lan-guages	Philosophy/ Classics	Music	The Study of Religions	Theatre Arts
If clauses	If this was, If about	-	-	If fertilization counts as, if fertilization were, If an assertion, If there is no,	If for a reason, If these people, If newly posted,	-	If the network wants, If broadcasters rely on, If the internet connection is good, If the digital,
Compound hedges	some form maybe said to, the aim of	-	-	Will be, A theoretical possibility, Need to be, Would likely, Given that, Has been, Considered, Should be seen	Normally seen, The view that, Thought to be, Often seen, Could be, Seems to	Have tended, Can be, In an attempt, Some sort, of Believed, to have, Of the view that, It Could be Should seek	would have, Will have been, Can have, Could have
Introductory phrases	-	-	-	This thesis believes that, Which are said to, It would seem,	Some believe, In view	Generally speaking, Very largely, This makes them more, In this case,	Are of the view, It could easily, It is high time,
Approximators of degree	-	-	-	-	Significantly	-	Slightly

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Types of hedges in the section	English Language	Linguistics	Modern Languages	Philosophy/ Classics	Music	The Study of Religions	Theatre Arts
Nouns	-	-	-	Seems, It appears, Assuming, An attempt	Sometimes Seem, Assumed	To suggest Sometimes Perceived Suggests	About, Need, Quite, Becoming, Allows, Sometimes, Suggest, Unlike, Prospects

Source: Field Data, (2019)

Table 30 displays the types and variations of hedges that were collected from the findings and discussion sections of theses from the seven disciplines. The hedges in the table provide answers to the research question which seeks to find the variations, types and forms of hedges that postgraduate students employ in their theses across disciplines. The various types of hedges were collected following categorization of hedges from the Centre for English Learning and Professional Development. Specifically, Braun et.al's (2015) thematic content analysis (See 5.1, on page 111) was used to disseminate data after which the researcher identified rhetorical devices that the students have used to hedge their claims. A matrix of important features of words from the theses, which constitute hedges and are relevant for answering the research questions was generated. Types and forms of hedges found in the data which represent broader patterns of hedges were examined and certified. A detailed analysis of the distribution of hedges used by the disciplines will be discussed in the next chapter.

Table 31: Frequency Distribution

Types of hedges in the section	Disciplines: the number and frequency of hedges in the "Findings /Discussions" sections of the postgraduate theses							
	Eng-lish-Language	Lin-guis-tics	Morden Lan-guages	Philos-ophy/ Clas-sics	Music	The study of Reli-gions	Thea-tre Arts	Total
Modal auxil-iary verbs	4	4	4	5	6	4	3	30
Modal lexical verbs	4	0	2	0	2	2	2	12
Adverbs	2	1	0	1	3	5	1	12
Proba-bility adjec-tives	0	1	3	2	2	4	5	18
If clauses	3	1	0	4	3	0	4	15
Com-pound hedges	2	0	0	5	6	9	4	26
Intro-ductory phrases	0	0	0	3	2	4	3	12
Approx-imato-rs of de-gree	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2
Nouns	0	0	0	4	3	4	9	20
Total	15	7	9	24	28	32	32	147

Source: Field Data, (2019)

Table 31 answers the research question which aims to decipher the extent to which hedging is included in academic writing pedagogy. Braun et.al's (2015) thematic content analysis was

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applied (See 5.1,on page 111) Categorisation of hedges found in students' theses from each of the seven disciplines has been presented in the table above.

Table 32: Percentages of Hedges

Types of hedges	Percentage of hedges in the Findings /Discussions section
Modal auxiliary verbs	20.4%
Modal lexical verbs	8.1
Adverbs	8.1
Probability adjectives	12.2
If clauses	10.2
Compound hedges	17.6
Introductory phrases	8.1
Approximators of degree	1.3
Nouns	13.8
	100%

Source: Field Data, (2019)

Following the nine categorizations of hedges from the Centre for English Learning and Development, Table 32 displays the frequency of types and variations of hedges found in the findings and discussions sections of postgraduate theses. It was realised that modal auxiliaries were the highest employed hedges, while approximators of degree were the least employed hedges.

Figure 6: Displayed Percentages

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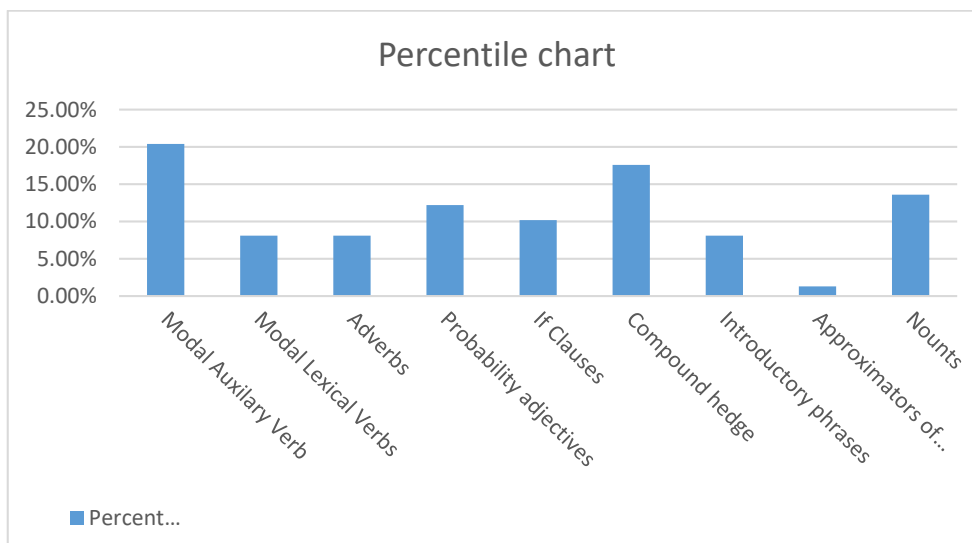
Source: Field Data (2019)

Figure 6 above is the percentile chart, which displays differences in the appropriation of types and variations of hedges across disciplines in the Findings/Discussions sections.

Table 33: Disciplinary Percentage

Disciplines	Percentage of hedges
English Language	10.2%
Linguistics	4.8%
Modern Languages	6.1%
Philosophy/Classics	16.3%
Music	19%
The Study of Religions	21.8%
Theatre Arts	21.8%

Source: Field Data (2019)

As mentioned earlier in Chapter One, the study seeks to find disciplinary variations in the appropriation of hedges by postgraduate students. Results from the "Findings and Discussions" sections of postgraduate theses depict that The Study of Religions and Theatre Arts disciplines employed the highest percentage of hedges amongst the seven disciplines with **21.8%,** respectively, while Linguistics had the least with **4.8%.**

5.2 Types, Variations, Frequencies and Distribution of Hedges in the Analysis and Interpretation Sections.

Findings from the analysis and interpretations of the postgraduate theses are presented in the forms of graphic organizers, namely tables and graphs, which depict the types of hedges garnered from the data. Three sets of tables present the types/variations, frequency distribution and a percentile of hedging that were appropriated by the students.

Table 34: Types and Variations of Hedges

Types of hedges in the section	English Language	Linguistics	Modern Languages	Philosophy/Classics	Music	The Study of Religions	Theatre Arts
Modal auxiliary verbs	Might, Could	Maybe, Will, Should, Can	Must, Would, Could	May Might, Most, may, Would be, Would, Might could,	Would, would, Will, Could, Can Could,	Might Can be Can, Should Should	Can, will May, Would,
Modal lexical verbs	believed to, Is quite, Suggests, sought to	-	Seem	Assumed	Almost	Seems to, Some can, Seek sort	Seem, Tends
Adverbs	-	Doubly	Commonly, Concretely	-	Most	On most	Most
Probability adjectives	-	-	-	Probably, Readily, Possibly, Possible, likely	Some	Some	-
If clauses	-	-	-	-	If we agree, If Care is, If the carriers of	If the Ghanaian populace	If one person fails to, If health facilities, If they realise

Types of hedges in the section	English Language	Linguistics	Modern Languages	Philosophy/Classics	Music	The Study of Religions	Theatre Arts
Compound hedges	Seen that	-	Could have,	More likely, Is likely, May be, Have been shown, Can be expected, While it, Could not,	Might Have, Could have, This could be seen, Would rather, May have, Most of,	Believed to be, The need, Believed to be, The aim of, What can be described,	Even though need to, Could not, There are often, Will be, Serve as, In order to, Tend to suggest,
Introductory phrases	-	-	We believe that,	would be less likely As we can see,	-	It is believed, One can argue that, We need to, Could therefore, It was noted, It was clear	This can be said, In terms of,
Approximators of degree	-	-	-	Probability more likely,	-	Totally	-
Nouns	-	-	-	Likelihood	Act as, seems,	Suggest, claims, Need for, Seem A number, Somewhat,	Sometimes, Even, Appears, Perhaps

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Types of hedges in the section	English Language	Linguistics	Modern Languages	Philosophy/Classics	Music	The Study of Religions	Theatre Arts
						Suggests that	

Source: Field Data, (2019)

Table 34 presents the types and variations of hedges that were found in the "Analysis and Interpretation" sections of theses from the seven disciplines. Hedges in the table provides answers to research the question which seeks to find variations, types and forms of hedges that postgraduate students employ in their theses across disciplines. Braun et.al's (2015) Thematic content analysis was used (See 5.1 on page 111& 6.1 on page 155). The types and forms of hedges were examined in order to find broader patterns of the types and variation employed by postgraduate students in the "Analysis/ Interpretation" sections of the students' theses from the seven disciplines.

Table 35: Frequency of Hedges

Types of hedges in the section	Disciplines: the number and frequency of hedges in the Analysis/Interpretation's sections.							
	English	Linguistics	Modern Languages	Philosophy/ Classics	Music	Religions	Theatre Arts	Total
Modal auxiliary verbs	2	4	3	7	5	5	4	30
Modal lexical verbs	4	0	1	1	1	1	2	10
Adverbs	0	1	2	0	1	1	1	6
Probability adjectives	0	0	0	5	1	1	0	7
If clauses	0	0	0	0	3	1	3	7
Compound hedges	0	0	1	6	5	4	8	24
Introductory phrases	0	0	3	4	0	5	2	14
Approximators of degree	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	3
Nouns	0	0	0	1	2	6	3	11
Total	4	5	10	26	18	25	24	112

Source: Field Data,(2019)

Table 35 answers the research question, which aims to decipher the extent at which hedging is included in postgraduate theses. The principles of Braun et.al's (2015) Thematic content analysis was applied (See.5.1 on page 111& 6.1 on page 155).

Table 36: Percentage of Hedges

Types of Hedges	Percentage in Postgraduate Theses
Modal auxiliary verbs	26.8%
Modal lexical verbs	8.9%
Adverbs	5.4%
Probability adjectives	6.3%
If clauses	6.3%
Compound hedges	21.4%
Introductory phrases	12.5%
Approximators of degree	2.7%

Types of Hedges	Percentage in Postgraduate Theses
Nouns	9.8%

Source: Field Data, (2019)

The table above shows the percentages of the appropriations of hedges by postgraduate students from a Ghanaian University's College of Humanities. Modal Auxiliaries happened to be the highest type of hedges employed by postgraduate students in the "Analysis /Interpretation" sections of their theses. Approximators of degree seemed to be the least employed. The next chapter presents an in-depth discussion on the findings.

Figure 7: Types of Hedges
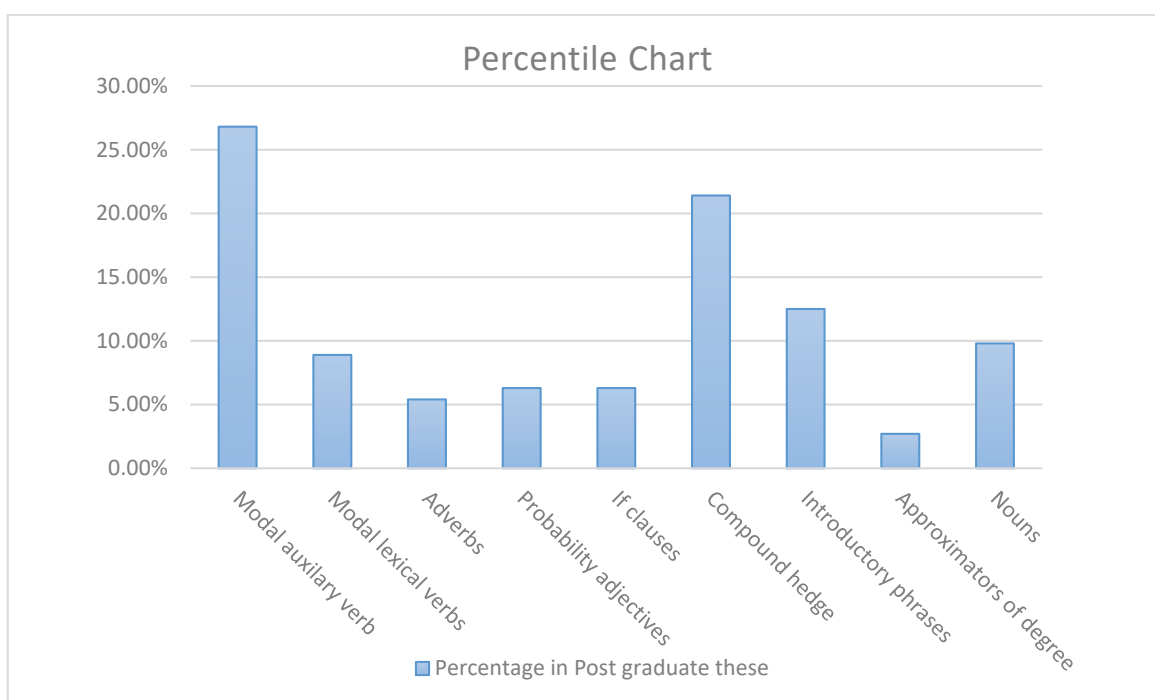
Source: Field Data, (2019)

Figure 7 gives the percentile display of the kinds and variation of hedges from the analysis/interpretation sections

Table 37: Disciplinary Percentage

Disciplines	Percentage of Hedges
English Language	3.6%
Linguistics	4.5%
Modern Languages	8.9%

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Disciplines	Percentage of Hedges
Philosophy/Classics	23.2%
Music	16.1%
The Study of Religions	22.3%
Theatre Arts	21.4%

Source: Field Data, (2019)

It is envisaged from the table above that there might be disciplinary variation in the employing of hedging across disciplines by postgraduate students in the College of Humanities from a Ghanaian university. As the table above indicates, Philosophy/Classics students hedge most in the "Analysis and Interpretation" sections of their theses with **23.2%.** On the other hand, English Language students hedged least in their "Analysis / Interpretation" rhetorical sections with **3.5%.**

Figure 8: Hedges Across Disciplines
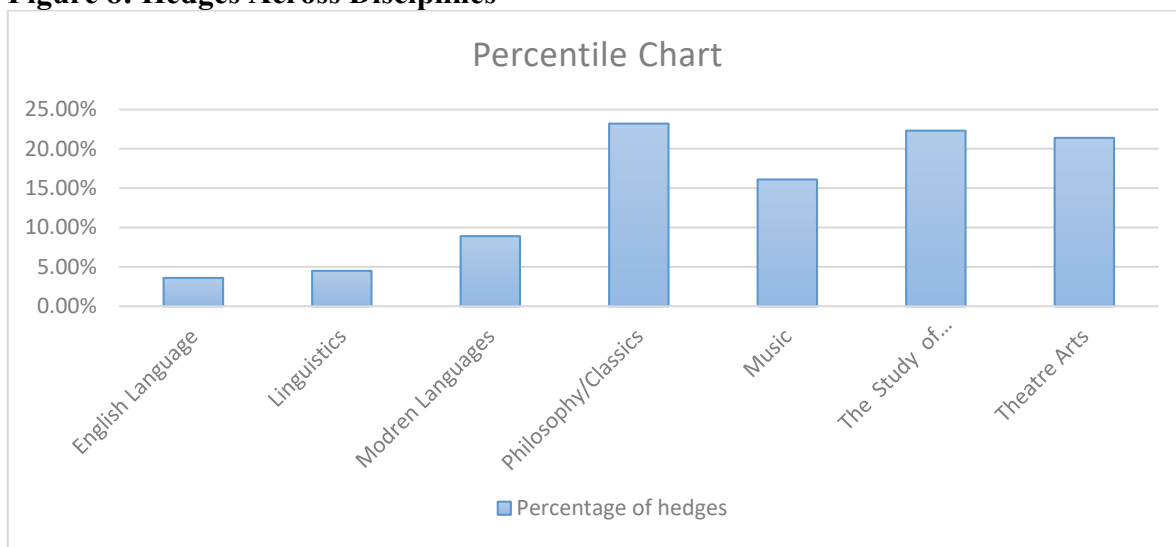
Source: Field Data, (2019)

Figure 8 depicts the percentile disciplinary variations of hedging across.

5.3 Types, Variations and Frequencies of Hedges Found in the Conclusions and Recommendations Sections

Findings of the appropriation of hedges in the "introduction and conclusion" section of postgraduate theses are presented in forms of visuals in this section. Tables and graphs are used

to represent the frequency and percentile distribution of the data. The graphic organizers enhanced the visualization of the data.

Table 38: Variation of Hedges

Types of hedges in the section	English Language	Linguistics	Modern Languages	Philosophy/ Classics	Music	The Study of Religions	Theatre Arts
Modal auxiliary Verbs	Would, have	Can be, Could be, May be,Will	Must, Can, May, not, Will, Should	Would, Would, Can, Can, Can, Would, Should, May	Must, Should, Might, Could, Would	Can, May, Could, Ought, Will,	Can may, Would Should Could
Modal lexical verbs	Seems to, Tries to, Seems to believe, Needs to, appeared to, Assumes, Tends	Seem to	-	Seems, believes, Can, viewed,	Seems, Seems to	Seems, Seen, Means, seemed to	Seem, Sought, sought
Adverbs	-	Hardly mostly,	-	-	-	Mostly	Partly, Necessarily, Likely
Probability adjectives	-	Most, Almost	Must	Possibility, ability most, almost must,	Most	-	Almost quite, Most, largely
If clauses	-	-	-	If there is, A righteous, If conception Mistakenly, If we are, If one spouse is, If a	-	If violated, If any, in which	If reporters know

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Types of hedges in the section	English Language	Linguistics	Modern Languages	Philosophy/ Classics	Music	The Study of Religions	Theatre Arts
				particular, If even			
Compound hedges	-	Behave like	May have, Could hardly, May be, May have	We can, There may, May be, Seem to be, Would be seem to be, Would seem	Would seem, can lead	Believed to be, generally perceived, it can be, must be able,	It could be, Suggest that, Could have
Introductory phrases	-	-	We are of the view, This will enable	I think, This assumes, I believe,	-	At other times, It is believed, The points above imply, It is also evident, While others believed,	I found it prudent, It is hoped, The idea is that,
Approximators of degree	Largely	Largely	Hardly	Totally, Perhaps, Often, Presumption, Profoundly	-	Mostly, Undoubtedly	-
Nouns	-	Suggesting, suggested, Sometimes	Suggest, Considered	Some,Conclusion Can, Proposes Allows, Suggests	Some, Appear, Serves, Tends	Sometimes, Considered, Suggests, Attempts, Somewhat, Suggesting Despite	Need, Appears

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Source: Field Data, (2019)

Table 38 shows the types and variations of hedges that were found in the "Conclusions/ Recommendation" sections of theses from seven disciplines of the College of Humanities from a Ghanaian University. Hedges in the table provide answers the research question which seeks to find variations, types and forms of hedges that postgraduate students employ in their theses across disciplines. Braun et.al's (2015) Thematic Content Analysis was used (see 5.1 on page 111& 6.1 on page 155) to distil the information.

