



## RESEARCH PAPER

### Lexical Hedges in Female Speech: An Analysis of Contemporary Talk Show

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#### ABSTRACT

The study elaborates the use of lexical hedges specifically in female speech. The focus was on finding frequently used lexical hedges in female speech and to analyze the impact of these lexical hedges in their communication style. However, the qualitative analysis of Anupama Chopra's talk show was conducted. To analyze the female speech pattern in the said show, Martin's (2008) two strategies of indetermination and subjectivization acted as the theoretical framework of the study at hand. Based on this research, it has been deduced that women tend to use "You know" in a greater number as compared to other lexical hedges. Additionally, the more lexical hedges women use, the more their speech become incoherent and unclear. Moreover, the study recommends to draw the results of frequency of lexical hedges in the day to day conversation of females using the frequency formula.

**KEYWORDS** Indetermination, Lexical Hedges, Subjectivization

#### Introduction

Language, known as the dress of thoughts, is defined by Sapir says that, "language is purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desire by means of a system of voluntarily produce symbols" (Sapir, 1921). It is a tool used to converse and express our ideas, thoughts, and emotions. It is the language that authorizes us to bring our thoughts into verbal and non-verbal expressions. As a result, language distinguishes us from the non-living and the flora and fauna. As is known, gender is a socially assembled entity which means that it is the society that shapes our gender, categorizing us into 'male' and 'female'. Our societies not only, draw a borderline among our genders but also, sets the do's and don'ts for how a particular gender has to behave in that specific society. There are certain attributes that society considers to diversify us into a specific gender. One of the key attributes that society uses is "language". Language plays a pivotal role in framing our gender. As a consequence, language scrutinizes the speeches, that is the daily basis conversation of males and females of their surroundings in general, and locates the dissimilarities among them.

One of the prime distinctions that separates male speech from that of the female is the use of 'Lexical Hegdes'. In gender discourse we examine how males and females in their distinctive manner express their thoughts, the methods they use in their communication, the schemata behind the words they utter, and their body language and gestures. Women's speech is considered to be more prominent and commanding in domestic circumstances while men's speech is considered to be ruling and leading in public

spheres. Females conspicuously use lexical hedges, tag questions, and empty adjectives in their speech. Lakoff (1973) said there are ten female language features namely lexical hedges, tag questions, rising intonation on declarative, empty adjectives, precise color terms, intensifier, hypercorrect grammar, super polite forms, avoidance of strong swear words, and emphatic stress. The aim of this research is to classify the features of female speech, specifically lexical hedges. Hedges is a "tool" that assembles our utterances. Females comparatively makes greater use of lexical hedges in their speech as compared to men. Due to the reason, females are claimed to be dominant panelist as the way they make use of their language is highly supportive. (Holmes, 1995. p, 274).

Lexical hedges are used by females under a variety of circumstances. They employ them when they want to soften their response, ask for clarification, or indicate ambiguity. Female lexical hedges are a humorous aspect of language and communication. In numerous cultures, females use these lexical hedges to soften their statements and seek confirmation. Some Lexical hedges include "maybe", "sort of", "kind of" etc. These lexical hedges serve to soften sentences or create a polite tone. Alternatively, it is noted that some women prohibit the use of lexical hedges in the same way, as language use can vary on the base of individual communication style and cultural background. Ali and Shakir (2022) analyzed the use of lexical hedges by studying the movie "Sierra Burgess is a Loser"

Lexical hedges in female speech target methods and patterns that women utilize to construct their speech in a politer yet indirect method. Rabab'ah, Jaser, and Altakhaineh (2022) analyzed the work of different Saudi female academic writers which result in the outcome that hedging emerges as a prominent feature of female writing. Despite the importance of lexical hedges, few researchers have analyzed these concerns for females. Hence there is a need for more clarification. Therefore, this study explores different lexical hedges used by females in a talk show mainly focusing on what is the most used lexical by females in their speech and what impact does the use of lexical hedges have on the speech of the females.

## **Literature Review**

Language is a mode of communication among humans. Through language, humans express their thoughts, ideas, feelings and whatever runs through their mind. Language can convey linguistic communication as well as non-linguistic communication. It will not be wrong to say that language is a set of words used to interchange communication; it is only possessed by human creatures. Language process has written properties to differentiate it from other creatures, such as animals. These properties are discreteness, meaningfulness, distinct productivity, limitless ability, and uncertainty between form and meaning and so on.

