Abstract The study investigates hedging in Arabic and English newspaper editorials, examining

A contrastive analysis of the use of hedges in English and Arabic newspaper editorials

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differences in usage and types. It analyzes 60 editorials from two Arabic (Echorouk and Elkhabar) and two British English newspapers (The Independent and The Guardian), applying Salager-Meyer's (1997) model. Results indicate hedging in both languages, with English utilizing more hedges. Arabic leans towards approximators of degree, quantity, frequency, and time, while English favors modal auxiliary verbs. The study underscores the importance of teaching learners not only grammar but also rhetorical structures across different writing genres.

Key words: *Arabic, Editorials, English, Hedges, Newspapers.*

1. Introduction

Nowadays, media has become one of the most ubiquitous and influential powers in modern society. Its power lies in its persuasive ability to influence the minds of the audience. Newspapers, as a pivotal example of the newfangled media, are not only a medium to report facts and neutral information, but rather, they are considered as sites for expressing ideologies, cultures, politics, and societies, and positioning negotiations through utilizing different pragma-lingual devises such as metadiscoursal resources (Salahshoor, Najjary ASL, & Tofigh, 2014). This is clearly illustrated in editorials that convey the official position of the newspaper. Indeed, Zarza (2018) pointed out that editorials are, famed as the voice of the newspaper, "public discourse that communicate with a mass audience and play on obvious role in the determining and shifting of public opinion" (ibid: 41). Furthermore, William (1981) argued that editorials are one type of argumentative texts, and the use of interactional metadiscourse in this genre strengthens the relationship between the writer and reader.

From the perspective of considering writing as a means to facilitate social and communicative interaction between the writer and the reader, metadiscourse can be described as "the linguistic tools used to structure a discourse or convey the writer's position regarding its content or the audience" (Hyland 2000:109, as cited in Hyland & Tse 2004). Along with the same line, Amiryousefi & Rasekh (2010) argued that metadiscourse epitomizes that writing is a social act that involves an interaction between readers and writers to affect how ideas are presented and perceived. Therefore, metadiscourse can be understood as the methods through which writers manifest themselves within their texts to engage with their readers. Additionally, according to Hyland & Tse (2004), metadiscourse serves two primary functions: textual and interpersonal. Textual functions aid in structuring the discourse by linking ideas, indicating shifts in topics and sequences, referencing other parts of the text, and similar activities. Conversely, interpersonal functions highlight the writer's stance in the text through the use of hedges, boosters, self-reference, and other elements commonly categorized as evaluation or appraisal (ibid: 157).

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Newspaper editorials provide interesting chances to examine how it is used for persuasion and argumentation, and how relationships are established between writers and readers. That is to say, how writers influence the audience's opinion and shape their thoughts in any given issue. Therefore, metadiscourse, as an eminent strategy for argumentation, becomes the focal point for several studies. However, it appears that there is a limited exploration regarding the application of metadiscourse in the journalistic genre, particularly in newspaper editorials. Thus, the current study endeavors to examine the utilization of hedging, a prominent strategy of interpersonal metadiscourse, in both English and Arabic editorials. This research takes a comparative approach, aiming to highlight the similarities and disparities in the frequency and function of hedging across both cultural contexts.

2. Theoretical Background
2.1. Hedges : definitions

Hedges are one of the mostly utilized metadiscourse markers. It has been elucidated in different ways in literature. Erstwhile, it refers to fuzziness of concepts. Lakoff (1972: 458) suggested that:
"Natural language concepts have vague boundaries and fuzzy edges and that, consequently, natural language sentences will very often be neither true, nor false, nor nonsensical, but rather true to a certain extent and false to a certain extent, true in certain respects and false in other respects."

Lakoff focused not on the pragmatic roles of hedges, but primarily on their logical characteristics. He viewed hedges as "words whose meaning inherently involves vagueness, serving to either increase or decrease fuzziness" (ibid: 471). In his work, Lakoff examined the concept of 'hedging' from a semantic standpoint, regarding it as a method to adjust and approximate levels of fuzziness, tentativeness, and uncertainty.

These semantic features of hedging were the starting point for many researchers to expend the scope of discussion to encompass the pragmatic aspect of hedges in discourse.
Within this approach, research focuses more on the functions of hedges such as politeness, indirectness, vagueness and understatement. Hyland (1996: 343) defined hedging as "the expression of tentativeness and possibility." He added that hedges are related to expressing, purposefully, vagueness to show distance between the speaker and what is said. Correspondingly, Wilamova (2005) stated that hedges are pragmatic markers that soften the strength of an utterance to express negative politeness. That is to say, they are deemed as mitigating devices used to minimize the degree of imposition between the speaker and the recipient.