Table 39: Frequency of Hedges

Types of hedges in the section	Disciplines: the number and frequency of hedges in the conclusion/ recommendation sections of the postgraduate theses							
	Eng-lish	Linguis-tics	Mor-den Lan-guage	Philoso-phy/ Classic	Mu-sic	Reli-gion	Thea-tre Arts	Total
Modal auxil-iary verbs	1	5	4	10	5	5	5	35
Modal lexical verbs	8	1	0	4	1	4	3	21
Adverbs	0	2	0	0	0	1	3	6
Probability ad-jectives	0	2	1	4	1	0	4	12
If clauses	0	0	0	5	0	2	1	8
Compound hedges	0	2	3	7	2	4	3	21
Introductory phrases	0	1	1	3	0	2	3	10
Approximators of degree	1	1	1	4	0	5	0	12
Nouns	0	3	2	4	2	7	2	22
Total	10	17	12	41	11	30	24	145

Source: Field Data, (2019)

Table 39 answers the question research which aims to decipher the extent hedging is included in postgraduate theses. Once again, the principles of Braun et.al's (2015) thematic content analysis have been applied to distil the words into less content in figures and into its related categories. The table however, provides new insight and the representation of the categories of hedges found in students theses in each of the seven disciplines at the "conclusion and recommendation" sections by making "replicable and valid inferences" from the data collected in the form of figures as suggested by Krippendorff (1980:28).

Table 40: Percentage of Types of Hedges

Types of Theses	Percentage in Postgraduate Theses from the Seven Disciplines
Modal auxiliary verbs	24.4%
Modal lexical verbs	14.4%
Adverbs	4.2%
Probability adjectives	8.2%
If clauses	5.5%
Compound hedges	14.4%
Introductory phrases	6.8%
Approximators of degree	8.3%
Nouns	13.8%

Source: Field Data, (2019)

Table 40 shows that auxiliary verbs have the highest percentage of types of hedges that are employed across disciplines by postgraduate students in the conclusion and recommendation sections of their theses. Adverbs happened to have the least percentage of employment of hedges by postgraduate students.

Figure 9: Types of Hedges Found from Seven Disciplines

Source: Field Data,(2019)

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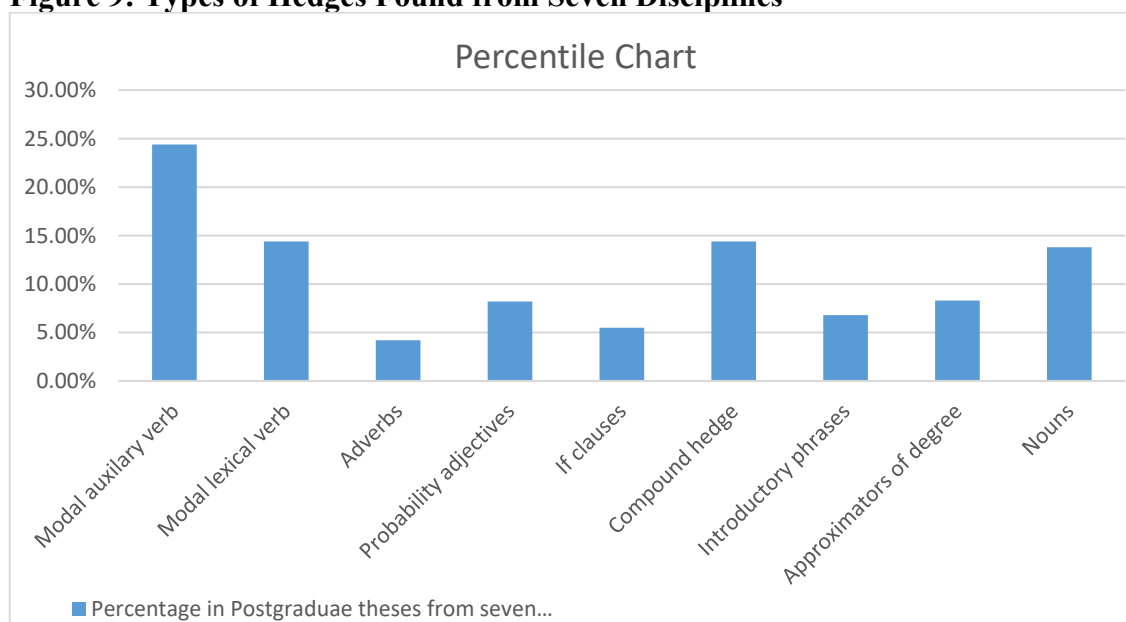
Figure 9 above depicts the percentile differences of types and variations of hedges employed by the students at the conclusions and recommendations section.

Table 41: Disciplinary Percentage of Hedges

Disciplines	Percentage of Hedges
English language	6.8
Linguistics	11.8
Modern Languages	8.4
Philosophy /Classics	28.3
Music	7.6
The Study of Religions	20.5
Theatre Arts	16.6

Source: Field Data, (2019)

The percentage of the disciplinary variation of hedging found in the conclusion and recommendation rhetorical sections of postgraduate theses is shown in the above table. The discipline that employed the highest percentage of hedges with **28.3%** is Philosophy/Classics while English Language employed the least hedges with **6.8%**

Figure 10:Percentage of Hedges
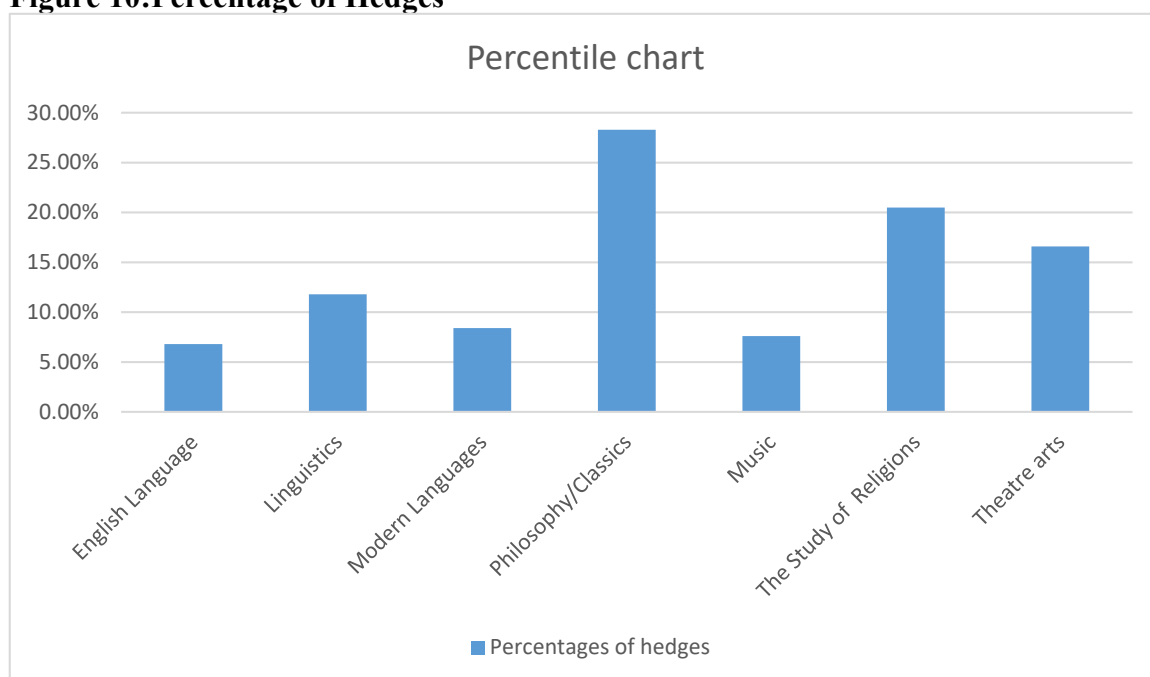
Figure 9 gives the total percentile disciplinary variation.

Source: Field Data, (2019)

Table 42: Total Percentages of Sections

Three Sections of Theses	Total Percentage of Theses
Findings/discussions	36.2%
Analysis/interpretation	27.8%
Conclusion/recommendations	36.0%

Source: Field Data, (2019)

The above table presents a summary of the percentages of hedges that are found across disciplines in the rhetorical sections of postgraduate students' theses. Figures from the table tend to suggest that postgraduate students hedge most in the "findings and discussions" sections of their theses. The full analysis will be presented in the next chapter.

Figure 11: Grand Percentage of Hedges
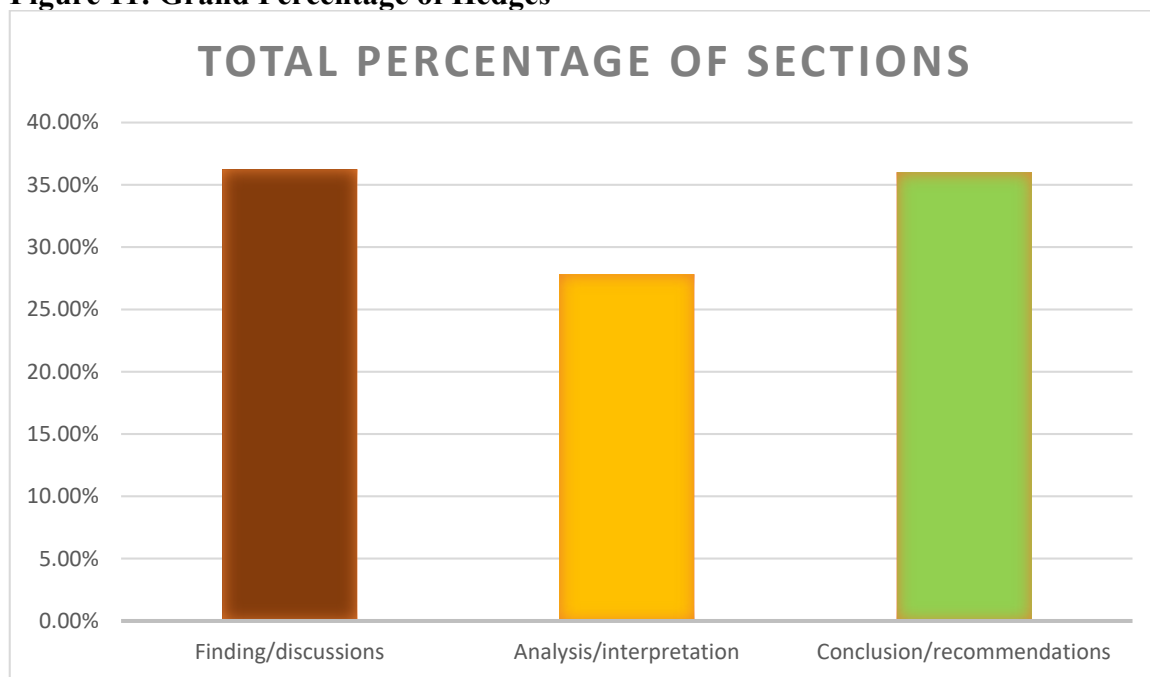
Source: Field Data, (2019)

5.4 Chapter Summary

The chapter presented findings from the study. The data on the types and variation of hedges that were employed by postgraduate student in the seven disciplines of the Schools of Languages, the School Arts and the School Performing Arts from the College of Humanities of a Ghanaian university were collected through qualitative means. The data were public secondary documents in the form of postgraduate theses written and submitted in the academic years 2016/2017 and 2017/2018. The following chapter focuses on analysis and discussion.

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Three rhetorical sections of the postgraduate theses (findings and discussion, analysis and interpretation, and conclusion and recommendation) were considered for the study. Distribution tables and figures were generated according to types and variations of rhetorical devices identified in the sections of the theses.

There were four types of tables and two types of figures under each postgraduate rhetorical thesis section discussed in the current study. The creation of the tables and figures followed Braun, Clarke, and Rance's (2015) thematic content analysis. A detailed analysis of findings from the current study is discussed in Chapter Six.

CHAPTER SIX

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

6.0 Introduction

The analysis and discussion of the current study is based on the data that was derived from the study and was presented in Chapter Five. The analysis and interpretation are in accordance with examination and the process of data collection, which were guided by the objectives and research questions of the study. The study explored the appropriation of hedging in postgraduate theses across seven disciplines in a Ghanaian University. The current study is likely to augment postgraduate students' appropriation of hedges in writing in Ghana and in other non-native English speaking countries as well.

The study employed the qualitative approach to research and specifically adopted phenomenology as its primary field design because the aim was to endeavour to understand the phenomenon of hedging from the students theses. Thus, the use of hedging in students' writing was directly investigated without interfering in the process as the tenets of phenomenon study prescribes (Creswell, 2007). The data collection tool used was document study. The documents, which are students' theses, were collected from an internal secondary source within the setting of the study (See 4.7 on page 106).

6.1 Methods of Analysis

Content analysis was used to analyse the study. Content analysis is one of the vital methodological means for text analysis and can be used to analyse qualitative or quantitative research in an inductive and/or deductive way. Since the study is qualitative in nature, content analysis was applied to decide on the various meaning of forms of texts (hedges) found in postgraduate theses across the seven disciplines (See 1.9.6 on page 20). The taxonomy of hedges which the study modelled followed that of the Centre for English Learning and Professional Development's nine categorization of hedges, which permeates classification and taxonomies of hedges as was discussed in Chapter Two.

 Furthermore, the employment of content analysis helped to provide new insight and also allowed for a representation of the categories of hedges found in students' theses as was discussed in Chapter Five. Inductive content analysis was used for the analysis because the structure of analysis on hedging in graduate theses was processed on the basis of previous

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knowledge of hedging in linguistic literature according to Kynga & Vanhanen, (1999) and Burns & Grove (2000)
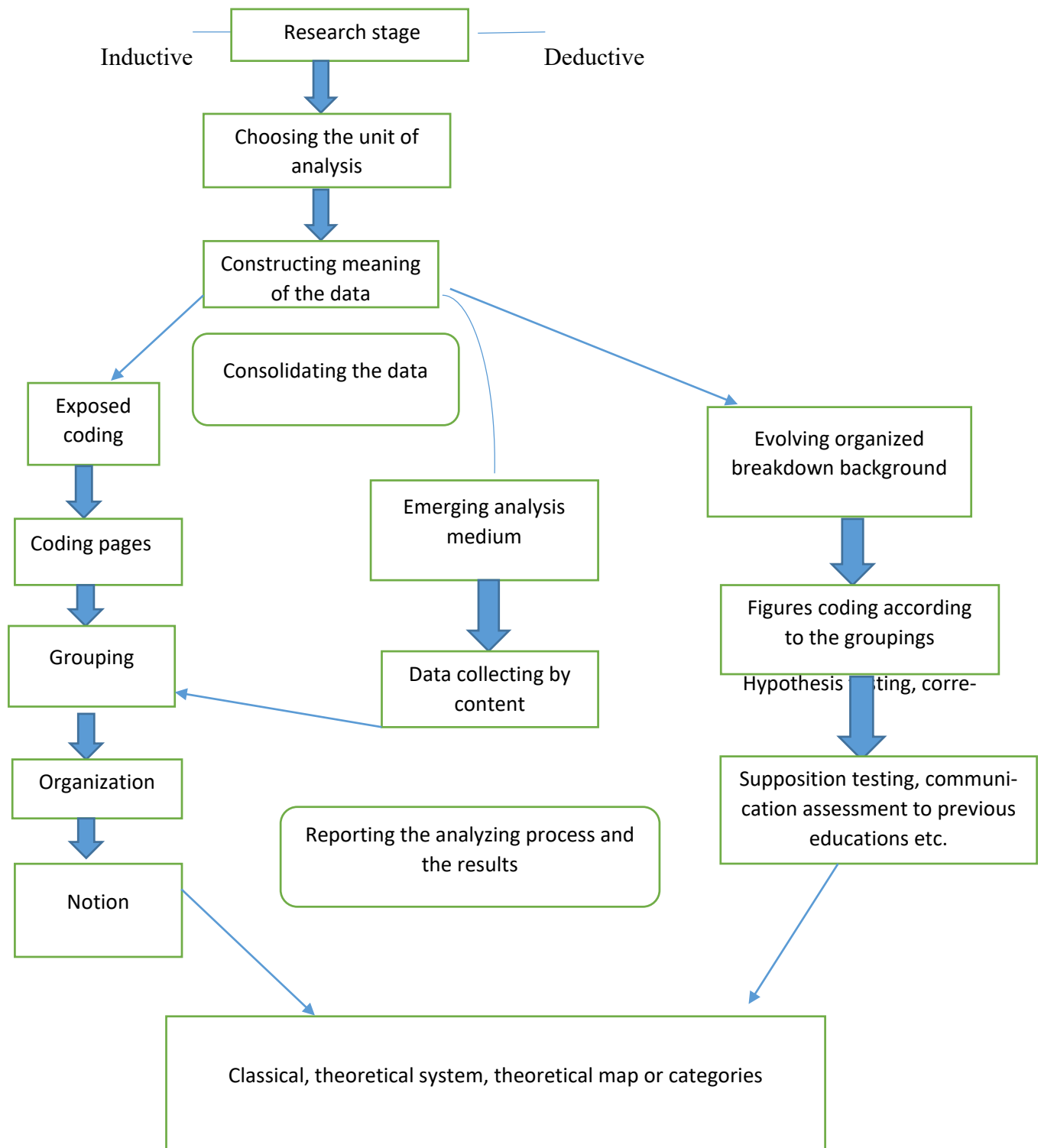
6. 2 Analysis Process

Polit & Beck (2004), Guthrie et al. (2004) and Elo & Kynga (2007) posit three main processes of data presentation, (namely: preparation, organizing and report) which were used for the presentation of the data in the current study. Weber (1990) and Burnard (1996) claimed that, despite the three main processes of data presentation there are no methodical rules for analyzing data in content analysis and that the key feature of all content analysis is that many words of the text are classified into much smaller content and categories. Elo & Kynga's (2007) assertion made a better case for the process; and that is the reason why the current study followed the three processes. The process made categorization of the data clearer and more meaningful.

The three phases, according to Polit & Beck (2004), are the preparation stage where researchers must accurately gather the needed data that will correctly answer the research questions. This phase was considered for collecting data from the seven disciplines that were earmarked for the study. The organization stage is the selection of the unit of analysis, which can be a word or a theme, perceived in the data. Rhetorical devices that constitute hedges were identified and collected from the students theses. Guided by the sampling considerations, the items (hedging devices) to analyse and into what details to analyse were put into consideration in accordance with the three-phase procedure. Two units of analysis were considered: 1) the theme, which comprises the sections of postgraduate theses, namely: "Findings/Discussions","Analysis/Interpretation" and "Conclusions/ Recommendations"; and 2) the nine categorizations of hedges according to the Centre for English Learning and Professional Development.

Next, a structured categorization matrix in the form of tables and figures were developed to group the data according to disciplinary variations, categories and types of hedges.

Finally, a careful analysis and interpretation of the data enabled the researcher to give an explicit report on the study in line with the tenets of the three-process stage of content analysis.

Figure 12: The Three Phases in Content Analysis

Inductive — Research stage — Deductive

Research stage → Choosing the unit of analysis → Constructing meaning of the data

Consolidating the data

Exposed coding → Coding pages → Grouping → Organization → Notion

Emerging analysis medium → Data collecting by content → Grouping

Evolving organized breakdown background → Figures coding according to the groupings → Hypothesis testing, corre- → Supposition testing, communication assessment to previous educations etc.

Reporting the analyzing process and the results

Classical, theoretical system, theoretical map or categories

Source: Elo & Kynga (2007)

The above diagram depicts the three-phase process of content analysis: either inductive or deductive. The preparation, organizing and resulting phases seemed the same for either the

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inductive or deductive analysis from the beginning of the diagram but there is a divergence point getting to the latter end of the figure. The study was engrossed in the inductive aspect.

6.2.1 Discussion of the Three Stage Process of the Analysis

Specifically, inductive content analysis was employed for the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the study. Figure 12 gives a diagrammatic presentation of the three stages mentioned in the analytical process. While organizing the data in Chapter Five the following process was followed: open coding, creating categories and abstraction. At the open coding stage the text was thoroughly read under each section of the theses. After reading, rhetorical devices were highlighted and underlined. Those that were identified as hedges were placed under labels of categories in the first set of tables, which indicates the types of hedges found in the postgraduate theses. This represented the coding sheet.

A second set of tables, which depict the frequency of the categorization of hedges was also created. The categories were created according to the ascending and descending order of the frequency table, similarities and differences in the variations were grouped, and a comparison between the data was given. The main reason for creating the classifications is to make available an appropriate means of describing the phenomenon of hedges and to increase the understanding and also to generate knowledge about hedging phenomenon. The abstraction stage of the analysis was when a percentile table was utilized which allowed for a vivid description of the occurrence of hedges in the various sections of the theses to be given. It was deemed imperative to organise a separate analysis of the types, kinds and variation of hedging devices appropriated in each section by postgraduate students across disciplines from the School of Languages, the School Arts and the School Performing Arts of a Ghanaian University's College of Humanities to ensure that the analysis follows the categorization from the Centre for English Learning and Professional Development.