Gender can be defined as the traits or characteristics that are formed on the basis of society, including norms of behavior and roles linked with them. It does not develop by birth, like identity. It is the name of performance. Some social investor introduced another term of sex with respect to gender. Biological sex is a term that distinguishes the humans on the basis of their reproductive behaviors, while gender elaborate the term 'sex'. Gender is given by society and sex is given by biology

Speech is a process of interaction for the formation of meaning that produces receivers information. Through speech, we build and share meaning in spoken and written samples in different contexts. Speech sounds can be categorized in the branch of linguistics called phonology, in which different types of speech are studied. Generally, it is made up of ideas through conversation.

Nikula (1997, p.188) defined hedges which confirmed that these are the words which are used by the speakers or the communicators in their speech to make their conversation less rigid and direct. Lakoff (1977, p.195) refers hedges as 'face' which means that it is the expression of words to describe others. Hedges function in daily communicative activities. Markkannen and Schroder (1989, p.89) discussed its function very deeply. These are used to avoid threatening acts and specify the speaker's approach. They are also used as illocutionary act which are used to achieve politeness publicly. It shows uncertainty level. Maurranen (2004, p.176), consider hedges as a sub strategy such as approximator which acts as a pragmatic role.

Malawet and Trakulkasemsuk (2021). defined adverbials as these are used to explain how, where or when something happened. An adverbial like adverbs plays the role of modifying different linguistic tools. Most often they are the phrases of preposition or the phrases of infinitives in combination with intensifiers. Adverbials shed light on how certainly a thing happens and what specific pattern does it follows to be done. Adverbs of frequency tell the number of occurrences of something. In simple words, they tell us how often something happens. Adverb of frequency are the kinds of adverbs that talks about the frequency and number of times a certain thing happens in a certain time frame (Dehham 2015).

Ajmal, Sadia and Sadiq (2023) explored hedges in relation to indicating uncertainties. They have discussed different uses, such as to indicate uncertainties and to shape power and tone of communication. The data was collected from the internet websites and 4 books written by male and female. The result shows that male writers use more hedges than female writers of native language. The comparative study established a significant difference between both the gendered language. This study challenged traditional gendered stereotypes.

Donadio and Passariello (2022) explored the function and the number of times hedges are used from different cultural angles. The data was collected from 29 English research articles and 29 Italian research articles in the form of qualitative and quantitative data. The result shows that use of hedges is preferred to both English and Italian corpora. The researchers found that authors emphasized their studies' limitations through intrinsic outcomes.

Yasmin, Mahmood, Jabeen, and Siddiqui (2020) explained that hedges can serve as a communication strategy to either minimize or maximize the strength of claim. It is analyzed on the basis of frequencies and grammatical strategy in research dissertation by Pakistani writers. The data collected from 150 researches reservation of science and social science. The results of the study came to an end that the number of hedges in social sciences is more than that of other fields of science.

Livytska (2019) explored that hedging is a very critical phenomenon in academic writings. These are used to show the writers decision in relation to proposition which allow writers to express their opinion rather than fact. Data for this article was collected from different articles and journals in quantitative form to organize a corpus base study. From this data the researchers found some reasons. One of the reasons for employing hedging devices in selected article is on the desire of research either to avoid consequences of error by limiting their possible commitment or to present the result accurately. This article found both theoretical and practical applications to provide information in the academic discourse.

Samaie, Khosravian, and Boghayeri (2014) in a very detail studies the different types and the frequencies of hedges used by the people of different areas in the field of literature. In this study hedging and its main types are focused on interpersonal meta discourse.

Schmauss and Killian (2022) study is based on the differences of lexical hedges on the basis of gender, that is male and female language. It is belief of the society that woman could be constructed as a lack of confidence.

Muziatun, Malabar, and Sangketa (2021) focused on hedging devices proposed by Namsaraev (2011) with respect to participant's confidence of male and female speeches. This study is based on male and female participation in a seminar using hedges in their speech. The study reviews that hedges used by Namasaraeu in 2011 are not fully used by the students.

Vlasyan (2019) aimed to determine linguistic hedging in interpersonal communication. He came to know that hedging refers to large number of lexical in syntactic features of text to modify preposition. He collected the data from the spoken dialogue in British National Corpus (BNC). The study concluded that for most of the times the lexical hedge used in day to day talk are I think, you know, I mean, etc help to establish connection between communication. The most important uses of hedges are to avoid conflict and threats from speakers and hearer's face. The study was used to analyze pragmatic function of hedges in conversation.

Engström (2018) made his article interested in a way that express the effect and frequency of two hedges that are used to find the data about the comparison of male and female way of speaking. 'I think' is used to express belief and 'I am sure' is used to express an opinion of the researcher.