Equally significant, according to Fraser (2007), hedging is considered a rhetorical tactic. By employing specific terms, structures, or prosodic forms in speech, speakers indicate a partial commitment to the complete categorization of a term or expression in the utterance (content mitigation), or to the intended force of the utterance (force mitigation).
From the citation mentioned above, it can be noticed that Fraser relates hedging to the speaker's intention to show lack of full commitment in terms of content or force. This supports Wilamova's (2005) claim that hedges are considered as mitigating devices. Along with the same line, according to Hyland (2005), hedges are devices used to signal that the writer intend to prevent the complete commitment to a proposition. Simply put, these devices assist writers to reduce the force of commitment in their writings, and send an indirect message that they are providing opinions not fats.

2.2.Functions of Hedges

Several studies have been conducted on hedging, mainly to capture the functions of hedges, but the most of them focused on their pragmatic aspect. To begin with, according to Saidat, Rafayah, & Ahmed (2011), hedges are used to avoid the sender's direct involvement; to show a degree of uncertainty; and to express politeness and modesty. They yielded more illustrations to these functions. They supplemented that hedges indicate imprecision when the precise information is intentionally avoided or is not available; moderate direct criticism; avoid sender's full commitment; show politeness; and modify the discourse.

Furthermore, Siddique, Mahmood, Akhter and Arslan (2018) maintained that hedges are used to show the writer's uncertainty about the contents. Hasanah & Wahydi (2015) offered four reasons for hedging: Firstly, to mitigate the risk of opposition by toning down statements to be less confrontational; Secondly, to enhance precision in reporting findings; thirdly, to demonstrate positive and negative politeness; lastly, to foster a sense of rapport between the writer and reader and ensure acceptance within a particular community.

Following this line of thought, Rabab'ah and Abu Rumman (2015) discovered that hedges serve several functions in discourse. They observed that hedges are utilized to soften the impact of assertions and reduce the level of certainty expressed. Additionally, hedges are employed to demonstrate politeness, thereby garnering support from the audience. Furthermore, they are used to sidestep direct criticism and instead engage the recipient in the conversation, fostering a collaborative atmosphere.

2.3.Hedging in newspaper editorials

Although, much has been published on hedges and hedging, there is a limited literature about the use of hedging in newspaper editorials. Tahririan & Shahzamani (2009) examined the similarities and differences between English and Persian social, economic, and political newspaper editorials. They found that English editorials' writers surpassed more hedges than Persian ones. By the same token, Abdollahzadeh (2007) cited in Samaie, Khosravian, & Boghayeri (2014) investigated how writers from diverse cultural backgrounds structure their written texts through the use of metadiscourse markers. Analyzing 53 Persian and English newspaper editorials, Abdollahzadeh discovered a contrast in the usage of hedges. English editorials tended to employ more hedges, whereas Persian editorials favored emphatics. This discrepancy suggests that English writers utilize hedges extensively with the aim of maintaining politeness towards their readers.

Moreover, based on Hyland's (2005) taxonomy, Salahshoor, Najjary ASL,& Tofigh (2014) analyzed eighty newspaper editorials from four elite Iranian and American newspapers. They found no differences between Iranian and American editors' use of metadiscoursal elements. Further, results reveal that metadiscourse devices assist to yield an opportunity for persuasive writing, since they exhibit informational, rhetorical, and personal choices.

Siddique, Mahmood, Akhtr, & Arslan (2018) investigated employing hedges in a thousand of editorials in Pakistani English newspapers. This study categorized hedges into the expression of uncertainty, conditional clauses, and impersonal expressions and reported speech. The researchers found out that these devices utilized by editors to make the readers uncertain about their stance, and give them a chance to decide and make conclusions about the issue presented.

Zarza (2018) conducted a comprehensive analysis of 240 editorials from both the New York Times and the New Straits Times. The findings unveiled a shared tendency among both newspapers to incorporate hedges in their written content. This suggests that expressing a degree of uncertainty and tentativeness in their perspectives is a customary practice observed in the editorials of both publications. This aligns with the notion that hedging serves as a rhetorical device employed by writers to convey their viewpoints while acknowledging potential ambiguity or variability in the presented information.