6.3 Thematic Content Analysis

Braun, et.al's (2015) thematic content analysis, which presents a six-phase recursive process, was also considered to consolidate the content analysis of Polit & Beck (2004), Guthrie et al. (2004) and Elo et.al (2007) as was mentioned in the previous section. The following are the recursive stages of the process:

1. The researcher acquaints his/herself with the data: this is the stage where rhetorical devices that the students have used to hedge their claims were careful studied and considered for the study.

2. The researcher generates initial codes: words and phrases that constituted hedges were highlighted and a matrix was created for the significant features of the theses that were pertinent to answering the research questions.

3. The researcher Searches for themes: types and forms of hedging found in the data were examined and placed under the categorisation of nine headings which represents each theme. It then became easy for broader patterns of meaning of the text to come to light.

4. The researcher then evaluates the themes: potential themes that determine if the data communicated a convincing story that answers the research questions was created.

5. The researcher defines and names themes: detailed analysis of each theme from the data that was collected was given.

6. The researcher finally produces a report: there was an interlaced analytic narrative and data segments, which related the analysis to existing literature on hedging.

Figure 13: Recursive Six-Phase Process of Thematic Content Analysis
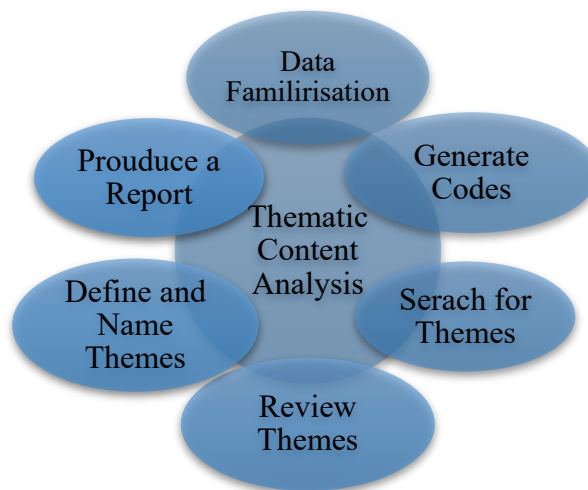
Source: Braun et.al (2015)

Figure 13 depicts the six-phase recursive content analysis adapted from Braun et.al (2015) and was used in the presentation, analysis and discussion of the study.

One major advantage associated with content analysis is its modest nature. A researcher can, for instance, observe a phenomenon without being observed. Fraenkel & Wallen (2000) assert that "it helps to avoid the dilemma of the observer's paradox". This is particularly true in the sense that the contents being analyzed are not influenced by the presence of the researcher. For instance, in the current study, the rhetorical devices known as hedges that were identified and collected from postgraduate theses was done without any hindrance

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from external or internal factors. One disadvantage of using content analysis, according to Hoskins & Mariano (2004:90), is "the absence of simple guidelines for data analysis: each inquiry is distinctive, and the results depend on the skills, insights, analytic abilities and style of the researcher". The above-mentioned disadvantage was evident during the analytical stage of the study, so the researcher's' insight in the application of hedging in the academic discourse was applied to carry out the analysis of the study.

6.4.0 Categorization, Analysis, Discussion of Hedges: "Findings and Discussion" Section of Postgraduate Theses

Table 30 from Chapter Five gives a clear indication and a fair idea of the types and variations of hedges used in postgraduates' theses from the seven disciplines (English Language, Linguistics, Modern Languages, Philosophy/Classics, Music, The Study of Religions and Theatre Arts) at the "findings and discussions" section from the Schools of Languages, Arts and Performing Arts. The presence of rhetorical devices known as hedges or cautious language in the "Findings /Discussions" section of the theses demonstrates that the seven disciplines that were the focus of the study employed kinds of hedging. The numbers of hedges identified were **147,** which constituted **36.6%** of hedges employed by postgraduate students at the "Findings/ Discussions" sections across disciplines. Although there was an indication in the use of hedges by all of the disciplines, there exists differences and similarities in the appropriation of hedges by each discipline. The categorization of hedges followed the principles set by the Centre for English Learning and Professional Development that scholars follow when categorizing hedges. Notable among the scholars are Salager-Mayer (1994) and Al-Rashady (2012).

6.4.1 Modal Auxiliary Verbs

Mukundan (2011) states that modal auxiliary verbs are significant rhetorical devices that aid writers to facilitate discussions and help to protect them against disagreeable claims. The current study provided an indication of the employment of modal auxiliary verbs by postgraduate students for hedging across disciplines. Table 30 in Chapter Five depicts that postgraduate students employed kinds of modal auxiliary verbs in their write ups. The appropriation of modal verbs enable students to maintain a cordial relationship between themselves and their readers. This relationship, according to Hyland (2001:56), is created through hedges, which are an important means of both supporting writers' positions and building the writer-reader relationship. Although postgraduate students appropriated modal auxiliary

verbs in the "Findings and the Discussions" sections of their theses, there seemed to be similarities in the types of hedges and differences in the number of hedges employed as well.

Similarities in the types were evident where almost all the seven disciplines employed the same kinds of modals like: ***can, would, should, could*** and ***may*** in their submissions. This trend probably occurred because the abovementioned modal auxiliary verbs are rhetorical devices that the students can easily relate to as hedging devices. As postgraduate students might have been exposed to the usage of these modal verbs during their formatives period in schooling and might have had much exposure on the use of modal auxiliaries through their grammar lessons. As Yule (1999) puts it, students are taught to use modals to express what is possible, permitted and necessitated during their grammar lessons. The implication is that postgraduate students may have selected those modal auxiliaries spontaneously. Omer (2016) made a similar observation of Kurdish students' knowledge and usage of modal auxiliary verbs as being limited to modals such as ***will, may, might*** and ***can.***

 One noticeable occurrence in the appropriation of modal auxiliary verbs by postgraduate students was the repetition of the same hedges such as ***can*** and ***could*** across disciplines. For instance, English Language students repeated the use of ***can*** about 20 times. Mukundan (2011) attributes the repetitive use of modals like ***can*** to the complex nature of items of modality in academic writing. She continues that the complexities in the use of items of modalities creates a sort of barrier to non-native speakers in using modals in an effective way in academic writing as these modal auxiliaries have semantic functions and can assume various forms of modality. Take "could" as an example; it may be used to indicate ability in the past and a hypothetical idea in the future. An example of *ability* in the past is: "when BioEsi was a child, she could speak French fluently"; and a *hypothetical idea*: "when Dabasu visits Nigeria, she could visit us, if she wants want to".

Omer (2016) also espouse that modal auxiliaries can sometimes be challenging for L2 students during academic writing, since the main forms of modal auxiliaries are "***can", "could", "may", "would" and "might***". Each of these forms has a variety of functions and meanings such as ability, reassurance, requesting, probability and controlling, which writers must learn to use appropriately. Omer continued that Kurdish students could highly appropriate hedging devices like Modal auxiliary verbs such as, ***will, may, might, can",*** although Adverbs, Probability adjectives, Lexical verbs and Compound hedges are also prevalent

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hedging devices. The repetition of the same type of hedges tends to consequently indicate lack of exposure to other rhetorical device. Although postgraduate students might have been exposed to modal auxiliary verbs, it appears they lack the effective appropriation of these verbs; hence, the repetitive nature of usage as was envisaged in the current study.

The differences in the appropriation of Auxiliary modal verbs by postgraduate students was envisaged across the seven disciplines. For example, English Language, Linguistics, Modern Languages and The Study of Religions recorded **4** hedging devices each out of the **30** hedging devices that were employed by postgraduate students. This is followed by Philosophy/Classics **5**, Music **6** and Theatre Arts **3**. Music therefore scored the highest and Theatre Arts recorded the least. From the analysis, Music seemed to have employed the highest appropriation of hedging. Postgraduate students across the seven disciplines happened to use modal auxiliaries to hedge most in the "Findings/ Discussion" sections of their theses than other rhetorical sections. Table 32 in Chapter Five indicates that the percentage of the appropriation of modal auxiliary verbs in the "Findings and Discussions" section of postgraduate theses across disciplines is **20.4%.** This figure is the highest amongst the three rhetorical sections that were considered for the study. This observation confirms Hyland (1999), Vartalla (2001), Hajanto (2006) and Demir (2018) assertion that the appropriation of modal auxiliary verbs ranks highest in hedging by writers.

6.4.2 Lexical Verbs

Types and variations of lexical verbs employed by postgraduate students in their theses in the "Findings and Discussions" sections have been depicted in Table 30 in Chapter Five. There were perceptible differences and similarities in the appropriation of lexical verbs. The discrepancy was envisaged as disciplines like Linguistics and Philosophy/Classics seemed not to have recorded any type of lexical verb. This phenomenon implied that postgraduate students from the aforementioned disciplines are either not privy to the usage of such hedging devices or they did not deem it necessary to hedge their claims in that section of their theses. Omer (2016) confirms this occurrence when a study she conducted on Kurdish students revealed that the students did not appropriate lexical verbs for hedging ,because they might not have been exposed to its usage for hedging in academic writing. The findings, however, contradicts Varttala's (2001) study that found student writers, especially economic students, employed the highest form of lexical verbs to hedge as opposed to others. An obvious similarity is that disciplines like English Language, Modern Languages, Music, and

The Study of Religions all employed the same types of hedge: *tends, seems,* and *seem* repetitively in their write up. This happening could be as a result of three reasons first is lack of exposure to kinds and types of lexical verbs. Second is laying emphasis on the discussions and third is lack of knowledge of appropriation of other types of hedges for suitability of the rationale for hedging.

Despite the similarities, Theatre Arts made use of the verb **"sought",** which none of the disciplines recorded. This uniqueness might be a result of intensive reading by Theatre Arts students. Table 31 gives the differences in frequency as Linguistics and Philosophy/Classics **0** entries. Modern Languages, Music, The Study of Religions and Theatre Art **2** each. English Language recorded **6,** making it the discipline that appropriated the highest lexical verbs in the "Findings / Discussion" sections of postgraduate theses out of **12** items that were recorded. The highest employment of lexical hedges by postgraduate English students confirms Ekco's (2009) claim that English discipline is likely to hedge using lexical verbs depending on the nature of the title of the thesis and not the characteristics of the writer. Thus, it could be deciphered from Ecko's assertion that the title of a study in an English discipline determines the frequency of Lexical verbs that would be employed and not the characteristics of the discipline. Table 32 in Chapter Five indicates that the percentage of lexical verbs that were appropriated in the Findings / Discussions sections of postgraduate these across disciplines is **8.9%**out of an overall total of **147** hedges were identified.

6.4.3 Adverbs

Adverbs remain a type of rhetorical devices that writers employ to show caution or soften the claims of their proposition. Table 30 illustrates the types and variation of adverbs that postgraduate students employed as hedges in their write up. Almost every discipline recorded an appropriation of an adverb as a hedge except Modern languages. The Study of Religions recorded the highest entry followed by Music and English Language. Theatre Arts, Philosophy /Classics and Linguistics recorded the least. The common appropriation of Adverbs by almost all of the seven disciplines is as a result of the basic component of meaning that adverbs give rather than the syntactic property in meaning they give. A common trend in usage was the appropriation of the adverb **"mostly"** by the disciplines. Vartalla (2001) confirmed such a situation in a study where all the disciplines he researched employed adverbs to hedge because of a straightforward constituent that adverbs have for hedging.

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On the other hand, Modern languages students' inability to appropriate adverbs to hedge could suggest that they did not deem it necessary to detach themselves from their claims at that instance for fear that the intended meaning of their claims might be misrepresented. This finding corroborates Haufiku (2016) assertion that writers zero preference for tentative adjectives and adverbs perhaps could meant that they were not proficient with the application of tentative adjectives and adverbs to show their full commitments or even to detached themselves from their claims for fear of misrepresenting the envisioned meanings of their claims.

The frequency of usage of adverbs as a hedge from Table 32 indicates that Modern Languages recorded **0**. The Study of Religions recorded **5.** Music recorded **3** while English Language recorded **2** and Philosophy / Classics, Linguistic and Theatre Arts recorded **1**, respectively. The total number of adverbs employed by postgraduate students were **12** out of the **147** hedges identified in the rhetorical section of the theses across disciplines. The percentage of adverbs employed across discipline is **5.4 %.**

6.4.4 Probability Adjectives

Probability adjectives are types of hedges which are also referred to as shields by some scholars like Prince et al. (1982). According to Table 30 in Chapter Five, postgraduate students employed kinds and variations of Probability adjectives in the making of their claims in the findings/discussion sections of their theses. There were however, some disparities. For instance, English Language did not record any entry for Probability adjectives but the other disciplines did. The Study of Religions recorded the highest followed by Theatre Arts, Modern Language and Philosophy/ Classics. Table 32 gives us the frequency of **0, 6, 5, 2, 2, 1, 1,** respectively. The total number of Probability adjectives that were collected from the section is **18,** which constitutes **12.2%.** The current study did not record Probability Adjectives as the highest forms of hedging devices in the rhetorical sections of postgraduate thesis but in a study on Hedging in Scientific and Social Texts, Elheky (2018) revealed that the most employed forms of hedging devices in the rhetorical sections were probability Adjectives. It implies that we cannot depend on one study to generalise on either the highest or lowest occurrence of hedging phenomenon in academic writing.

6.4.5 If Clauses

"If clauses" are conditional clauses that are used in grammar to modify the main clause. Although Crompton (1997) disapproves of its usage as a rhetorical device for hedging, other

scholars like Hyland (1999) agree that "if clauses" render hypothetical meaning, thus they imply uncertainty and play a pivotal role as hedges as they invoke a potential barrier in softening of claims made. Table 30 depicts the types and variations of "If clauses" used as hedges by postgraduate students in the Findings/Discussions sections of their theses. There are notable distinctions in the usage of "If Clauses" by the students. For instance, disciplines like Linguistics, Modern Languages and The Study of Religions did not employ any form of "If clause" to hedge their claims; but both Theatre Arts and Philosophy /Classics recorded the highest entry followed by Music, English Language and Linguistics. A worth noting occurrence is that none of the disciplines employed the same type of "If Clause". Each discipline differs from the other. The frequency distribution from Table 32 indicates that Theatre Arts and Philosophy/ Classics recorded **4** each, while Music and English Language recorded **3** each and linguistic **1**. This gives us an aggregate of **15** and a percentage of **10.2%.**

6.4.6 Compound Hedges

Compound hedges are types of phrases that comprise several hedges. They are sometimes referred to as double, treble hedges or quadruple hedges and could either comprise of Modal auxiliary with Lexical verbs and Adverbs or Adjectives. Examples are: ***"possibility needs to be", "would likely given"*** and ***"have tended to be like".*** Five disciplines, namely: Music, English Language, Theatre Arts, The Study of Religions, and Philosophy/Classics, employed kinds and variations of compound hedges in the making of their proposition in the finding and discussion sections of their theses. However, two disciplines, namely Linguistics and Modern Languages, did not record any type and frequency of hedges. Notable amongst them, according to Table 31, is that: Theatre Arts recorded the highest number of compound hedges, followed by Music, Philosophy/ Classics and English. A worth mentioning observation is the uniqueness in the appropriation of these Compound hedges, no discipline repeated any that another discipline had used. Table 32 gives as the frequency distribution as follows: Linguistics and Modern languages **0** each, Music **6,** Theatre Arts **9,** The Study of Religions **4,** Philosophy/Classics **5** and English **2** out of a total of **26** compound hedges employed across disciplines. The percentage of the appropriation of "compound hedges" according to Table 33 in Chapter Five, is **17.6%** of the total hedge of **147.**

6.4.8 Approximators of Degree

Approximators of degree are types of hedges used to soften the strong opinion behind a proposition. Prince et al. (1982) refers to them as "adaptors" or "rounders" of quantity degree or frequency" or time that express tentativeness. Table 30 indicates that postgraduate students employed very minimal types and variations of Approximators of degree in their write ups. Five disciplines: English Language Linguistic, Modern Languages, Philosophy/ Classics and The Study of Religions did not employ any form of Approximators of degree in their write ups. Only two disciplines - Music and Theatre Arts - employed minimal numbers of Approximators of degree in their claims. Table 31 in Chapter Five gives a frequency of **0:0:0:0:0** and **1:1,** respectively, out of **2** entries while Table 32 gives the percentage of the approximators of degree as **1.3%** out of **147** hedges. Perhaps there was minimal appropriation of Approximators of degree by postgraduate students since there appeared to be no need of presenting exact irrelevant figures or unavailable figures in their theses, as the tenets of the appropriations of Approximators of degree prescribe, according to Vertalla (2001).

6.4.9 Nouns

Nouns are used by writers to show their description of a situation. This helps writers to show their deference towards their propositions. Postgraduate students from the seven disciplines from a Ghanaian University employed an appreciable number of nouns to hedge in their propositions. Theatre Arts recorded the highest use of Nouns followed by The Study of Religions and Philosophy/Classics who recorded the same frequency of hedges while Music recorded the least. Table 31 in Chapter Five gives us the frequency as **0:0:0:9:4:4:3** out of a total of **20** nouns. Again, Table 32 gives us a percentage of **13.6%** out of **147** hedges.

Figure 14: Hierarchical Presentation of the Types of Hedges
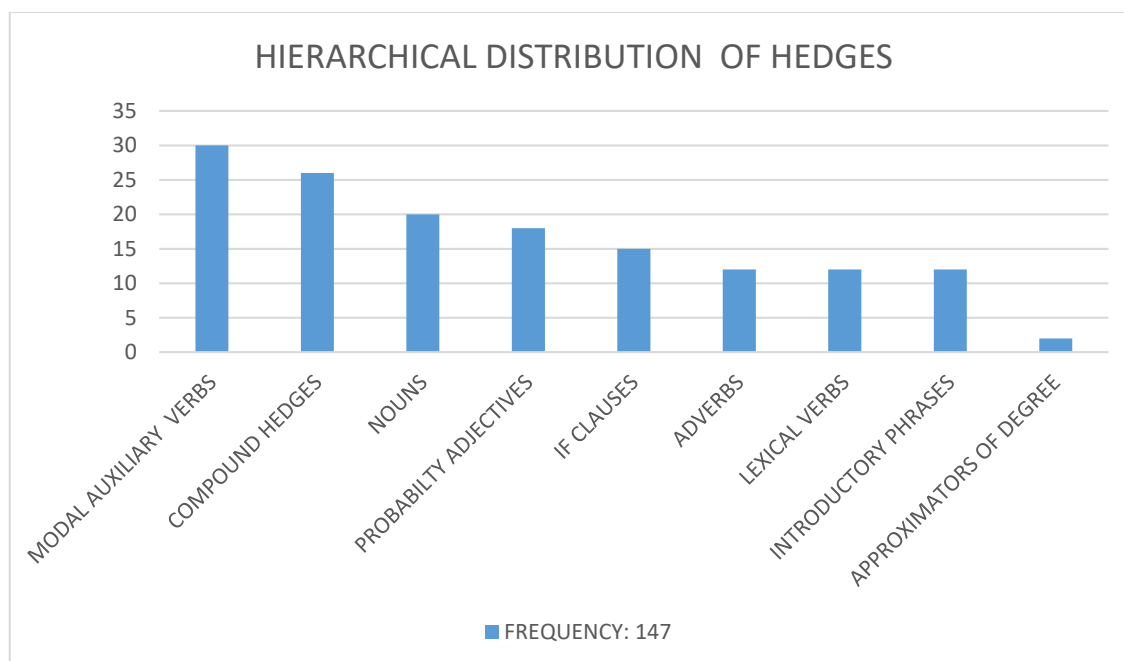
Source: Field Data, (2019)

Figure 14 above depicts a hierarchical distribution and an accompanying frequency distribution of the types of hedges found across disciplines in the "Findings / Discussions" sections of postgraduate theses from the College of Humanities from a Ghanaian University. From the figure, a total of **147** hedges were realised. Modal auxiliaries were the highest employed, followed by Compound hedges, Nouns, Probability adjectives and If clauses, respectively; while Adverbs, Lexical verbs and Introductory phrases had the same frequency and Approximators of degree had the least frequency.