Namaziandost and Shafiee (2018) tried to draw a comparison among the genders focusing on how the lexical hedges are brought in use in a verbal communication to accomplish the results. Different education seekers were selected from Islamic Azad University of Abadan, Iran (20 males and 20 females). It is concluded that male and female use hedges differently in different context. It is found that the feminine gender has a greater use of lexical words.

## **Material and Methods**

The data for this research was collected by using a tool that specifically has females conversing with each other and making use of lexical hedges in their conversation, so that the most used lexical hedges by females in their speech can be identified along with knowing what impact the use of lexical hedges has on the speech of females. So, the interview was used as a tool to find out about the most used lexical hedge in the speech of females and to know about the impact of lexical hedges on the speech of females. The specific interview under discussion was selected just because this interview mainly focused on females conversing with each other and using lexical hedges in their speeches.

This current study was based on an interview which was broadcasted a year ago, was selected as a tool for conducting this research. The interview, Women's Day Adda was interviewed by Apunama Chopra and was broadcasted by Film Companion on Netflix is available on YouTube. This interview has a senior female interviewer and a group of 7 female members sitting next to each other playing the roles of interviewees. All the members of this interview, including the interviewer belongs to the Bollywood industry.

The interviewer asked the well-recognized ladies of Bollywood industry to expand and share their views regarding their line of success, the challenges they faced during their career building and whatever has they encountered in the Indian Film industry. This is a 29 minutes and 59 seconds long interview where a number of questions were asked by the interviewer from each of the interviewee about their career making, achievements and challenges in path.

Keeping an eye on the interview, the interview has been analyzed manually, without making use of any kind of software. To find out about the utmost used lexical words by the women in the selected talk show, after the number of lexical hedges used by each female (the interviewer and the interviewees) was counted and written separately. The entire data is observed and the most repeatedly and most commonly used lexical hedges are underlined. This research uses a qualitative method in order to extract the answers of the desired research questions.

For the first research question, the interview was listened at least thrice and the desired data was focused. To examine data regarding the effect of lexical hedges on female speech, a technique called as, the “comparison technique” was used, in which after finding out the most used lexical hedges used by each female, the speeches of all the females are compared and then this method is concluded by providing the data saying that whose speech is the most doubtful, unclear and contradictory one, as lexical hedges create doubts and makes the speech unclear.

Our research is based on the examination of lexical hedges in female talk show. The targeted methods and patterns of lexical hedges used by female tried to organize their speech in an indirect way. The current study is guided by two strategies, including indetermination and subjectivization, being explained by Martin (2008).

Strategy of indetermination consist of different types of lexical verbs and auxiliaries in which epistemic lexical verbs are directly relevant to data analysis of our research. Epistemic lexical verbs are the words that talk of assumptions. According to Martin (2008), the strategy of subjectivization refers to the usage of personal pronouns in addition to the use performative verbs in a conversation indicates that the certain said words lead to the personal opinion of the speaker and are truly based on the opinions regarding to their own interest.

Making use of lexical hedges can be revised as a strategy of indetermination because it allows speakers to express uncertainty or ambiguity in their speech. This strategy can be particularly prevalent in female speech. The use of lexical hedges can contribute to the subjectivization strategy by signaling the speaker's personal perspective and allowing for a more subjective and nuanced communication.

## **Results and Discussion**

Females make great use of lexical hedges in their speech which often makes their speech a doubtful one. The investigation to draw the results of research is based on analyzing the chosen audiotape with different angles so as to find the results of the mentioned objective questions.

### **Analysis of the Talk Show**

The analysis of the first research question includes gathering the sum lexical hedges of all the speakers in the interview by carefully listening to them and pinpointing the lexical

hedges, and then highlighting the lexical hedge which is most common among all, or the most used one.

The below mentioned table shows the lexical hedges used by the eight females in the interview and also the number of times they have been used.

**Table 1**  
**Number of each lexical hedge used by each female**

S.No:	Speakers:	You know	I guess	I think	Well	Like	I mean	Kind of	Let's say
01	Anumpama Chopra (interviewer)	07	0	02	0	01	0	0	0
02	Masaba Gupta	15	01	02	0	0	0	0	0
03	Shefali Shah	08	0	03	01	02	01	0	0
04	Mrunal Thakur	06	01	01	0	0	0	0	0
05	Neelum Kothari	04	0	0	0	02	07	0	0
06	Swastika Mukhurjee	03	0	01	0	0	0	04	0
07	Prajakta Koli	07	0	01	0	0	02	02	0
08	Kusha Kapila	01	0	02	0	02	0	0	01

The above-mentioned table shows the exact number of lexical hedges used by the interviewer and the interviewees in their question answers session. The table shows how many times does women use lexical hedges in their daily life conversation, and it also sheds light on the variety of lexical hedges women use in their talk. Lexical hedges like, you know, I guess, I think, well, like, I mean, I guess, let's say are pinpointed in the speech of women when they were being interviewed by the interviewee.

