HEDGES AS WRITER PROTECTIVE DEVICES IN APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND LITERARY CRITICISM RESEARCH ARTICLES

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Abstract
It is widely acknowledged that hedges form an indispensable part of academic writing in general and research articles (RAs) in particular. There has been a lot of research done attempting to describe and classify this language device, address its complex nature and understand its functions in different types of texts. This paper presents the results of a small-scale comparative study carried out on a corpus of research articles in two scientific fields – applied linguistics and literary criticism. The analysis was based on a revised classification of Hyland (1998) and Dontcheva-Navratilova (2009) and with special regard to the role they play in reader-writer interaction. The aim of the investigation was to determine which features in the text function as writer-protective, i.e. hedging writer commitment to the propositional content of the message, and to what extent these features differ in the examined texts. The results of the study show that there are significant differences in both the variety and frequency of use of hedges in applied linguistics and literary criticism research articles, which suggests that there is a connection between particular types of hedges and differences in the type of argumentation and interaction with the intended readership in the two respective communities.

Keywords
academic writing, applied linguistics, hedges, literary criticism, research articles

1 Introduction
There are some language phenomena that seem to be more tempting for linguists than others and anyone who attempts to review the amount of work dedicated to hedging will agree that hedges have certainly received a flattering scope of attention. The beginning of the research on hedging goes back to the early 1970s when Lakoff (1972) first utilized the term ‘hedge’ and defined their properties based on the philosophical notion of fuzzy categories. Many of the subsequent studies on hedging accepted to a certain extent Lakoff’s idea that the function of hedges is concerned with degrees of vagueness and precision. There have been copious attempts to examine hedges from numerous points of view – semantic (e.g. Channel 1980, Coates 1983), pragmatic (Myers 1989, Holmes 1990, Brown & Levinson 1978), gender and culture differences (e.g. Burrough-Boenish 2002) resulting in various classifications and definitions. In