Figure 15: Disciplinary Hierarchy

HIERACHICAL DISCIPLINARY VARIATION

(Bar chart showing DISTRIBUTION:147)
- THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS: 32
- THEATER ARTS: 32
- MUSIC: 28
- PHILOSOPHY/CLASSIC: 24
- ENGLISH LANGUAGE: 15
- MODERN LANGAUGES: 9
- LINGUISTICS: 7
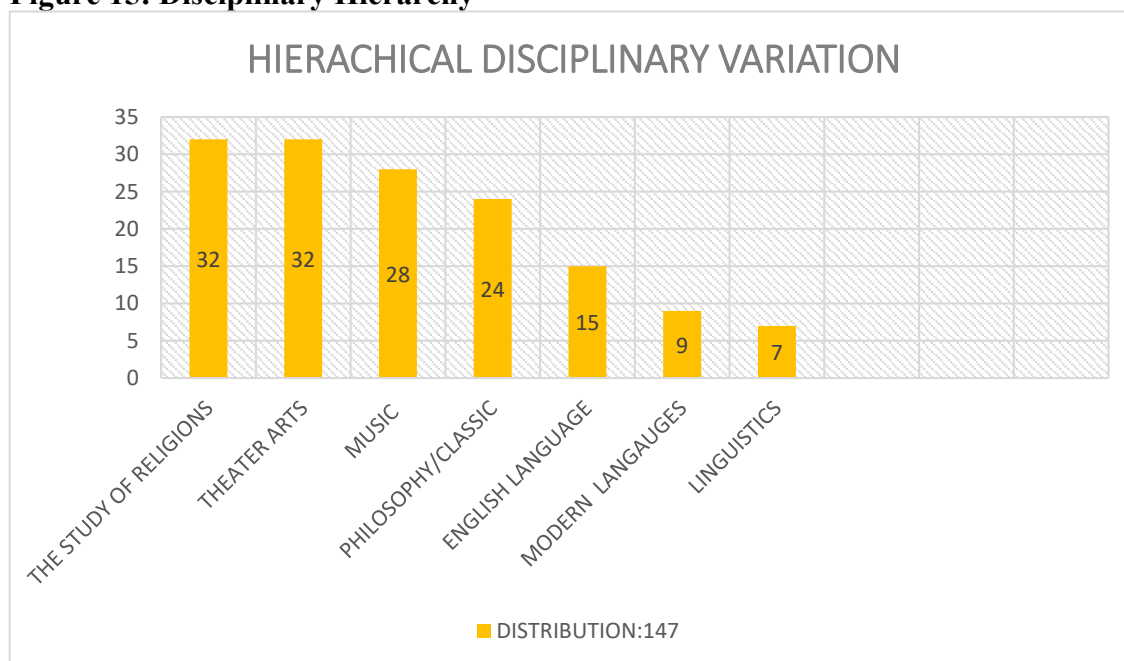
Source: Field Data, (2019)

Figure 15 depicts the hierarchical frequency distribution of disciplinary variation of the appropriation of the types and kinds of hedges at the "Findings / Discussions" sections of postgraduate theses across disciplines in the School of Languages, the School of Arts and the School of Performing Arts from a Ghanaian University. There is a clear indication that the disciplines did not hedge equally in the rhetorical sections. For instance, Theatre Arts and The Study of Religions coincidentally hedged equally; followed by Music, Philosophy/ Classics, English Language, Modern Languages and Linguistics, respectively.

6.4.10 Interpretation and Discussion of the Analysis of the Findings and Discussions of Rhetorical Sections of the Postgraduate Theses

The variations and types of hedges identified and collected from the "Findings / Discussions" sections indicate the employment of rhetorical devices known as hedges or cautious language in the making of claims by postgraduate students across disciplines. A total of **147** types of hedges which follows categorization from the Center for English Learning and Professional Development were collected from the corpus. Invariably the number of hedges that were discovered in the "Findings / Discussions" section of postgraduate theses across the seven disciplines did not seem encouraging. An argument can be made that postgraduate students might not have been exposed to kinds of rhetorical devices that they can use to

hedge appropriately in academic writing. Atmaca's (2016) study corroborates the aforementioned where finding from a study confirms that hedges tend to be of great importance for academic writing and essential for an effective communication and academic success but students happen to hedge not encouragingly. Hence, Atmaca (2016) entreats English Language teachers and lecturers to provide written work that varies both in the kinds and types of hedging usage, which will reveal the real purpose of hedging to the students. The purpose of the exercise is to enable students to refer correctly to writing conventions of hedging effectively and appropriately. In reiterating the need for students to be efficient in the appropriation of hedging, Geherdan (2019) argues that hedging leaves room for other voices or research perspectives which allow other additions to the dialogue and enable the proposition to be refined or interpreted or challenged by audience who may or may not come up with new ideas based on the claims.

Modal auxiliaries had the highest frequency of occurrence as shown by Table 32 in Chapter Five. It implies that Modal auxiliary verbs are appropriated by the students more than the other hedge types. This result confirms findings by Hyland (1994), Vertalla (2001), Akabas (2012) and Halabizazs (2014) that Modal auxiliary verbs are the rhetorical devices that are extensively and ordinarily used by writers to soften the tone of their propositions, especially for student writers. Although Omer (2016) made a similar observation, she asserts that the highest appropriation of Modal auxiliary verbs by students indicate their inability to recognize and appropriate other kinds and types of hedges effectively.

Compound hedges were the second highest type of hedges that much focus was placed on by the students. Compound hedges thus appear to be the next most commonly used type of hedges employed by the students to show tentativeness. The phenomenon of appropriating Compound hedges across disciplines could be as a result of the fact that Compound hedges are a combination of two or more hedging devices, where Auxiliary verbs play a very important role in the combinations. As Salager-Meyer (1994:7) puts it, Compound hedges comprise a "strings of hedges". The order of appropriation is followed by Nouns, Probability adjectives and If clauses. These hedging devices are fairly often used by students to show commitment levels towards their claims. Adverbs and Introductory phrases were satisfactorily employed by the students to soften their claims, with Approximators of degree being the least of hedging devices appropriated by the students. Approximators are mostly associated with the quantifiable information, thus the situation where there was an almost no

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appropriating of Approximators across disciplines, consequently, reveals that not much of quantifying information were presented in the "Findings / Discussions" sections of post-graduate theses. This finding confirms Vartalla's (2001:218) assertion that "Approximators of degree are commonly linked to quantification".

There was an indication of variations across disciplines in the employment of hedges. The disciplines that were considered for the study fall within a disciplinary categorization re-ferred to as "soft sciences" although most of the studies on hedges across disciplines con-sidered both the "hard and soft sciences". Some notable studies that combine both the hard and soft sciences are Vartalla (2001), Hyland (2004), Yen (2007), Musa (2014) and Hariri and Zarere (2015). But the current study focused only on the soft sciences in order to identify the distinctiveness in the appropriation of hedging devices in the soft science disciplines.

From figure **15** there was an indication of a significant variation across the disciplines alt-hough the figure shows that two disciplines, namely The Study of Religions and Theatre Arts coincidentally employed the same number of hedges: **32**, respectively, out of the total count of **147** hedging devices. This figure represents **21.8%.** Thus, it could be said that The Study of Religions and Theatre Arts postgraduates employed the highest form of hedges. This is probably because their write ups were a bit lengthier. Again, discussions in their theses might have been focused on a more sensitive area of discourse. Consequently, there was a considerable tentativeness in their reportage as there was the possibility of a future change in the submission as the students did not want to sound too forward and strong in the making of their claims.

Following the two disciplines are Music **28**, Philosophy/Classics **24,** English Language**15,** Modern Languages **9** with Linguistics having the least hedging devices. The differences in the appropriation of hedging across disciplines are as a result of the fact that kinds of disci-plines do not produce the same length of write ups. Again, theses title influences writers' ability of appropriation of hedges. For instance, some topics can be more sensitive while others can be less delicate or very concrete. The delicate topics are often hedged heavily while the technical ones hedged slightly. However, there cannot be a generalization that the disciplines that hedge slightly at the Findings / Discussions" sections the in the current study are those disciplines that hedge slightly across all studies on hedging in disciplinary varia-tion; and vice versa for the disciplines that hedged heavily. For instance, Halabizaz's (2014) inter-disciplinary variations of the employment of hedges across disciplines in the hard and

soft sciences in the abstract of Masters' theses indicated that English language, which falls within the soft sciences category, hedged in an advanced manner more than the other disciplines.

The use of hedges in the "Findings /Discussions" section in postgraduate degrees across disciplines, however, show different degrees and frequencies of appropriation in the College of Humanities from a Ghanaian University.

6.4.7 Introductory Phrases

Introductory phrases are another type of rhetorical devices that writers can use to show caution in the making of their claims. The use of Introductory phrases gives writers a form of reservation. This reservation does not imply that writers do not believe in their claims, but it prevents writers from sounding like they are imposing their findings on their audience. Some examples of introductory phrases are: "**we *are of the view that", "it could easily be seen that*** " and ***"This thesis believes that".*** From Table 30 there is an indication of a fairly employment of Introductory Phrases across the seven disciplines. Three of the disciplines, namely English language, Linguistics and Modern Languages, did not record the use of introductory phrases. However, The Study of Religions recorded the highest, followed by Theatre Arts, Philosophy/Classics and Music. The frequency Table 31 in Chapter Five reveals the figures, respectively, as follows: **0:0:0:3:2:4:3** out of the total figure of **12** Introductory phrases. Again, Table 32 in Chapter Five shows a percentage of **8.1%** Introductory phrases out of 147 hedges.

6.5.0 Categorization, Analysis and Discussion of Hedges in the "Analysis/ Interpretation" Sections of Postgraduate Theses

Postgraduate students from the Schools of Languages, Arts and Performing Arts appropriated kinds and variations of hedges in their theses in the "analysis and interpretation" section from the seven disciplines (English Language, Linguistics, Modern Languages, Philosophy/Classics, Music, The Study of Religion and Theatre Arts). Table **34** in Chapter Five gives a clear demonstration of the appropriation of hedges with a total of **112** hedges, which represents **27.8%** of the total hedge count appropriated by the students from the seven disciples. There existed a remarkable variances and resemblances in the appropriation of hedges by each of the disciplines. For the categorization of hedges (See 6.4.0 on page 155)

6.5.1 Modal Auxiliary Verbs

Each of the seven disciplines employed a type of modal auxiliary verb for hedging across disciplines. Table **34** in Chapter Five depicts the similarities and differences. The similarities correspond with what pertained in the "Findings/ Discussions" section (See 6.4.1 on page 160) Scholars like Tahririan (2009), Kaledeita (2010), Abdi (2012), Dudley (2012) and Yazi and Demair (2016) have corroborated the occurrence. The differences in the appropriation of auxiliary modal verbs are distinct from the situation in the "Findings / Discussions" section. (See **6.4.1 on page 160**) In this section Philosophy/Classics recorded the highest entry of **7** Modals auxiliary verbs, which is followed by Music and The Study of Religions that recorded **5** each. Theatre Arts and Linguistics recorded **4** each this is followed by Modern languages with **3** and English Language with the least entry of **2.** The total number of Modal auxiliaries recorded was **30**. The differences in this section are distinct from the first section (See **6.4.1 on page 160**). Philosophy/Classics appeared to have employed the highest appropriation of hedging because, probably, the issues that were discussed in the theses by postgraduate students might be lengthier in text than what was analysed by the other disciplines.

It was noted that although students most highly appropriate modal auxiliary verbs to hedge their claims, they used less Modal auxiliary verbs to hedge in the "Interpretation / Analysis" sections as compared to the "Findings / Discussions" section as was mentioned in **6.4.1.** This is probably because the write up in the Interpretation/ Analysis sections of the theses were shorter. This observation confirms Hyland (1999), Vartalla (2001) and Hardjanto (2016) who posit that writers are likely to hedge less in the Interpretation / Analysis sections since much discussion does not happen in such sections of the write up.

Table **36** in Chapter Five indicates that the percentage of the appropriation of Modal auxiliary verbs in the Interpretation/Analysis sections of postgraduate theses across disciplines is **26.8%**. This percentage is less than what was recorded in section **6.4.1.**

6.5.2 Lexical Verbs

It is evident from Table **34** in Chapter Five that lexical verbs are appropriated by postgraduate students in different degrees of variations and types. There was perceptible disparity in usage. Table **35** displays the discrepancies as follows: Linguistics did not employ any form of lexical verbs while four disciplines, namely: Modern Languages, Philosophy/Classics,

Music and The Study of Religions employed **1** each. This phenomenon implies that post-graduate students from the aforementioned disciplines are either not privy to the usage of such hedging devices or they did not deem it necessary to hedge their claims in that section of their thesis. Theatre Arts employed **2** while English Language students employed **4** and ended up being the highest recorded. The findings in this section is in consonance with section (**6.4.2**) The highest employment of Lexical verbs by postgraduate English students confirms Ekco's (2009) assertion that English Language discipline is likely to hedge more using lexical verbs depending on the nature of the title of the thesis and not the nature of the write up. The total number of hedges recorded at the "Interpretation / Analysis" section was **10** devices. This constituted **8.9%** of the total rhetorical devices collected at this section, according to Table **36** in Chapter Five.

6.5. 3 Adverbs

Adverbs, which forms part of the word classes and have a syntactic function in grammar, is also a type of rhetorical device that writers employ to show caution in the making of their propositions. The seven disciplines show different tendencies for hedging using adverbs. Table **34** in Chapter Five illustrates the types and variations of adverbs that postgraduate students employed as hedges in their write ups. Although adverbs function syntactically in grammar, postgraduate students have a minimal appropriation of adverbs for hedging. For instance, English Language and Philosophy/Classics disciplines did not record any type of adverbs. However, Linguistics, Music, The Study of Religions and Theatre Arts recorded **1** each while Modern Languages recorded **2,** which happened to be the highest usage. Notably, there was not any trend of repetition of the types of adverbs used by the students. The total number of adverbs employed by postgraduate students in the "interpretation and analysis" sections was **6** out of the **112** hedges identified in the section of the theses across disciplines. The percentage of adverbs employed was **5.4%.** Comparatively, postgraduate students employed many more adverbs in **6.4.3** than this section, probably because, as Hariri and Zarere (2016:34) posits, "discussion sections of write ups generally contains more hedging forms than all the other sections".

6.5.4 Probability Adjectives

There is variations in the use of types and kinds of Probability adjectives by postgraduate students across the seven disciplines. Probability adjectives are also referred to as shields by some scholars (Prince et al., 1982). Table **34** shows some disparities in the appropriation

of   hedging devices. For instance, English Language, Linguistics, Modern Languages and Theatre Arts did not record any usage. The Study of Religions and Music recorded **1** each while Philosophy/Classics recorded the highest, which is **5**. Table 35 gives us the frequency as **0:0:0: 1:1:5,** respectively. The total number of Probability adjectives that were collected from the section is **7** out of a total of **112** hedges which were   realized. This constitutes **6.3%** of the hedges. The section recorded a reduction in the appropriation of Probability adjectives against what was realised in section (**6.4.4.**)

6.5.5 If Clauses

"If clauses" are conditional clauses used in grammar to modify main clauses. Some scholars disapprove of using If Clause to hedge (See 6.4.5 on page 164). If clauses invoke a potential barrier in softening of claims. Table 34 depicts the types and variations of   If Clauses used as hedges by postgraduate students in the Interpretation/ Analysis sections of their theses. However, there were some distinctions in usage. From table **35** in Chapter Five, disciplines like English Language, Linguistics, Modern Languages and Philosophy/ Classics did not employ any form of If Clauses to hedge. The Study of Religions employed **1** while Music and Theatre Arts recorded **3** each as the highest entry. A worth noting occurrence is that none of the disciplines employed the same type of If Clause. Each discipline differ from the others. The frequency distribution from Table 35 in Chapter Five indicates the frequency as: **0:0:0: 0:1:3:3** out of the total number of **112** collected. This frequency shows that only **7** rhetorical devices out of the **112** devices are If Clauses. The percentage of If Clauses, according to Table **36** in Chapter 5 is **6.3%.** This percentage is lower than that recorded in **6.4.5** of the current study. It, thus, imply that postgraduate students appropriated fewer If Clauses in this section than they did in section **6.4.5.** Lengthier composition of text might have occurred in section **6.4.5** than it happened in section **6.5.5.**

6.5.6 Compound Hedges

Compound hedges are types of phrases that comprise several hedges (See 6.4.5 on page 164). Table 35 in Chapter Five clearly depicts the types and variations of rhetorical devices that were employed as Compound hedges by postgraduate students in the Interpretation /Analysis sections of their theses. Disciplines like English Language and Linguistics did not record any form of Compound hedge in the making of claims. Theatre Arts recorded the highest of **8** devices followed by Philosophy/ Classics **6,** Music **5** and The Study of Religions **4**, and Modern Language recorded the least of **1.** A worth mentioning observation is the

uniqueness in the appropriation of Compound hedges across disciplines. It was envisaged that no discipline repeated any that another discipline used. Table 35 gives the frequency distribution as **0:0:1: 4:5:6:8** making an aggregate of **24** out of **112** hedges identified.

The percentage according to Table 36 is **21.4%.** This then appeared to be the next highest number of hedges employed by postgraduate students at the "Interpretation/ Analysis" sections of their theses, following Modal auxiliary verbs. This phenomenon is the same as was recorded in section (6.4.6). But one cannot conclude that both Findings / Discussions and Analysis /Interpretation sections of the postgraduate theses are hedged similarly. As there is an indication that Findings / Discussions is hedged most by writers. Gradu (2009) and Zanria (2016) confirm the phenomenon of highest hedging in the findings and discussions sections of write ups.

6.5.7 Introductory Phrases

Hyland (2004) refers to Introductory phrases as solidarity features of rhetorical devices. Introductory phrases are important types of phrases that writers can use to show caution or to hedge their claims. Hedging with introductory phrases give writers a form of reservation; not that they do not believe in their claims. But then it prevents them from sounding like they are imposing their finding on their audiences and also it allows them to gain support for their propositions. Some examples of introductory phrases are: ***"there might be an implication that"***, ***"it could appear that"*** and ***"This thesis believes that".*** From Table 34 in Chapter Five, there is an indication of a fair employment of Introductory phrases across the seven disciplines; three of the disciplines, namely: English Language, Linguistics, and Music did not record any form of Introductory phrases. However, The Study of Religions recorded the highest with **5** devices, followed by Philosophy/Classics **4** and Modern Languages **3**. Theatre Arts recorded the least with **2**. The total frequency from Table 35 reveals the figures, respectively, as **0:0:0:3:4:5:2** giving an aggregate of **14** out of the total figure of **112** hedging devices identified. The percentage, according to Table 36 is **12.5%,** making introductory phrases the third most appropriated hedging devices in the "Interpretation / Analysis" sections of postgraduate theses.

6.5.8 Approximators of Degree

Approximators of Degree are types of hedges that are used to soften the strong opinion behind a proposition. Prince et al. (1982) refers to them as "adaptors" or "rounders" of quan-

tity degree or frequency of time that express tentativeness. Table 34 indicates that postgraduate students employed very minimal types and variations of Approximators of Degree in their write ups. Five disciplines: English Language, Linguistic, Modern Languages, Music and Theatre Arts did not employ any form of Approximators of Degree in their write ups. Only two disciplines: Philosophy/Classics and The Study of Religions employed minimal numbers of Approximators of Degree in the making of their claims. Table 35 gives a frequency of **0:0:0: 0:0** and **2:1,** respectively, giving us an aggregate of **3** Approximators of Degrees out of **112** hedge entries with a percentage of **2.7 %**. It appears that Approximators of Degree are the least employed hedges by postgraduate students at the "Interpretation / Analysis" sections of their theses, probably because the subject matter of discussion in this rhetorical section did not contain many quantifying issues that require hedging using Approximators of Degree as Vartalla (2001) posits.