Table 1 clearly present an output that 'you know' is the most frequently used lexical hedge by women in their speech. Although, there is a variety of lexical hedges in the speech of females including, I guess, well, let's say etc but the lexical hedge, 'you know' is the most used by all the females in their conversation. The table justifies the answer showing that the interviewee, Anupama Chopra uses the lexical hedge 'you know' seven times during the entire interview, Masaba Gupta has used it fifteen times, Shefali Shah eight times, Mrunal Thakur uses it six times, Neelum Kothari makes use of it for four times, Swastika Mukhurjee uses it 03 times, Prajatika Koli seven times and Kusha Kapila uses it once. They all have used 'you know' more than any other lexical hedges in their speech which declares 'you know' to be the most used lexical hedge by females.

**Table 2**  
**Total number of lexical hedges used by each female**

S. No:	Speakers	Total Number of Lexical hedges:
01	Anumpama Chopra (interviewer)	10
02	Masaba Gupta	18
03	Shefali Shah	15
04	Mrunal Thakur	08
05	Neelum Kothari	13
06	Swastika Mukhurjee	08
07	Prajakta Koli	12
08	Kusha Kapila	06

The above mentioned table shows that Masaba Gupta is the female with the maximum number of lexical hedges in her speech (which is 18) whereas, Kusha Kapila is

the female with the minimum number of lexical hedges in her speech (which is only 06). Spotting the effect of lexical hedges on the speech of females makes use of a qualitative approach that uses a comparison method to conclude the results. By using the comparison technique and comparing the speech of Masaba Gupta, the female who has used eighteen lexical hedges in her speech to the speech of Kusha Kapila, who has used only six lexical hedges in her entire speech, we get to know that Masaba Gupta's speech is very unclear and full of doubts as compared to the speech of Kusha Kapila. Kusha Kapila appears to be more clear in her thought processing and bringing her thoughts into words. Although, Kusha Kapila is far less experienced than Masaba Gupta but still Masaba Gupta's speech seems to be the one which either seeks the approval of the interviewer or she is not very clear about which aspect of her speech to put first. The only reason which makes Masaba Gupta's speech less clear than that of the speech of Kusha Kapila is the maximum use of lexical hedges by Masaba Gupta in her speech. She is no doubt an experienced lady but, it is the use of lexical hedges which makes her speech lag behind. Kusha's speech has less number of lexical ideas.

### **Conclusion**

This research scrutinizes the use of lexical hedges by females in their conversation. It uses the theory of subjectivization and interdetermination, simultaneously. Using these theories, it in depth studies which lexical hedge is the utmost used by females in their conversation. Furthermore, it also sheds light upon how the maximum use of lexical hedges by females in their talk has an adverse and negative effect on their speech.

This research works on two research questions and works deeply in finding the answers for both of the research questions. The qualitative method was used to find the answers to these research questions and employed interview as a tool. And for the analysis of both of the research questions, this study purely makes use of analyzing data using the qualitative research method. For the first research question, this research concludes that, females use a number of different lexical hedges in their day to day conversations but, 'you know' is the most frequently used lexical hedge by females in their speech whereas, for the second research question, which is to spot the effect of lexical hedges on the speech of females, this study explains that using lexical hedges causes an adverse effect on the speech of females.

After the entire analysis was carried out, this research concluded that the more the females use lexical hedges in their day to day conversations, the greater does her speech gets doubtful and less clear. Lexical hedges have an adverse effect on the speech of the one who uses it, thus, females make great use of it which makes it obvious for their speech to be doubtful and less clear.

Thus this research paper concludes that the more a female uses lexical hedges in her speech, the more her speech becomes unclear and doubtful. We can easily say that lexical hedges negatively impact the speech of females. The greater lexical hedges are used the more complexity and disturbance does it creates in the conversation of the feminine gender. The study recommends working on how lexical hedges of the interviewees effects the speech of the interviewer? And also to draw the results of frequency of lexical hedges in the day to day conversation of females using the frequency formula.

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