6.5.9 Nouns

Nouns are used by writers to show their description of a situation, and enable them to show their deference towards their propositions. Postgraduate students from the seven disciplines employed an appreciable number of Nouns for hedging in their propositions. English Language, Linguistics, and Modern Languages did not employ any form of Nouns to hedge their propositions. The zero preference for Nouns in hedging by the above disciplines might suggest that postgraduate students in that discipline are probably not well vested in the appropriation of such hedging technique. On the other hand, The Study of Religions recorded the highest of **6** rhetorical devices followed by Theater Arts **3,** Music **2** and Philosophy/Classics**1,** being the least. Table 35 gives us the frequency as **0:0:6: 3:2:1** which makes **12** out of a total of **112** hedges. The percentage, according to Table 36 is **9.8%.** The phenomenon of hedging in this section is less than the previous one in **6.4.9.**

Figure 16: The Hierarchical Frequency Distribution
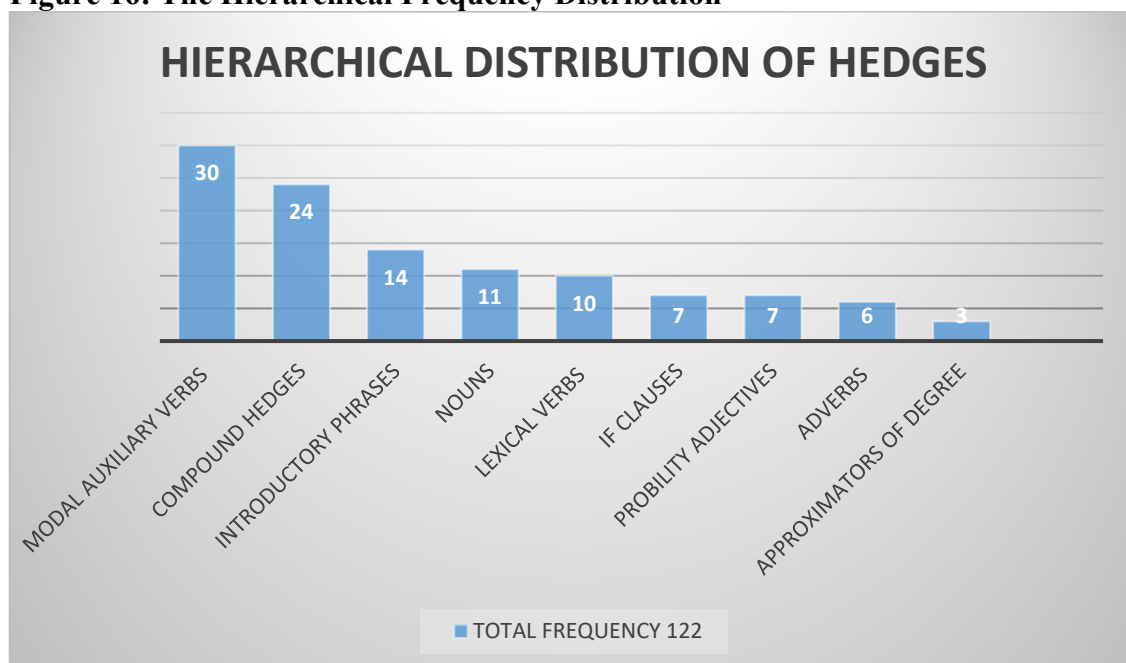
Source: Field Data (2019)

Figure 16 depicts the hierarchical representation of the appropriation of kinds, types and frequency of hedges by postgraduate students at the interpretation and analysis sections of their theses. From the structure it can be seen that a total of 112 of hedges were employed by postgraduate students (See 2.7 on page 47) for the categorization. Each kind of the nine categorizations was appropriated by postgraduate students. However, there was an indication of the preference of some over others. For instance, Modal auxiliary verbs were the most preferred type of hedges with a frequency of **30** entries out of the total of **112** hedges. This is followed by Compound hedges **24**, Introductory phrases **14,** Nouns, **12,** Lexical verbs **10,** If clause and Probability adjectives **7 e**ach, Adverbs **6,** and Approximators of degree, **3**. The disparities in the appropriation of hedges indicates the extent at which postgraduate students want to show their deference to the propositions made and how they would want to tone down the strong force imbedded in the making of their claim. Furthermore, to also indicate the   extent at which they probably would want to avoid opposition from the discourse community again to depict   the level of interpretation and criticism that can be allowed in their propositions.

Figure 17: Hierarchical Disciplinary Variations
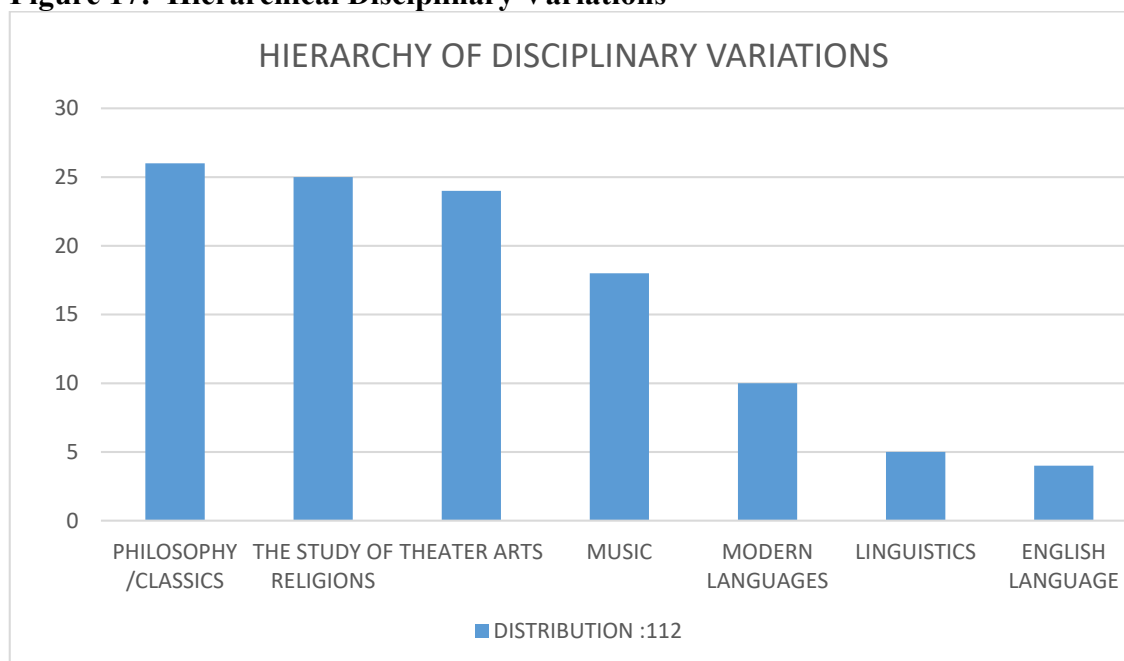
Source: Field Data, (2019)

Figure 17 depicts the disciplinary variation of the appropriation of hedges across disciplines. There is an indication that each of the disciplines appropriated hedging devices differently. This trend emanates from the point of view that each discipline has its own linguistic culture in terms of the appropriation of rhetorical devices known as hedges which is used to show tentativeness. Again, the nature of the study and the title informs the decision of the application of caution. Lastly, the length of the discussion also determines the extent of the application of hedging devices. From the figure it could be seen that Philosophy/Classics appropriated the highest form of hedging devices, followed by The Study of Religions, Theatre Arts, Music, Modern Languages, Linguistics and English Language.

6.5.10   Interpretation and Discussion of Hedges in the Interpretation/Analysis Sections.

After the data analysis, there is an indication that postgraduate students across disciplines in the Schools of Languages, Arts and Performing Arts of the College of Humanities in a Ghanaian University employed variations and types of rhetorical devices known as hedges or cautious language at the Interpretation/ Analysis sections of their theses. A total of **112** types of hedges were collected from the corpus. Out of the variations and forms of hedges, Modal auxiliary verbs had the highest frequency of occurrence. Modal auxiliaries ranged highest in section **6.4.10** section just as it happened in this section. Despite the similarities in the

two sections, the level of hedging was higher section in **6.4.10** than it occurred in this section. This occurrence then confirms the assertion by scholars like Hyland (1994), Vertalla (2001), Akabas (2012), Halabizaz (2014) and Demir (2018) that writers hedge highest using modal auxiliary verbs but generally hedges less in other rhetorical sections except the discussion section. Compound hedges are another type of hedges that postgraduate students are susceptible to using in Interpretation / Analysis sections. Compound hedges, thus, appear to be the next most common type of hedge that was employed by the students to show tentativeness as was depicted in **6.5.6.** The phenomenon of appropriating compound hedges across disciplines, according to Salager-Meyer (1984), is because they are a combination of two or more hedging devices where auxiliary verbs played a very important role in the combinations.

Other types of hedging devices used across disciplines are Introductory phrases, Nouns, Lexical verbs, If clauses, Probability adjectives, Adverbs and Approximators of degree. Introductory phrases and Nouns were satisfactorily employed by the students, with Approximators of degree being the least of the hedging devices appropriated by the students to tone down their commitment towards their claims. A Valid reason given by scholars for less appropriation of Approximators of degree (See 6.4.10 on page 168). This finding confirms Vartalla's (2001:218) assertion that "Approximators of Degree are commonly linked to quantification". Although, Approximators appeared to be the least employed hedging device in this section ,the findings in the current study contradicts Anh's (2018) results on the use of "hedging devices in applied linguistics academic discourse" which revealed that writers employed the highest form of Approximator in the making of their claims in their rhetorical sections.

There is an evidence of disciplinary variations in the employment of hedges. The discipline in the current study fall within the soft sciences although most of the studies on hedges across disciplines considered both the hard and soft sciences, the rational for the focus on the soft sciences only is to ascertain the uniqueness in the appropriation of hedging in soft science disciplines. From figure 17 there is an indication of a significant variation across the disciplines unlike the situation in section (6.4.10). The current section recorded a remarkable occurrence. Each discipline has a unique entry. To begin with, Philosophy/Classics have the highest entry of **26** hedging devices out of **112,** which gives us **23.2%.** This is followed by The Study of Religions **25** and **22.3%,** Theatre Arts **24** and **21.4%**, Music **18** and **16.1%,**

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Modern languages **10** and **8.9%**, Linguistics **5** and **4.5%,** and English Language **4** and **3.6%.**

The reasons for disparities and zero appropriation of hedging across disciplines is elaborated in section (**6.4.10**). To augment the elaboration, Kuatana (2011) believes that student writers are mostly exposed to only modal auxiliary verbs to the disregard of other hedging devices. However, there cannot be a generalization with regards to the present findings. For instance, Halabizaz's (2014) inter disciplinary variation of the employment of hedges across disciplines in the hard and soft sciences in the abstract of masters theses indicated that English language, which falls within the soft sciences category, hedged higher than the other disciplines. Halabizaz's (2014) finding contradicts the use of hedges in interpretation and analysis sections in postgraduate degrees across disciplines in the current study.

6.6.0 Categorization, Analysis and Discussion of Hedges in the "Conclusions/ Recommendations" Section

Postgraduate students across the seven disciplines were not uniformed in the practises of hedges which lessen the effect of their propositions. Table 38 in Chapter Five gives a clear indication and a fair idea of the types and variations of hedges that the students employed. A total of **145** hedges, which constituted **30.7%** of hedging devices across disciplines were identified in the students' theses. For categorization of hedges (See 2.7 on page 47) there were noticeable variances and resemblances in the use of types of hedges across disciplines.

6.6.1 Modal Auxiliary Verbs

Modal auxiliary verbs remain one of the most significant types of rhetorical devices used for hedging across disciplines in postgraduate writing. Hyland (2004) argues that the predominance of the appropriation of Modal auxiliaries in student's thesis is because the verbs are considered to be the prototypical hedging form that writers use to soften the degree of their commitment devoted towards their claims. The observation in the present study is confirmed by Mojica (2005) and Hajanto (2006) in a study which reveals that the use of Modal auxiliary verbs ranks highest in employment of hedges by writers (Clyne, 1987; Vassileva, 2001; Hyland, 1999; Vartalla, 2001). But it contradicts Nivales (2001) who states that students hedged more using modal auxiliary verbs in the introduction part of their write ups. Following in the direction of the first two sections (6.4.1 and 6.5.1), Modal auxiliary verbs were used the most in this section, and although the percentages (when compared) exposed that the current section (6.6.1) is not the most hedged. Prasithrathint (2016), in a study on

strategic hedging, confirms the current finding when it was noted that, despite the fact that Modal auxiliaries were prominent linguistics markers in the conclusion section, the section was not the most hedged as compared with the other rhetorical sections. However, Akabas (2012) in an earlier study concluded that Turkish writers appeared to have employed a greater number of hedges in their conclusion sections. This finding, according to Akabas, shows that, while writers were making a closure for their entire research, they [writers] preferred that their readers find possible means of interpreting and making an informative judgment on the claims rather than the information being imposed on them. In another study, Yagiz and Demir (2014) claimed that non-native writers possibly happened to hedge more in the conclusion sections of their theses than native writers. From the views of the scholars above, it can be argued that the motivation for higher percentages of hedging in a specific section of a paper, depends likely on the motivation of the writer and not necessarily on existing hedging conventions. Again, one cannot generalize that a particular rhetorical section of a paper is hedged highly at all times.

There seemed to be similarities in the types of hedges and differences in the number of hedges employed by postgraduate students in the making of their claims. Table 38 in Chapter Five projects the similarities, where almost all the seven disciplines employed modal auxiliaries like *can, would, should* and *could* in their submissions. Probably these auxiliary verbs are the rhetorical devices that the students can easily relate to as hedging devices.

Table **39** in Chapter Five helps to bring out the differences in the appropriation of modal Auxiliary verbs. Philosophy/Classics employed the highest of **10** devices, followed by Linguistics, Music, The Study of Religions and Theater Arts who employed **5** each, respectively. Modern Languages employed **4** devices and English Language employed the least at **1** device out of the total **30** Modal auxiliaries. Table **40** in Chapter Five indicates that the percentage of the appropriation of Modal auxiliary" verbs in the Conclusions /Recommendations sections of postgraduate theses across discipline is **24.4%.** Markedly, postgraduate students employed more Modal auxiliaries in their "Findings / Discussions" and the "Interpretation / Analysis" sections of their thesis more the other sections.

6.6.2 Lexical Verbs

Writers use Lexical verbs to modify their assertion and tone down any potential risk that their claims might bring. They believe that conveying their propositions appropriately will enhance collegial attitudes with readers (Holmes, 1990).

Table **38** depicts the types and variations of Lexical verbs employed by postgraduate students across disciplines with perceptible disparities. The discrepancy is envisaged as a discipline like Modern Languages did not employ any lexical verbs to hedge. Meanwhile Linguistics and Music employed **1** each; while Philosophy /Classics and the Study of Religions employed **4** each, Theatre Arts employed **3** and English Language employed **8** as the highest. This phenomenon implied that English Language postgraduate students across disciplines are more privy to the usage of lexical verbs. An obvious similarity across disciplines is the use of hedges like **"seem",** which was repeated amongst the disciplines. Hyland (1999) and Granda (2009) assert that "seem" is an extremely important lexical hedge, which signals a tentative assessment of referential information and convey collegial respect for readers and audience. Despite the similarities, there is a significant uniqueness where Philosophy/Classics students appropriated a lexical verb such as **"viewed",** which was not used by any discipline. It might happen that postgraduate students of Philosophy/Classics might have studied a little further on the realization of kinds of Lexical verbs as hedges thus they exhibited a uniqueness in appropriating the lexical verb *"viewed",* which none of the disciplines recorded or possibly they selected hypothetically.

Once again, English Language discipline employed the highest Lexical verbs just as it was recorded in the previous sections: **6.4.4** and **6.5.5**. This then corroborates Ekco's (2009) assertion that English disciplines are likely to hedge using Lexical verbs depending on the title of the thesis and not the nature of the writer ups. Table **40** in Chapter Five indicates that the total number of Lexical hedges at the Conclusions / Recommendations section was **21** with a percentage of **14.4%.**

6.6. 3 Adverbs

Adverbs remain a type of rhetorical devices that writers employ to show caution or to soften the claims of their proposition (Hariri & Zarere, 2016). Table 38 illustrates the types and variations of Adverbs that postgraduate students employed as hedges in their write ups. The appropriation of Adverbs by postgraduate students in the Conclusions/ Recommendations sections of their theses across disciplines is not encouraging as four disciplines (English Language, Modern Languages, Philosophy/Classics and Music) recorded **zero** entries of Adverbs. On the other hand, Theater Arts recorded the highest with **3** devices, followed by Linguistics **2** and The Study of Religions **1.** The total number of Adverbs employed by postgraduate students was **6** out of a total hedge of **145** identified in the rhetorical section

of the theses across disciplines. The percentage of Adverbs employed across disciplines is **4.4%:** the percentage corresponds with that of Lexical verbs mentioned early in **6.4.2**. The minimal preference of Adverbs by postgraduate student in the appropriation of the making of their claims could be because the students might not be well vested in the application of adverbs for hedging. Thus, they applied it with much caution in order to avoid distorting of their intended meaning, which might lead to the misconstruing of their proposition by their audiences/readers.

6.6.4 Probability Adjectives

Hinkle (2005) categorized Probability adjectives under epistemic hedges. Table 38 in Chapter Five shows that postgraduate students employed kinds and variations of Probability adjectives in the making of their claims in the Conclusions / Recommendations sections of their theses. However, there were some disproportions in the appropriation of these rhetorical devices. For instance, English Language did not record any entry for probability adjectives, but the other disciplines did. The non-preference of Probability adjectives by English Language could be suggested that there was no need for employing of Probability adjectives to hedge their claims or they might not have been exposed to the appropriation of Probability adjective to hedge their claims. As a result, the students desisted from employing them probably in order not to make mistakes that could cause them to commit errors. Haiku (2016) made a similar observation in his study on the examination of hedging devices used in academic discourse, where students desisted from using Probability adjectives because of uncertainty about its usage and fear of making mistakes in usage. Despite the failure of the English discipline to appropriate Probability adjectives to hedge, disciplines like Philosophy/Classics and Theater Arts recorded the highest of **4** each while Modern Languages and Music recorded **1** each, and Linguistic employed **2** out of the total number of Probability adjectives recorded **12** with a percentage of **8.4%,** according to Table 40. The percentage of Probability adjectives in this section is an improvement on what was appropriated in section **6.5.4.** But frequencies of the occurrences and percentages of the appropriation of Probability adjectives in section **6.4.4** surpasses the incident in both **6.5.4** and that of **6.6.4,** probably because since **6.4 4** is the section that hedged most, it is logical that the highest percentage of Probability adjectives were realized there. The purpose for formulating each rhetorical section might be the result for the disparities in the appropriation of Probability adjectives by the three sections.

6.6.5 If Clauses

If Clauses invoke potential barrier in softening claims and writers use them extensively to hedge their propositions. Also, if clauses are conditional clauses used in grammar to modify the main clause. Crompton (1997) disapproves of the use of If Clauses as a rhetorical device for hedging, but other scholars like Salager-Meyer (1998) agree that If Clauses render hypothetical meaning that implies uncertainty and they also play essential role as hedges. It envisaged in the current study that postgraduate students across disciplines employ types and variations of if causes in their write ups, Table 38 depicts the types and variations of If Clauses. It can be envisioned that there existed minimal use of If Clauses across disciplines.

The frequency from Table 39 shows that four disciplines (namely English Language, Linguistics, Modern Languages and Music) did not employ any form of If Clauses; however, Philosophy/ Classics recorded the highest entry of **5** followed by The Study of Religion **2** and Theater Arts 1.

It appears that the title of the theses in Philosophy/Classics and the nature of the discussions, analysis and conclusions enabled postgraduate students from that discipline to employ the use of If Clauses higher than the other disciplines. This is the second time Philosophy/Classics has employed the highest form of If Clauses in two rhetorical sections (**6.4.5** and **6.6.5**) while other disciplines did not record any in any of the sections.

The total number of If Clauses appropriated at the Conclusions / Recommendations sections of postgraduate's theses across disciplines are **8** out of **145,** which form **5.5%** of the total frequency. The percentage of If Clauses appears to suggest that postgraduate students might not have been exposed to the usage of If Clauses as a rhetorical tool for hedging. The percentages of If Clauses in the three sections are uneven. For instance, in this section, postgraduate students seemed to have appropriated fewer devices. Section **6.6.5** recorded a slightly higher percentage than the current section while section **6.4.5** recorded the highest percentage. Different motivations and purposes for each rhetorical section might have resulted in the differences in frequencies and percentages.

6.6.6 Compound Hedges

Compound hedges encompass strings of several hedges, where there usually is juxtaposing of the several hedges: "**It would seem somewhat unlikely", "it seems reasonable to assume".** Postgraduate students from each of the seven disciplines appropriated different levels of Compound hedges in the Conclusions / Recommendations section. For instance, six

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disciplines appropriated appreciable numbers of compound hedges while one discipline did not record any kind of compound hedge. Table 39 gives the frequency as follows: Linguistics **2,** Modern Languages **3,** Philosophy/Classics**7,** Music**2**, The Study of Religions **4,** Theatre Arts **3** and English Language **0.** A worth mentioning observation is the uniqueness in the appropriation of these types of hedges. No discipline repeated any that another discipline used.

The total count of compound hedges is **21** out of **145** with a percentage of **14.4%**. The percentage of compound hedges recorded in section **6.5.6** far outnumbers that which was observed and recorded in **6.4.6** and in the current section. The communicative purpose of each rhetorical section accounted for the differences in the appropriation of compound hedges. The highest appreciation of compound hedges of disciplines per rhetorical sections varied unlike other disciplines that maintained their highest level of the employment of a kind of hedges in two or more sections.

6.6.7 Introductory Phrases

Introductory phrases are other types of phrases that writers can use to show caution in the making of their claims. The use of the Introductory phrase gives writers a form of reservation: not that they do not believe in their claims but prevents writers from sounding like they are imposing their findings on their audience. Some examples of Introductory phrases are: ***"we are of the view that", "it could easily be seen that", "This thesis believes that".*** From Table 38 there is an indication of a fair employment of Introductory phrases across the seven disciplines. Two of the disciplines: English Language and Music did not employ any form of Introductory phrase however Linguistics employed **1,** Modern Languages **1,** The Study of Religions **2,** Theatre Arts **3,** and Philosophy/Classics **3**. The total figure for introductory phrases was **10** out of 145 with a percentage of **6.8%**. This section recorded the least percentage of compound hedges out of the three rhetorical sections.

6.6.8 Approximators of Degree

Table 38 in Chapter Five indicates that postgraduate students employed appreciable numbers of Approximators of Degree unlike the minimal type and variations that were recorded in sections **6.4.8** and **6.5.8.** Salager-Meyer (1997) states that Approximators of Degree are used to apply caution when the precise figures which are found in some studies are unrelated or inaccessible or when the information does not allow the researcher to be more precise. Perhaps the above proposition from Salager-Meyer could be the reason why postgraduate

students applied a minimal level of Approximators of degree in their proposition. Two disciplines, namely Theater Arts and Music, did not employ any form of Approximators of Degree in their theses. But other disciplines did. For instance, the Study of Religions employed the highest of **5** followed by Philosophy/Classics **4,** English Language **1,** Linguistics **1,** and Modern Language **1.** The total number of Approximators of Degree was **12** with a percentage of **8.3%**. Interestingly, this section recorded the highest percentage of Approximators of Degree amongst the three rhetorical sections. Philosophy/Classics recorded the highest level of Approximators of Degree in this section and in section **6.4.9** probably because the information they divulge in the conclusion sections of their theses did not allow for much precision.

6.6.9 Nouns

Nouns are used by writers to show their description of situation. Nouns help them to show their deference towards their propositions and protect them from making statements that are beyond their level of certainty. Postgraduate students from the seven disciplines employed appreciable number of hedges in their propositions. The Study of Religions recorded the highest of **7** devices, followed by Philosophy/Classics **4,** Linguistics **3,** Modern Languages and Theater Arts **2** each and English Language **0.** Table 39 gives us the frequency of **20** nouns out of **145** hedging devices and a percentage of **13.8%**. Noticeable similarities amongst the appropriation of Nouns in the three rhetorical sections are that sections **6.4.9** and **6.6.9** recorded the highest levels of the appropriation of Nouns with the same percentages. This occurrence might be a mere coincidence as each section might have a different reason for hedging and study shows that both sections do not hedge equally as section **6.4.1** which happens to be the discussion section, hedged higher than the other sections.

Figure 18: Hierarchy of Types of Hedges
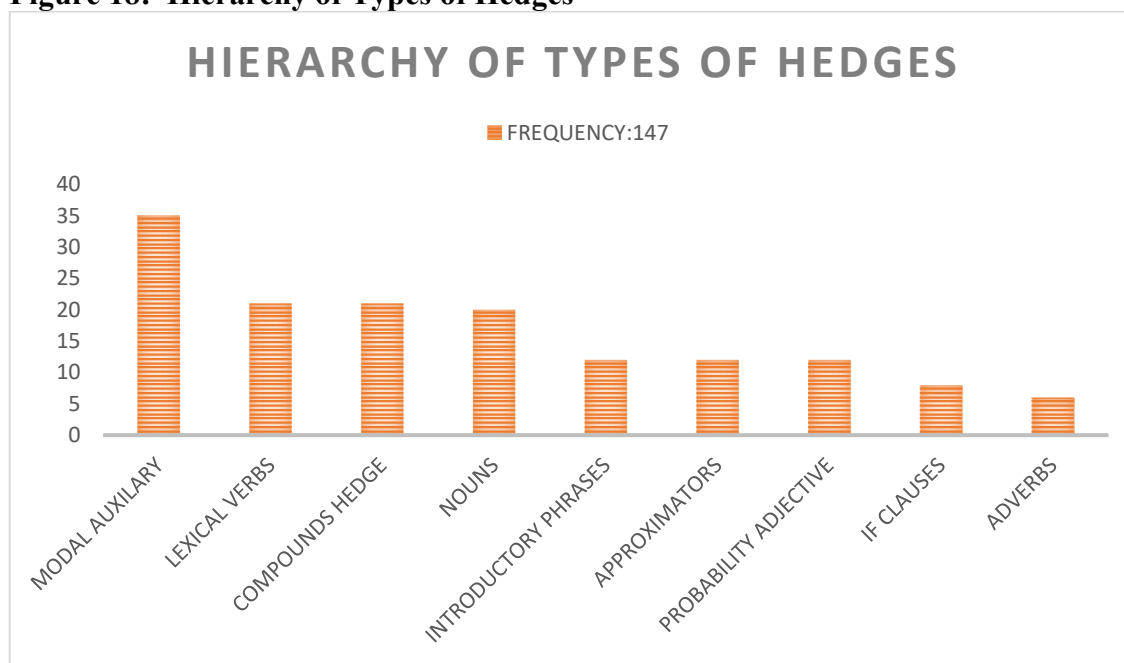
Source: Field Data (2019)

The above figure depicts the distribution of hedges that were identified in postgraduate theses across disciplines in the College of Humanities from the Schools of Languages, Arts and Performing Arts. The figure shows that 147 types and variations of hedges were recorded Modal auxiliary verbs were identified as the most employed hedges. This was followed by Lexical hedges and Compound hedges, which had the same level of distribution. Nouns were the next in order, followed by another tier from three disciplines, namely Approximators of degree, Introductory phrases and Probability adjectives: If clauses followed with adverbs being the least employed.

Figure 19: Hierarchy Disciplinary Variation of Hedges
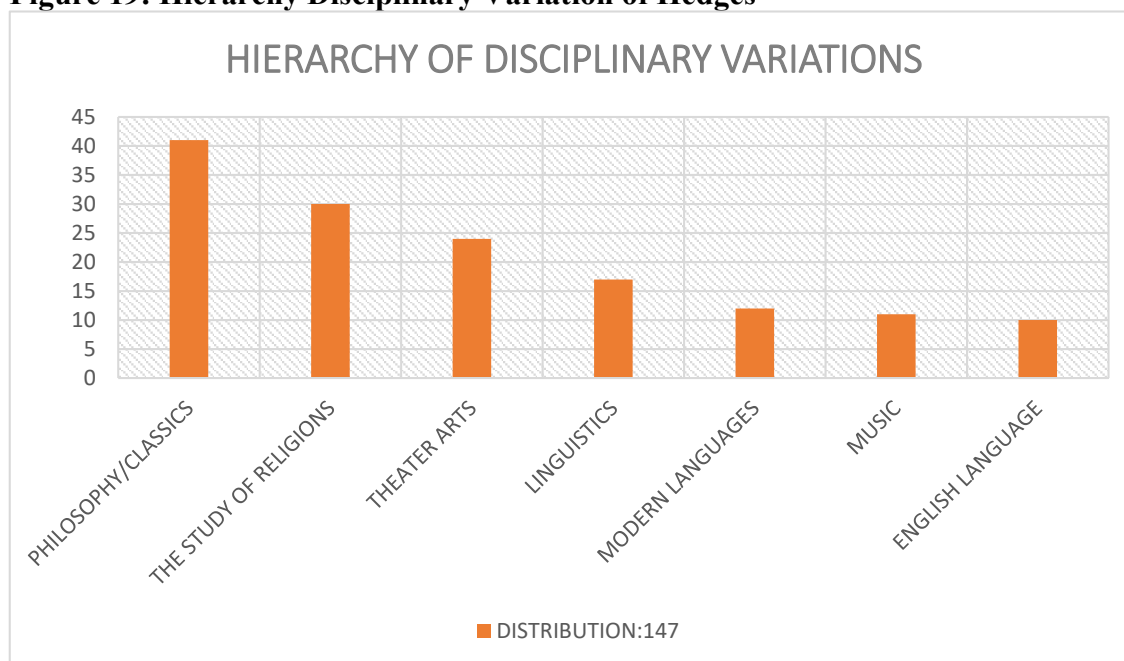
Source: Field Data (2019)

The above figure gives us the disciplinary variation in the appropriation of hedges across the seven disciplines. The figure depicts that there is no uniformity in the appropriation of hedges across disciplines. Salager-Meyer (1990) argued that rhetorical conventions accounts for the variation of hedges in different disciplines. Bloor and Bloor (2002) also opine that an important factor that results in disciplinary variation in hedging is the cultural perception of the appropriateness in each discipline. The different levels of distribution of hedges across disciplines in the current study seem to agree with the perceptions of the above scholars. Philosophy/Classics hedged most. This was followed by The Study of Religions, Theater Arts, Linguistic, Modern Languages, Music and English Language.

6.6.10 Interpretation and Discussion of Hedging in Conclusions and Recommendations Rhetorical Sections

A total of 145 variations and types of hedges were identified and collected. This finding implies that the Conclusion / Recommendation section is the second most hedged section of postgraduate students' theses across disciplines, the first being the findings and discussions sections. Out of the 145 hedges, Modal auxiliaries had the highest frequency of occurrence as figure 19 depicts. Given this result, it appears that postgraduate students across

disciplines employ modal auxiliary verbs more than the other hedge types in their theses. Each of the three rhetorical sections of postgraduate theses in the current study revealed highest use of Modal auxiliary verbs. Markkanen & Schröder (1997) noted the notion of Modality is one of the important aspects of the appropriation of rhetorical devices in relation to hedging across disciplines in academic writing. These findings also confirm studies by scholars like Hyland (1994), Vartalla (2001), Akabas (2012) and Halabizaz (2014), which states that Modal auxiliary verbs are rhetorical devices that are widely and commonly used by writers to soften the tone of their proposition, especially, student writers.

After Modal auxiliary verbs, Compound hedges and Lexical verbs are other types of hedges that post graduate students focused on mostly in the Conclusions / Recommendations section of their thesis to show tentativeness. Other hedging devices that were fairly and regularly employed and had the same level of appropriation are Nouns, Probability adjectives, Introductory phrases and Approximators of degree. If clauses and Adverbs were the least used hedges. After Modal auxiliary verbs, Compound hedges were the second most used hedging devices. The phenomenon of appropriating Compound hedges across disciplines could be as a result of the fact that Compound hedges are a combination of two or more hedging devices where auxiliary verbs play an essential role in the combinations.

A significant disciplinary variation was noted. Figure 19 depicts the variations. Philosophy/Classics hedged with a frequency of **41** hedging devices out of a total of **145** hedges. The Study of Religions followed with **30** hedging devices, then Theatre Arts recorded **24** hedges followed by Linguistics with **17** devices. Modern Languages and Music recorded **12** devices each with English Language recording the least of **10** devices. The disciplines that recorded high devices might have had lengthier write ups in the Conclusion / Recommendation sections and might have focused on a more sensitive areas of discussion. Consequently, there was much tentativeness in the reportage as there is the possibility of a future change in the submission.

The practice of hedging in the Conclusion/ Recommendations section of postgraduate theses across disciplines however shows different degrees and frequencies of hedging across disciplines. Again, writers did not want to sound too forward and strong in the making of their claims. Employing of caution in the reportage of postgraduate students will make them gain acceptance in the academic discourse and thus prevent further opposition by their audience.

Figure 20: Overall Percentage of Hedges in the Three Sections
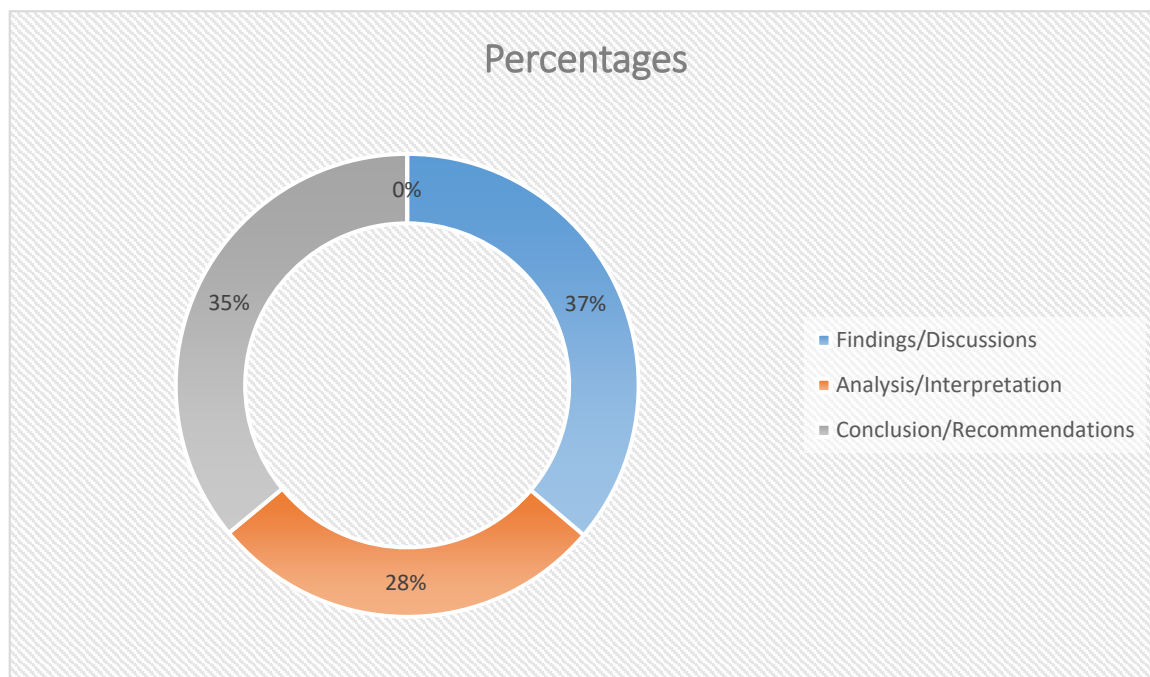
Source: Field Data (2019)

Figure 20 above shows the total percentages of hedges that were identified in the three rhetorical sections of the postgraduate theses. It is envisaged that the section that was hedged most by postgraduate students is the Findings/Discussions section. This was followed by the Conclusions /Recommendation section. The section that hedged least is the Interpretation / Analysis section. Findings from the current study corroborate other studies. For instance, Emami (2008) and Hassani and Farahani (2014) observed in their studies that writers hedged heavily in the discussion section because of the different purposes that each section serves. For example, in the discussion section, writers are supposed to make statements, find reasons to support their verdicts, and further offer interpretations and suggestions for their statements by referring to the similar previous studies. In line with the aforementioned, writers are aware that they have to possibly be cautious about how they put forward the reasons and interpretations of their propositions in order to avoid any possible negation or criticism from their readers/audience. Again, in the discussion section, writers tend to compose lengthier prose because of an elaborate composition of the rhetorical section.
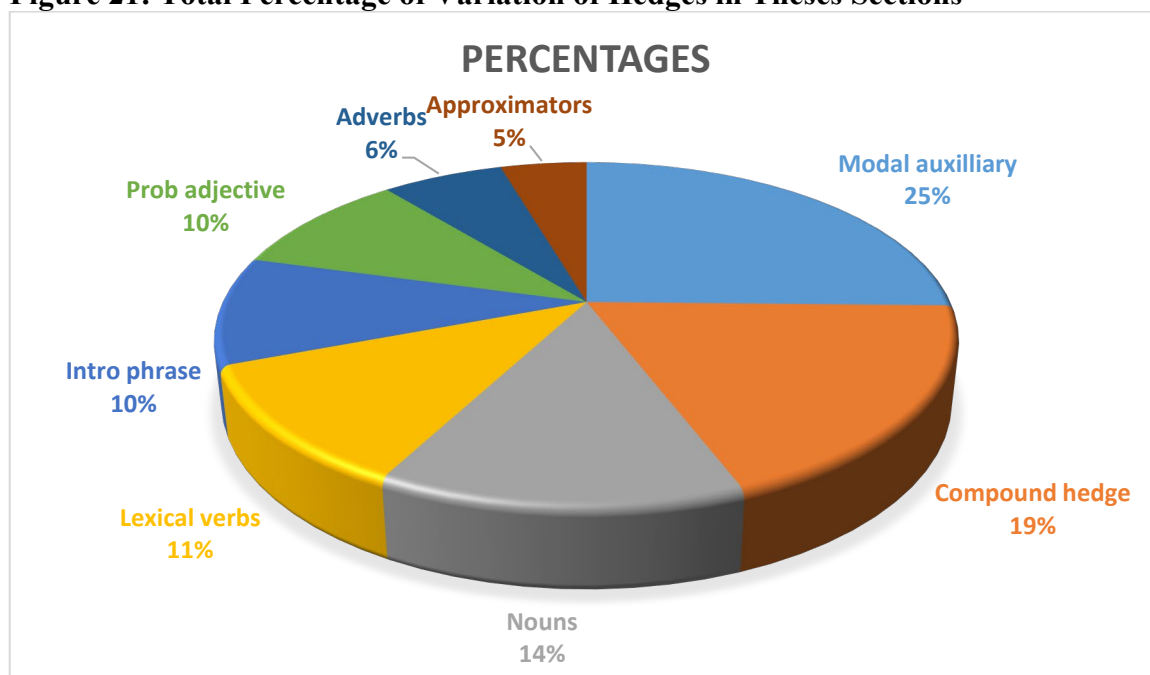
The current study revealed that the Conclusions/ Recommendations section of the theses is the second most hedged. Akabas (2012) also confirmed in a study that Turkish students tend to hedge appreciably well in the conclusion sections of their papers. This, he said, is possibly to enable readers/audience to find interpretations explicitly, and to make the writer seek for

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the approval of the readers by allowing them to make an informed judgment on the propositions.

However, findings in the current study contradict that of Haufiku's (2016) study, which examined hedging in academic discourse in Masters Students' theses, findings that students hedged least in the conclusion sections of their write up in academic writing. Despite these differences, academic writing literature has it that prose in the conclusion sections of write ups are quite straightforward as the conclusion simply unfolds the findings of a particular study, presents a clear description of the results, and describes the process of manipulating data which was obtained during the data collection stage. As a result, the conclusion makes limited claims about the study. It implies that whether or not the conclusion and the recommendation section is hedged, its purpose remains the same.

The least hedged section of postgraduate theses in the current study is the Interpretation / Analysis section because the discussions in that section contained a straightforward interpretation of the results of the study and, as a result, postgraduate students employed limited hedging, unlike they appropriated in discussion sections of their study. Salager-Meyer (1994) made a similar observation in a study when he said that writers hedge low in the interpretation section because they only present a clear description of the results as was obtained. The audience is, thus, not allowed to take a judgmental stance on the interpretation and analysis of the results obtained. Salager-Meyers's findings added credence to that of Hyland (1998) where it was noted that the interpretation section was hedged less because it contained a fair number of hedging devices as compared with the other sections. And that limited number of hedging may be applied during evaluating of the results instead of for a discussion of the results per se. Also, Serholt (2015) adds that the interpretation section is normally the least hedged because it simply presents an objective sort of results. It can then be concluded at this juncture, but not generalized that, the interpretation and the analysis section of postgraduate thesis is usually the least hedged because it announces a straightforward, objective presentation of the results of the study without allowing for much judgment by audiences/readers.

Figure 21: Total Percentage of Variation of Hedges in Theses Sections

PERCENTAGES

Adverbs 6%
Approximators 5%
Prob adjective 10%
Modal auxilliary 25%
Intro phrase 10%
Compound hedge 19%
Lexical verbs 11%
Nouns 14%

Source: Field Data (2019)

Figure 21 above gives the total percentage of hedging from the three sections of postgraduate theses. The categorization followed the nine-categorization proposed by the Center for English Learning and Professional Development. Several scholars such as Myers (1985), Hyland (1996a, 1996b), Salager-Meyer (1994), Vázquez & Giner (2008), Jalifafar (2011) and Bonyadi, and Gholami &Nasiri (2012) have also come out with taxonomies for analyzing hedging devices, which is in consonance with that of the Center for English Learning and Professional Development.

A significant variation is evident in the frequency and percentages of hedges that were appropriated across disciplines in all of the rhetorical sections of postgraduate theses. It is noticeable that Modal auxiliary verbs are the most prevalent hedging devices and thus have the highest percentage in students' writing. Many scholars have corroborated this finding (See 6.4.1, 6.5.1 & 6.6.1 on pages 160,172 & 180 respectively). Mur-Dunmas (2016) stipulates that preference for appropriating Modal auxiliary verbs over the others may point at some sort of possible grammatical concentration of English Language teaching regarding the expression of particular meanings or communicative intentions using modality in academic writing. Compound hedges are the second highest hedges that were appropriated by the students: the appreciable number of the percentage of compound hedges is as a result of its combination, which includes Modal auxiliary verbs. On the other hand, Nouns, Lexical

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verbs, Introductory phrases, and Probability adjectives are trailing behind with minimal percentages. The least percentages of the appropriation of hedges were recorded by Approximators of degree and Adverbs. Regarding the hedging devices that were appropriated minimally, most scholars agree that lack of exposures in the appropriations of those devices is responsible for such phenomenon; and they recommended that students should be exposed to such devices during English language teaching. However, findings from the studies of Yang (2003) and Ebadi (2015) contradicts the findings in the current study as they noted that students appropriated highest frequencies of Approximators in their write ups. Students effective appropriation of Approximators of degree to hedge is a worth studying phenomenon of hedging, because of the varying findings of its appropriation by scholars. As studies most often record zero phenomenon of Approximators of degree whiles other studies record high incidence of appropriation. Also, Faris (2015) revealed that Introductory phrases were predominant in hedging by the students in the rhetorical sections of their write up.

In an earlier study Nasiri (2011) argued that the un-uniformed distinction in the appropriation of kinds and variations of hedging devices could be a result of disciplinary backgrounds. A significance worth noting phenomenon from the academic writing literature is that most of the research on hedging focused on how students appropriated a particular type of hedging device to the neglect of others. These researchers tend to investigate the appropriation of Modal auxiliary verbs while other types are not mentioned at all. The current study, however, looked at how each one of the nine categorizations is appropriated by students across disciplines.

Figure 22: Grand Disciplinary Variation in the Three Sections
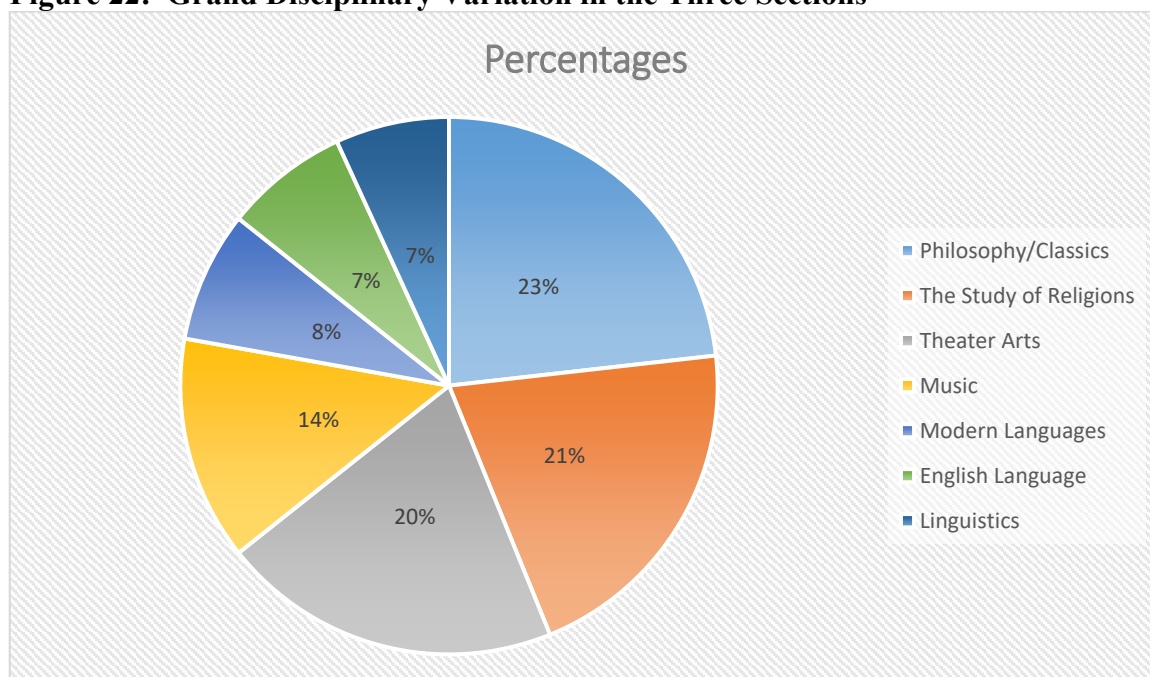
Source: Field Data (2019)

Figure 22 depicts the overall percentage of disciplinary variation of hedges in postgraduate theses. Seven disciplines that fall within the soft sciences category were considered for the study. There are other studies on disciplinary variations that combined both the soft and hard sciences. Some examples are Mojica (2005) comparison of using hedging devices between Engineering and Linguistics students: Jalifafar (2007) context and frequency of hedges in Humanities and Natural Science; and Hariri (2015) hedging in Chemical Engineering, Medicine and Psychology. The current study focused on the soft sciences so as to find out how the various disciplines in the humanities use hedging devices to shield themselves from any form of misconception that may arise from a strong force behind their claims. Hyland (2004) argues that there exist explicit personal interpretations in propositions of hedges from the humanities or social sciences where the standards for instituting proof is less reliable thus the writers in the soft sciences must work much harder to establish an approachable relationship with the reader through effective appropriation of hedging devices.

The study noted a significant variation across disciplines. Scholars like Schefter (1996), Wishnoff (2000), Nugroho (2002), Hyland & Bondi (2006) and Vazquez and Giner (2008) confirmed in their studies that the occurrence of hedging varies according to disciplines. For

instance, Philosophy/Classics hedged highest across disciplines due to the nature of the discipline and the sensitive nature of the discussion that dealt with human subjects. For this reason, the claims made by the students have an elaborate exposition and considerable tentativeness in expression. Disciplines like The Study of Religions and Theater Arts followed Philosophy/Classics with similar trends. Music, Linguistics, English Language and Modern Languages are disciplines that hedged least. Although there is a close relationship between communication practices and societal organizations in disciplinary communities, it seems, the context in a particular discipline influences the frequency of hedging in that particular discipline and also how writers typically argue and engage with their audiences. It can then be argued that rhetorical conventions influence the appropriation of hedges across disciplines.

6.7 Chapter Summary

Interpretations and discussions of the current study were done in Chapter Six. The chapter critically interpreted and discussed the findings of the study. The types and variations of hedges identified in three rhetorical sections of the students' theses followed a categorization from Center for English Learning and Development (Modal auxiliary verbs, Lexical verbs, Compound hedges, nouns, and Introductory phrases, Approximators of degree and Probability adjectives). There was a clear indication of the appropriation of hedges by postgraduate students in kinds and in variations in the three sections of their theses. The most hedged section of the students' theses is the findings and the discussion sections: this is followed by the conclusion and introduction section, the least hedged is the interpretation/analysis section. There was an indication of the appropriation of each of the nine kinds of rhetorical devices known as hedges by postgraduate students to show their tentativeness and their level of commitment towards their propositions.

It can be envisaged from figure 21 that Modal auxiliaries were the most used hedging devices in all three sections of postgraduates' theses. The highest percentage of Modal auxiliary usage confirms the finding of Hyland (2001), which stipulates that students are not exposed to any form of hedging devices except Modal auxiliary verbs, and as a result they are inclined to use Modal auxiliaries more than other types of hedging devices. The next most used hedging devices were Compound hedges probably, because Compound hedges are a combination of other hedging devices (Modal auxiliary and Noun or Adjective). This

is followed by Nouns, lexical verbs, Introductory phrases, Probability adjectives, Adverbs and Approximators of degree being the least used.

The least appropriation of Approximators of degree and adverbs by postgraduate students in the current study contradicts Halabizaz (2014) and Akaba's (2012) studies, which posit that non-native students' writers appropriate higher degrees of adverbs and Approximators of degree in their write ups. The contradiction between the two findings cannot be over-generalized as study has shown that language and cultural influence can affect the appropriation of kinds of hedges by writers.

There was significant indication of disciplinary variations although all of the disciplines fall under the soft science category. The disciplinary variation might be attributed to each discipline's extent of rhetorical sensitivity, modality, awareness of audience, purpose, title of the study and nature of the thesis and linguistical acculturation.

Figure 22 shows the disciplinary variations amongst the seven disciplines. Philosophy /Classics hedged most. This is followed by The Study of Religions and Theatre Arts. Theoretically it can be said that these three disciplines hedges most across the seven disciplines because the frequencies depict marginal proportion amongst these three as they shared 64% out of the 100%. The nature of the study amongst these three disciplines dealt with human subjects and thus they employed qualitative analysis and statistical probabilities to represent their claims. As a result, they used elaborated expositions and significant cautiousness in the making of their propositions. This confirms Vartalla (2001) and Halabizaz's (2014) claim that most soft sciences deal with human subjects and as a result are likely to hedge more depending upon the title and the nature of their studies. The other four disciplines also hedged significantly although not as high as the three disciplines that were mentioned earlier.

Despite the disparities in the appropriation of rhetorical devices known as hedges in the theses of postgraduate students across disciplines there is clear evidence of disciplinary variations of hedging, which is depended on the nature of the study. The following chapter focuses on summary, conclusion and recommendation

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY/CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

7.0 Introduction

Writers in academic discourse are expected to present their proposition with caution in order to avoid sounding too strong and very imposing on their audiences. As a result, scholars have carried out studies on one of the significant academic writing rhetorical devices known as hedging or cautious language that enable writers to soften the strong force behind their proposition and also to enable their claims to gain credibility in academic writing. Inadvertently, these researches mostly focused on expert research articles to the disadvantage of students' theses, although one of the academic conventions that enable students to supposedly gain credibility in the academic community is by mastering the skills of these important rhetorical devices known as hedging. The limited study into students' writing to decipher how they employ caution to create rhetorical barriers against possible opposition in academic writing seems detrimental to their success and for their competition for acceptance into an international academic discourse community believed to be characterised with expert native writers who tend to apply caution more appropriately in the making of their claims.

The current study explored how postgraduate students who are believed to be non-native students of a Ghanaian University's College of Humanities crafted their text through the appropriation of hedging devices. The study aimed at findings answers to the research questions (See 1.3 on page 4).

The study was principally qualitative and used the phenomenology approach as its basic design (See 4.1,4.3 & 4.5 on pages 90,91,&105 respectively).The main investigation tool was secondary documents in the form of students' theses (see 4.7 on page 106). Thematic content analysis was employed to analyse the data (See 6.1 on page 155).

This chapter summarises major findings of the study, draws conclusions, offers recommendations and suggests directions for future study.

7.1 Summary of the Major Findings of Each Research Question

1. To what extent is hedging included in postgraduate theses across the seven disciplines?

The analysis of each of the three rhetorical sections of postgraduate theses, namely: "Findings/Discussions", "Analysis/Interpretation" and "Conclusions/Recommendations" revealed the extent at which postgraduate students employed hedging in their write ups. The findings showed a minimal and disparity appropriation of hedging devices in the students'

theses. This disparity emanated as a result of the nature of the students' theses and the length of the expository and discursive writing in some of the rhetorical sections. The section that hedged most is the "Findings/Discussions", followed by the "Conclusions /Recommendations". The "interpretation/analysis" section hedged least. Modal auxiliary verbs were the most favoured hedging devices across sections and disciplines. This confirms literature in academic writing, which reveal that Modal auxiliary verbs rank highest in the appropriation of hedges by writers. Compound hedges also had an appreciable number of usages probably because compound hedging is a combination of Auxiliary verbs and either Adjectives or a Nouns. Studies show that since students are exposed to Auxiliary verbs it is much easier for them to use Compound hedges to apply caution. The other types of hedges (i.e. Lexical Verbs, Adverbs, Probability adjectives, If clause, Introductory phrases, Nouns, and Approximator of degrees) recorded either zero or least appropriation in some of the students' theses. This trend confirms Hyland's (1999) assertion that lack of pedagogical exposure of hedging to students creates a limitation on the appropriations of hedges by students. Thus, it became evident from the study that the students might not have been exposed to the appropriation of rhetorical devices that can be used to apply caution in write ups.

2. What are the variations types and forms of hedges that postgraduate students employ in their theses across disciplines?

Disciplinary variations occur in academic writing because of the types of problems studied and how they are addressed. Hyland (2005) asserts that academic writing ascribes to knowledge making and that differences in the types of problems studied and ways of addressing them help account for disciplinary variations. These regularities therefore offer insights into the knowledge constructing procedures of disciplinary communities. The study revealed variations and types of hedges employed by each of the disciplines, and the variances and resemblances in the appropriation of hedges across disciplines. The similarities were envisaged when each rhetorical section revealed modal auxiliaries as the highest hedging devices employed by postgraduate students. Aside the unique similarities, each discipline employed other types of hedges at different levels. The discipline that employed the most hedging devices is Philosophy/Classics, probably because of the nature of their study and the fact that they dealt more with human subjects that involved sensitivity. Hyland (2005) posits that the success of such sensitive write ups depends on how writers are able to

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persuade their audiences through writers' systematic appeal to specific disciplinary meanings, characterised by following an accepted rhetorical device in the making of claims. This rhetorical device happened to be hedges. Bazerman (1988) claimed that writers must shape their evidences, observations, data, and views of insight into the patterns of their inquiries. Further, Bazerman elaborates that writers must value the knowledge they gain from their community and explicitly frame their arguments in ways that conforms to disciplinary expectations concerning appropriate involvement and interpersonal conduct within their community. Bazerman's claim is in agreement with the tenets of the politeness theory which underpins the study (See 3.1 on page 65)

Each of the seven disciplines varied in the types of hedges used and their frequencies because of the nature of the data that the disciplines were analysed, and the inability on the part of students to apply hedges that have not been exposed to them.

3. How effectively do postgraduate students across the seven disciplines craft their propositions with hedges in a Ghanaian University?

Results of the study showed that effectiveness of the appropriation of hedging devices in postgraduate thesis is subjected to the title and the nature of the thesis. Hedging becomes more effective when it is employed to tone down the strong effect that the reportage may connote. Since human subjects are more sensitive and thus findings in that field needs to be made tentatively, disciplines like Theatre Arts, Philosophy/Classics and The Study of Religions whose study centred on human subjects appeared to have hedged more in their proposition. The effectiveness in creating shields for themselves and their audience is to minimise the effects of Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) (See 3.3.0 on page 65). Although other disciplines did not hedge in high frequencies in an encouraging manner, they succeeded in appropriating minimal levels of hedges to protect themselves against any form of misconception that their proposition might present. The study, thus, revealed that the effectiveness of the appropriation of hedges did not lie in the students' ability to appropriate varied types of hedges to an appreciable frequency; but rather the students' ability to recognised the sensitivity of their claims and appropriate either a minimal or high level of hedges to efficiently tone down their proposition. It can then be said that the effectiveness in the appropriation of hedging lies in these areas: a) the students' ability to recognise the sensitivity of the proposition and then apply caution accordingly; b) the students' ability to recognise which hedging devices fits perfectly for hedging within a particular situation; c) the student ability to

choose an appropriate hedging device out of the lot; d) the students' ability to avoid repeating the same kind of hedging devices but rather choose others from the types that are available. It appeared in the current study that lack of exposure by the students to the appropriation of kinds of hedging devices limited their effectiveness in the appropriation of hedges.

4. Which complex taxonomies of hedges are found in postgraduate theses across disciplines?

The taxonomy that was followed is the categorisation of nine types of hedges by the Centre for English Learning and Professional Development, which most researchers use as their taxonomies. The categorisation comprised both complex and less complex types. The less complex ones were Modal auxiliaries and Compound hedges because they were the most used by almost all the disciplines in their rhetorical sections. It seemed that hedge forms like "Nouns", "Adverbs", "If clauses", "Probability adjectives", and "Approximators of degree" were a bit complex for the students to appropriate as some disciplines employed less or zero of the above listed hedge types. This situation revealed that postgraduate students across disciplines might not have been exposed to these types of complex hedges; hence, they could not appropriate them in their write ups to show deference towards the making of their submissions. Hyland (1998) observes that English as Second Language writers or non-native writers, which are the category of writers that the population in the current study falls within, have some difficulty with hedging devices because most English for Special Purpose textbooks do not seem to provide adequate information in the taxonomies of hedges, while some of the text tend to advise students to avoid hedging altogether. The finding has further been confirmed by studies such as Hinkel (1997), Hyland and Milton (1997), Omer (2016) and Chen and Zhang (2017), who espouse that non-native writers need to improve their capabilities of using rhetorical devices and stylistic expressions like hedging. This height can be achieved when these writers are introduced to hedging through their English instructors during English lessons.

7.2 Conclusion

The exploring of hedging in postgraduate theses in a Ghanaian University revealed diverse appropriation of hedging by postgraduate students. There was an evidence of the appropriation of hedges in the various rhetorical sections of the students' theses, across the seven disciplines. Lewin (2005) mentioned that hedging makes a text more reader-friendly and allows the students to establish uncertainty, politeness, modesty, and writer's/ audience con-

siderations. Hedging also allow for the saving of one's face, evading responsibility and toning down claims. Hedges give audiences the opportunity to judge the statement of claims themselves. Postgraduate students appropriated hedges differently in the three rhetorical sections of their theses. Variations in hedging in the rhetorical sections of the postgraduate theses can reflect the different objectives of the rhetorical sections of theses. The findings in the current study are inconsistent with findings from Varttala's (2001) study on hedging in three disciplines: economics, medicine and technology. The current results again confirms Hyland's (1998) study on the distribution of hedging in biology RAs, Salager-Meyer's (1994) research on medical RAs, and Vassileva's (2001) study on the English and Bulgarian RAs. The section of the theses where students hedged most is the Findings/Discussions sections, probably because there was more write up in that section than the other sections. This is because the main rhetorical function of the Findings/Discussions sections is to make claims about the findings of a study thus students are likely to engaged in much writing in that section, which may probably result in the appropriation of much hedges by the students. Hyland (1998) asserts that writers try to gain their academic credibility in the findings/discussions section of their writings by going beyond their data to offer a more general interpretation.

There were resemblances and variances in the appropriation of types of hedges by each of the sections. For example, all of the sections employed auxiliary verbs as the highest form of the hedging out of the categorisation of nine hedges. According to Prashanthasints (2014), the highest appropriation of a particular kind of hedge to the neglect of others is a mark of a novice writer. Some sections did not employ some types of hedges at all as they fell within the complex types that students have not been exposed to. This finding augments Myers's (1989) suggestion that the level of claims writers make in the different rhetorical sections of their write ups is as a result of differences that are revealed in the percentages of hedging devices. Salager-Meyer (1993) said that the frequency of hedges that are appropriate by writers is dependent on the level of claim made, which is reliant on the writers' affectation to the universality of a particular communicative purpose of each rhetorical section. This finding is consistent with Hariri's (2015) research findings, which revealed that different rhetorical sections of research articles do not hedge uniformly.

There was a significant disciplinary variation. These findings suggest that different disciplines show discrepancies in the frequency, forms, and the variations of hedges. Although

there was an evidence of hedging across disciplines, some disciplines hedged higher than others. A notable finding was that the disciplines that hedge most have carried out a study that dealt with human nature which has much sensitivity in its reportage. Again, the disciplines dealt with qualitative analysis which demanded much content in the write up. The discipline that hedge highest is Philosophy/Classics followed by the Study of Religions and Theatre. It was envisaged that each of these disciplines has a thesis title that dealt with human nature.

From this analysis we can conclude that the motivation for hedging might primarily be an important academic protocol that allows for acceptance into the academic community within an established discourse community, and the drive of hedging is to enable writers to tone down the strong force behind their proposition and to avoid opposition and to call for acceptance in the academic discourse. Aside the primary motivation, there are secondary factors: the nature of study, human factor and sensitivity, method of analysis and the enculturation of a particular discipline. These factors enhance disciplinary variations in hedging as they appeared to be some of the main factors that determine the level and the extent of hedging across disciplines. Hyland (2008), Bondi (2006), Malavasi and Mazzi (2008) and Hiafiku (2016) posit that disciplinary culture plays a vital role in disciplinary variation in hedging. Hyland (1999) also claims that rhetorical constraint accounts for disciplinary variation in hedging. These rhetorical constraints are the linguistics styles that writers are limited to when discussing research text in each of the rhetorical sections of their write ups. Thus, a limitation in a particular discipline might place restrictions on the types and variations of rhetorical devices that are employed by the discipline. This, in turn, either increases or decreases the level of hedging devices in a particular discipline. Bondi (2006) speculates that it is language use and different kinds of arguments that accounts for disciplinary variations in hedging. Hyland (2008) further argued that authors from different disciplines write differently. Hyland's assertion is unequivocally explicit in the current study.

Findings from the current study are expedient to academic students in their pursuit to develop theses as it will ensure that they improve upon their writing ability in their use of hedges. Further, it will enable them to appropriately negotiate their writing space in academia. Again, it will give them academic credibility in their writing and prevent them from gaining opposition in academic discourse community because of a strong force that might

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character their proposition. Furthermore, findings from the current study will inform language instructors that some types of hedges are barely appropriated by students and this trend depicts lack of formal knowledge of hedging by students, which emanated from lack of or the absence of formal instructions in hedging in the various disciplines. The result of this phenomenon could be the nurturing of immature writers in the academics' discourse community as the appropriate use of hedging reflects assured maturity in writing. The absence of the use of these rhetorical strategies known as hedging or cautious language may be a sign/or marker of novice writers.

7.3 Limitation

Some limitations have been noted in the present study. First of all, it was limited to three rhetorical sections of postgraduate theses although there equally are other sections in the theses where students could hedge. Again only 14 theses and seven disciplines were considered for the study. It will be an expedient idea that other studies focus on an increased number of theses and also on more disciplines. Still the seven disciplines were from the soft sciences. It is suggested that other studies should focus on a combination of both the soft and the hard sciences or only the hard sciences just as the current studies focused on only the soft sciences.

Furthermore, the present study used nine categorization of hedging devices from the Centre for English Learning and Professional Development for the analysis. This categorization is rarely used by researchers because of preferences of widely used taxonomies like Salager-Meyer's (1994) and Crompton's (1997) and Hyland (1998). Finally, the corpus of the study was limited to Postgraduate Masters' theses from an online data base. Another study can focus on postgraduate PhD theses.

7.4 Recommendations and Further Studies

The study aimed at exploring the appropriation of rhetorical devices known as hedges in postgraduate theses across disciplines in the College of Humanities from a Ghanaian University. The study stimulates research interest in academic writing, particularly on hedging in graduate students' writing in the Ghanaian context because most of the research on hedging by scholars was limited to research articles to the neglect of students' writing. The study contributes to the literature in academic writing especially in appropriations of hedging in students' theses, as it attempts to show whether there exist any differences in hedging forms and functions based on disciplinary variation and across rhetorical sections. There was an

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evidence of a probable insufficient formal instruction to students in the various disciplines on types, variations and functions of rhetorical devices known as hedges or cautious language from these theses.

Lack of effective instructions in hedging strategies could inform students' appropriation of these devices negatively. As a result, 1) teachers and instructors should make it their priority to discuss the importance of hedging with the students; 2) neophyte writers should be exposed to claims that can be made categorically and those that cannot; 3) instructors should teach reasons why hedging strategies should be adopted by students; 4) McEnery and Kifle (2002) mention that English for Second Language Teaching textbooks generally offer students with a limited range of options for expressing possibility, tentativeness, and opinion; thus, the content of these books should be improved to accommodate these rhetorical devices; and 5) the findings of the current study can be a starting point for curriculum developers to revise syllabuses and teaching material to include other types of hedging devices either than modal verbs as it is a category mostly that is mostly recommended by text book writers.6)as part of the supervision process, findings from the study can be used as a yard stick to guide students and remind them that research and theories are being developed and updated all the time thus the appropriation of hedging devices will enabled them to maintain their integrity as writers.

The study is restricted to postgraduate theses from the College of Humanities and was restricted to the soft sciences, thus it does not address the other disciplinary variations such as the hard sciences: undoubtedly, these results needed to be treated with little caution.

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Appendix: A: Excerpts of Hedging from English Language

a) Title of Thesis: Perceiving Romanticism in Ghanaian Poetry: A Case Study of Kofi Awoonor's Rediscovery and Other Poems (1964)

Academic Year: JULY, 2017/2018

1: The fact that the simple sentence is the second most preferred sentence type in all three essays across all three forms informs us that it ***is quite*** popular with the study population.

2: The use of coordinators ***suggests*** the formation of the compound sentence while the use of subordinators means complex sentences are present.

3: But if both coordinators and subordinators are used in a single grammatical structure, then that structure ***maybe said to be*** a compound-complex one.

4: ***If this was*** the case, students at this level should have used more of the compound sentence than the complex sentence. But we need to put the choice and use of compound sentences into

5: The writer ***can*** use concrete language in order to paint a mental picture to the reader.

6: The complex sentence was **mostly** used in all essay types but it was most preferred in argumentative essays.

7: An argumentative essay addresses an issue with ***the aim of*** persuading the reader.

8: Within each paragraph therefore there ***would be*** a topic sentence, most likely a simple sentence stating the position, and support sentences developing the idea in the topic sentence.

9: So also, complex sentences ***appeared to*** be the most dominant sentence used in their essays.

Appendix B: Excerpts of Hedging from Linguistics

Title of Thesis: Compounding In Ewe

Academic Year:JULY 2018/2019

1:A consonant sequence consists of up to two consonants, the second consonant ***may be*** of a liquid or a glide in the following words respectively: ʄle „to buy" tre „to seal".

2: Sometimes, during compounding it is ***possible*** that the segment carrying the high tone does not suffer elision.

4: A compounds whose outcomes are nouns and those that result in adjectives ***suggesting*** that compounding is not only a nominalization in Ewe.

5:I ***suggested*** a definition for Ewe V-N compounds as: the combination of inherent complement verb (ICV) or canonical transitive verb (CTV) and their obligatory nominal

6:The compensatory lengthening ***may be*** progressive or regressive depending on where the low vowel /a/ is located.

7: Sometimes the final syllable of the stem of V-V-N compounds ***may have*** a low tone changed to a rising one.

8:The study has therefore contributed to Ewe morphology and ***will*** serve as a reference material in the literature.

9:***Almost*** every scholar dealing with the study of compounding has proposed his/her own view.

10:***Sometime*** there are instances where during compounding the low tone is specified.

b)**Title of Theses**: Language Choice In The Ɔkere Speech Community

Academic Year: July, 2018

1: The only community that felt there was no need learning Ɔkere were respondents from Adukurom which ***could be*** attributed to the location of Adukurom and the heterogeneous nature of the town as stated.

2: Besides these studies ***can*** provide early interventions for such languages to be saved from death

3:It also came to light that notwithstanding the need for group identity minority language speakers ***will*** learn languages as far as it gives them some socio-economic importance.

4:Lastly I recommend that there **should** an advocacy for the development of literacy in Ɔkere to encourage members of the Ɔkere speech community to be literate in their heritage language. In addition, the only F.M. station at Dawu which is within the Ɔkere speech community should use Ɔkere for its programmes.

5:Compared to the other three languages, Kwaku's competence in Ewe **can be said** to be the lowest since he uses it with only his father

6:You **rarely** meet them speaking any other language apart from Ɔkere.

7:Nana is proficient in two languages Twi and Ɔkere but **seems** to be more proficient in Ɔkere.

8:Kwabena **seems to** be losing Konkomba and Dagbani since he uses these two languages only when some of his friends and mates at the University of Professional Studies who are native speakers of these languages call him.

9: Since farmers in the locality are **mostly** natives of these Kwa languages.

10: Generally Akan **seems** to be the preferred choice of language at the hospital.

Appendix C: Excerpts of Hedging in Sentences from Modern Languages

a) Thesis Title:A Translation into English of a Spanish Document Titled: Guía País Ghana Compiled by the Economic and Commercial Office of Spain in Lagos Updated in April 2008

Academic Year: November, 2017/2018

1:The choice of a less formal word such as"bañada" buttresses our earlier assertion that specialized texts *may*accommodate emotive or picturesque language depending on the writer's imagination.

2:Punctuation, tense arrangement, subject/verb and noun/adjective agreement etc. are all in orderin the source text, notwithstanding a few irregularities stemming *probably*from typographical mistakes.

3:"A translated document must sound so natural that it **would** be taken for the original document. This is how to determine a good translation".

4:*We believe that* the translator must not merely desire to rise above mediocrity.

5:We *deem* it very important for the translator to build a compendium of registers of some of the various known professions.

7.Secondly, since we were determined to render a meaning-based work, we weighed our words and expressions carefully and cautiously in other to avoid pitfalls and other linguistic traps. We *aimed* at giving our translation a touch of originality at all costs.

8.In this light we *tried* to get the gist of the core issues at stake before putting pen to paper.

9.Zakhir *believes* that his article is a summary of the principal procedures used by translators in different types of texts to avoid issues of untranslatability. He *agrees* that translators may restrict themselves to one or more of the procedures, each of which has its own characteristics and purposes in translation

10.Time and space would not allow us to give examples of the use of "acudir" another tricky, polysemous verb which *may* cause confusion if the translator is not careful.

a) Title of Thesis:""Challenges of Terminological Equivalence in Translation: A Translation of "Loi N° 2012-21 Portant Lutte Contre Le Financement Du Térrorisme En République Du Bénin."

Academic Year: 2016/2017

2: *It could* also be noted that though both *seem* to share same linguistic root and have some similarities, to some extent, they have *some* striking differences and these differences contribute.

3: The term "Parliament," *could also be seen* as near-equivalence proposed by Šarčević (2000) which is commonly used in the target text culture (Ghana).great deal to the challenges encountered by a translator during translation process.

4.They **can** also deal with same crimes committed in a third party country provided an international agreement gives them the competence thereof.

6.It *could* also be noted that though both **seem** to share same linguistic root and have some similarities, to some extent, they have some striking differences and these differ ences contribute a great deal to the challenges encountered by a translator during trans lation process.

7.This also*indicates* the domestication strategy of Venuti (1995) that is "bringing the readers of the target text home" in order to solve the problem of absence of direct equivalence in the TT. The term "Parliament," *could also be seen* as near-equivalence proposed by Šarčević (2000) which is commonly used in the target text culture (Ghana).

8.However, *if the target c*ulture was that of Nigeria with the same legal concept as that of Benin, the translator could have maintained the term 'National Assembly' because even a layperson in Nigeria would easily know that such concept which comprises of House of Senate and House ofRepresentative exists in the country.

9.This makes it a false friend with the English noun 'Actor'. To avoid the literal equivalence 'Actor' which *will mean* an artist who acts in a play or movie, the translator adopted the TL-oriented equivalents which are functional/dynamic equivalence techniques of Newmark/Nida to render 'Acteur' pg 16 as 'stakeholder' in TTthereby giving it a contextual meaning. This enables the recipients access the SL concept by using their knowledge of the TL system to establish epistemic correspondence

Appendix D: Excerpts of Hedging From Philosophy/Classics

a)   Title of Thesis: Karol Wojtyla's Conception of Love and Responsibility and its Application to the Use of Contraception

Academic Year: July 2018/2019

3: Accordingly, *it appears* that many if not all of the pharmacological contraceptives are at least in part abortifacient, and the newer preparations under development tend to be entirely abortifacient, notwithstanding that they are promoted as contraceptives

4: One can conclude there *will probably* never be a form of contraception which is absolutely safe with no negative side effects and no inconveniences.

5:And so the fact that *almost* all contraceptives are female contraceptives has *tended* to place the responsibility for contraception on women.

6: Nevertheless, this thesis *hopes* that the use of contraception *could* come to signal not sexual promiscuity, but sexual responsibility, a willingness for men and women to consider the full meaning and consequences of sexual intercourse before they engage in it.

8: For example, a doctor's medical practice involves medical interventions which generally affects *probabilities;* of healing, survival, failure and death.

9: On the level of families in all parts of the world, the procreation of offspring *can* now be controlled by the marriage partners

10: *If human* nature itself separates the unitive and procreative dimensions why can't we separate these intentions also in a contraceptive act?

2)**Title of Thesis:**Is Rorty a Jamesian? "A Comparative Analysis of William James and Richard Rorty on The Pragmatists' Conception of Truth"

Academic Year: 2017/2018

1.   *If there is no* practical difference, then what we articulate is of no use. Truth, for James, must inevitably be practically significant. Being practically significant here implies being useful.

2. Truth **has been considered** by Western cultures, from the Greek philosophers through to the Enlightenment, asthe only point at which persons are answerable to something nonhuman

3. Another difference between James and Rorty is the suggestion by Rorty that truth *could* be replaced with justification.

4. In spite of this, I will argue that there *might* be another perspective than just having no practical consequence between truth and justification.

5. *If one can be* a pragmatist without being a radical empiricist, then why would James argue that his notion of truth is a step towards advancing his radical empiricism?

6. *If Rorty* deliberately refuses to recognize what he calls "the constructivist truth" in James's notion of truth that*will* lead to forfeiting the supervisory caveat between himself and James.

7. *I think, maybe*, Rorty does not want his idea of re-description of anotion like truth to sound like constructivist truth.

8. But Rorty *may seem to have* complicated his stances simply because he and James had a standard as well, their idea of practical importance.

9. However, it is clear what his view is on the issue of theories of truth; *maybe not* consistent but certainly within a context which is comprehensible.

10. The call for redescription is *to suggestthe possible* replacement of some philosophical notions

Appendix E: Excerpts of Hedging from Music

b)Title of Thesis:Music Production and Preservation at Ghana Broadcasting Corporation

Academic Year: 2016/2017

1: Although GBC as an organization has not defined music production nor written any-thing down about it, *almost*every music production staff in the corporation understands the status quo.

2 Each of them also made it clear that, *if for a reason* there *should*be anything at all, it is the head of the music department's duty rather to focus on detailed monthly reports on some activities andonce in a while give a summary account on their activities in the de-partment for anniversary brochures than to worry about documenting historical events.

3 Another informant acknowledged that, *most* schools and groups are losing interest in the recording programmers because when these groups are recorded, it takes a long time before their music is heard on the programme, *mostly* at a time inconvenient to *most*of them or *most*people *might* have given up to listening and are in bed.

5.   Each of them also made it clear that, if for a reason there *should* be anything at all is the head of the music department's duty rather to focus on detailed monthly reports on *some* activities and once a while give a summary account on their activities in the depart-ment for anniversary brochures than to worry about documenting historical   events.

6. Another informant acknowledged that, *most* schools and groups are losing interest in the recording programmes because when these groups are recorded, it takes a long time before their music is heard on the programme, *mostly* at a time inconvenient to *most* of them or *most* people *might* have given up to listening and are in bed.

7.He said the GBC band gets gigs but they are not able to honour *most* of these invita-tions because the band has no equipments of their own.

8.The Ghana Music CD *can* serve as a good resource material for teaching history of music in Ghana, since it has the various musical types to describe how musical trends were in Ghana at the early stages.

9.She explained that though there are gaps in the records, these gaps **could be** as a result of broken records, or borrowed but not returned records.

10. Due to the funding problem, users of the library are not able to access what they

sometimes look for from the library.

Appendix F: Excerpts of Hedging from the Study of Religions

a) **Title of Thesis**: Mass Media Usage by Indigenous Traditional Priests and Priest-esses in Ghana

Academic Year:2018/2019

1. As it has been indicated,*some* traditional priests and priestesses *have tended* to publicize their services in the media especially the radio and the television.

2. More visibly, some priests and priestesses of the traditional religion have become *some sort of* competitors to their Christian counterparts

3. *Very largely*, the use of the radio and television are purposely to promote and also, give audience the exposure to the kind of services offered by the priests and priestesses in their shrine.

4. Presently, it *appears* to be out-dated for majority of the traditional priests and priestesses in Ghana to reside in isolated and remote places to receive clients.

5.So far, **attempts** have been made to examine the concept of the media and how religion in general, fits well into the concept of the media.

6.Though, originally God was *known* to be near man, man's fault made him move himself high up.

7.They are *largely* natural spirits though some are manifestations of divine attributes.

8.Ashanti religion, therefore, *tends* to focus on the abosom. And it is in understanding the relationship between Onyankopon, the abosom and man that one can glean the meaning of the sacred drama of worship.

9.*It is believed* that when they appear beside the natural object which is their residence they may appear in the form or shape of that object.

10.They **may** punish those who disobey the norms of the society with diseases, crop failure etc.

b) **Title of Thesis**: The Doctrine ofthe Trinity among Presbyterians in Akuapem
Academic Year:2018/19

1. The matured nature *suggests* that they are *likely* to have spent several years as Presbyterians, making them more credible to providing vital information for the study.

3. Tertullian, who is *believed* to be the first theologian to coin the word "Trinity".

4. The inhabitants of Akuapem today *may* be divided into two main linguistic and ethnic groups.

5. The matured nature suggests that they are *likely* to have spent several years as

Presbyterians.

6. It was *largely* noted that respondents reckoned the doctrine as the threefold

nature of God and that it relates to three in one deity.

Appendix G: Excerpts of Hedging from Theater Arts

a) Title of Thesis: Technology and News Production: The Case of Ghana Television and Tv3 Limited

Academic Year:2018/2019

1. Despite this observation, interviews with some media technology experts in Ghana reveal that television stations in Ghana *can* do more with the number of technologies that they use since there are other alternatives that *can* be employed in transmitting news footages.

2. Today, Facebook is becoming very popular because it *allows*for streaming even though the difficulty is that it is made public.

3. That notwithstanding, among the software used by respondents, the ones more appropriate for uploading files were dependent on one's location. Meanwhile, We transfer, was the *most*commonly used.

4. *This can be said* to be align to their mandate to continue to be a dependable source of information as public broadcaster

5. This is because all journalists are *expected to* upload files from assignment onto a central server, to which all other journalists and editors have access.

6. Then, *it is hoped* more television stations will be able to maintain their own fiber optic link.

7.So *if one person fails* to properly handover the daily intakes of the news footage that have been brought in when he was on duty,it gets lost in the system.

8.From the findings from GTV respondents, *sometimes* reporters lack certain key devices and equipment aside reliable internet services, to ensure smooth, quality, consistent and timely delivery.

9.Raw footages are*usually*sent to the newsroom and the scripts are edited by the show editors before the story is transmitted.

10.It is evident from the GTV respondents that a form of training is organized occasionally for a number of the personnel in the newsroom but that does *not seem* sufficient with the ever-changing technologies in the media industry.

b) Title of Thesis: Dance in the Management of Hypertension: A Case Study of Patients in Abokobi Health Centre, Ga-East Municipal Assembly

Academic year: 2016/20017

1. It **should** be remarked that the patients who went through the experimental process were also interviewed to elicit more information related to their health in the 'pre' and' post dance exercise.

2. This finding **appears** to corroborate a proposition by Börjesson, et al., (2016) that it is not enough to view pharmacological and non-pharmacological treatments of hypertension as complementary but the dynamics present sufficient justification for a shift towards the latter.

3. Apart from the relative potency levels, studies have observed some peculiar challenges that are associated with pharmacological treatment in developing country context such as Ghana, which *may*further reduce the motivation for patients to effectively go through such process.

4. Apart from the physical difficulty that *may* prevent a greater number of patients, other social factors *may*further deepen the apathy levels. People *may*not want to be known by their medical conditions because they *may* be stigmatized in society as 'hypertension patients' by people.

5.The qualitative design *largely* involved seven (7) key personnel selected from theAbokobi Health Centre who comprised two (2) medical officers, two (2) administrators and three (3) nurses.

6.The two readings [systolic and diastolic] and changes thereof, suggest thatpharmacological treatments in *most* cases do not necessarily reduce pressure levelsamong hypertension patients.

7.Apart from the relative potency levels, studies have observed some peculiar challengesthat are associated with pharmacological treatment in developing country context suchas Ghana, which *may further* reduce the motivation for patients to effectively gothrough such process.

8.From the discussion above, the researcher *could argu*e that the usage of dance therapymanages hypertension cases and the impact could have far reaching positive effect even than

9.The researcher argues that treatment and management of blood pressures among patients *could* use supervised bodily movements and dance therapies as a complementary strategy in the treatment processes.

10.Pharmacological approach *tends* not to be working welldue to the economic challenges facing many households.