3. The present study
3.1. Aims and corpus of study

This research examines newspaper editorials from British English and Algerian Arabic sources, aiming to uncover similarities and differences in the utilization of hedges. Sixty editorials were selected for analysis, with 30 drawn from recent issues of "The Independent" and "The Guardian", prominent British English newspapers, published in February 2019. The study contrasts the frequencies of hedging devices in these British English newspapers with those found in two Algerian Arabic newspapers, "Echorouk" and "Elkhabar". Specifically, the study seeks to address the following questions:

1. What are the hedging devices used in the British English editorials?
2. What are the hedging devices used in the Algerian Arabic editorials?
3. Are there any differences in the use of hedging in English and Algerian Arabic editorials?

3.2. Data Collection

To achieve the objectives of this study, the researcher opted for a selection of 15 newspaper editorials from each English newspaper. These editorials were sourced from recent editions of "The Independent" spanning from February 1 to February 15, 2019, with an equivalent number also chosen from "The Guardian" during the same period. Similarly, 15 newspaper editorials were chosen from recent issues of the Algerian Arabic daily "Echorouk", published between February 1 and February 15, 2019, with an equal number selected from "Elkhabar". Consequently, a total of 60 editorials from British and Algerian newspapers were scrutinized as part of this investigation.

The researcher randomly chose the articles, which were subsequently examined closely to identify instances of hedges. A comparison was then made between the English sample articles from "The Independent" and "The Guardian" to assess the utilization of hedges in contrast to similar linguistic devices found in the two Algerian Arabic newspapers, "Echorouk" and "Ennahar".

3.3. Background of the Newspapers

The Independent, a prominent British daily newspaper, covers a wide range of societal issues rather than focusing solely on specific topics such as economy or business. With a steadfast commitment to global perspectives, it has evolved from its inception as a newcomer in the British newspaper landscape to become a widely recognized source of international reporting and analysis. The Independent prioritizes objective news presentation and upholds journalistic ethics, garnering popularity among authorities both in the UK and worldwide. As a result, the editorials published by The Independent hold significant sway in shaping societal discourse, prompting authorities to critically engage with the issues raised.

Similarly, The Guardian, another influential English newspaper based in the UK, maintains a commitment to financial and editorial independence in perpetuity. Renowned for its mainstream influence, The Guardian emphasizes its editorial independence, ensuring that its journalism remains free from commercial bias and uninfluenced by wealthy owners, politicians, or shareholders.

Regarding the Arabic corpus, as outlined by Dahou (2017), the Echorouk newspaper stands as an independent tabloid established in 1990. With daily circulation figures ranging from 400,000 to 500,000 copies and a moderate unsold percentage of 20% to 30%, it holds a prominent position in the newspaper market, suggesting a considerable readership base. Similarly, Elkhabar, also an independent tabloid established in 1990 by a group of journalists, has recently undergone a transition period following its acquisition by the Cevital group. Initially a top-selling newspaper in Algeria, Elkhabar's position has declined over the years due to economic factors. To adapt, the newspaper's focus has shifted towards its print edition, with the electronic version primarily

featuring daily headlines and key updates. Despite this, Elkhabar maintains a daily circulation averaging around 250,000 copies, placing it in third position among Algerian newspapers.

3.4. Data Analysis

To quantitatively analyze the results, the researcher manually counted and calculated the occurrences of hedges in each editorial, separately for each language. This process involved tallying the number of hedges in English articles within each newspaper and then comparing these counts with the results from their Arabic counterparts.

The researcher categorized the types of hedges found in the newspaper articles using the framework established by Salager-Meyer (1997). To validate this classification, the researcher sought input from two PhD students specializing in Linguistics and a teacher from the Department of Arabic Literature at the University of Jordan. Based on their feedback, the researcher made adjustments to the classification.

3.4.1. Framework

Salager-Meyer (1997) delineated various types of hedges as follows:

1. *Modal auxiliary verbs***:** These are verbs that indicate possibility, necessity, or permission, such as may, might, can, could, would, should. They convey a sense of tentativeness or conditional action.
2. *Lexical verbs,* also known as speech act verbs, used for acts like doubting and evaluating rather than describing illocutionary force, such as: seem, appear, sound, believe, assume, suggest, estimate, tend, think, argue, indicate, propose, speculate, doubt, expect, consider.
3. *Adjectival, adverbial, and nominal modal phrases:* These phrases use adjectives, adverbs, or nouns to qualify statements. Adjectives like possible, probable, unlikely; nouns such as assumption, claim, possibility, estimate, suggestion; adverbs like perhaps, possibly, probably, likely, presumably, all serve to express varying degrees of uncertainty
4. *Approximators:* These are words or phrases that indicate approximation in terms of degree, quantity, frequency, or time, including words like approximately, roughly, about, generally, almost, mostly, many, more than, less than, tens, hundreds, a lot of, few, little, somewhat, often, sometimes, occasionally, usually, and others.
5. *Introductory phrases expressing personal doubt or direct involvement*: These are phrases used at the beginning of sentences to express the author's personal viewpoint or uncertainty. Examples include I believe, to our knowledge, it is our view that, we feel that. They signal the author's perspective and level of certainty regarding the information presented.
6. *If clauses:* These are conditional clauses that introduce hypothetical situations or conditions. Examples include if true, if nothing. They introduce a condition upon which the validity of the statement may depend.
7. *Compound hedges:* These are combinations of multiple hedges used together. They can involve modal auxiliaries, lexical verbs, adverbs, or adjectives. Compound hedges can range from simple combinations like a modal auxiliary with a lexical verb (e.g., it would appear) to more complex structures involving multiple layers of qualification (e.g., it may suggest that, it seems reasonable to assume that, it would seem somewhat unlikely that). These compound constructions further emphasize uncertainty or qualification in the statement.

3.5.   Results

3.5.1.   Overall frequency of each hedging category

Table 1 presents the overall use of hedges in both languages: Arabic and English. It shows that hedges are more frequently employed in English newspaper articles (N=1055) than in the Arabic ones (N=307). These results indicate that the four newspapers (those are written in Arabic and those in English, respectively) utilize hedges in their editorials to avoid full commitment and save their faces.

Language	Frequency of Hedges
Arabic	307
English	1055

1. **The overall use of hedges in both languages**

3.5.2.   The use of hedging in Arabic editorials
3.5.2.1. The overall use of hedging in Arabic

Table 2. below summarized the frequencies and percentages of all types of hedges found in Arabic. As it can be noted from the table, approximators of degree, quantity, frequency, and time are the most frequent type of hedges employed by the English writers. This type is followed by lexical verbs (27.36%), Modal auxiliary verbs (16.61%), and adjectival, adverbial, and nominal modal phrases (13.68%). This table also shows that compound hedges are not used in the Arabic newspaper editorials.

Concerning the adjectival, adverbial, and nominal modal phrases, the obtained results show that Arabic writers use more nouns (92.85%) than adjectives (7.14%), while adverbs are not used at all by them.

Hedges		frequency		Percentage	
Modal auxiliary verbs		51		16.61%	
Lexical verbs		84		27.36%	
Adjectival, adverbial, and nominal modal phrases	Adjectives	3	42	7.14%	13.68%
	Nouns	39		92.85%	
	Adverbs	0		0%	
Approximators of degree, quantity, frequency, and time		105		34.20%	
Introductory phrases		5		1.63%	
If clauses		20		6.52%	
Compound hedges		0		0%	
Total		307		100%	

Table 2. The overall use of hedging in Arabic

3.5.2.2.   The frequencies and percentages of hedging categories in Arabic
3.5.2.2.1. Modal auxiliary verbs

The present paper found out that there are some prepositions (حروف) used in Arabic as a type of hedges: قد, لعل, and ربما. Hence, we classified them according to their equivalent meaning in English, and we considered them as models. This may be deemed as a difference in the internal structure of Arabic and English.

Table 3 indicates that   قد   (41.18%) and يستطيع (17.66%) are the most frequently used in the modal auxiliary verbs subcategory. It also shows that صار (1.96%) is the least used form in this subcategory. Examples of these hedges are illustrated in the following statements extracted from the study's corpus:

- *"قد يصل العدد المجلوب للإجتماع إلى90 %! و هذا دلالة كافية على الصعوبات التي تواجهها فكرة العهدة الخامسة، وهي صعوبةقد تزيد من قناعة الرئيس بأن لا يغامر بالترشح ...(الخبر ، 9).*
- نحن لا نتهم الوزير عيسى في نيته تجاه العلوم الإسلامية، و هو أحد رجالاتها و علمائها،*فربما* قال ما قال بحسن صريرة ومن منطلق الغيرة عليها..." (الشروق، 11).

• "السلطة لا *يمكن* أن تسمح بمرشح جدي *يمكن* أن يجمع حوله الشعب و بقايا المعارضة الجدية و النظيفة...ولهذا الغرض سيقوم المجلس الدستوري بدوره في هذا المجال" (الخبر، 13).

Modal auxiliary verbs	Frequency	percentage
يستطيع	9	17.66%
ينبغي	2	3.92%
يصبح	3	5.88%
يمكن	4	7.84%
صار	1	1.96%
تحتاج	2	3.92%
يجب	2	3.92%
يقوم	2	3.92%
قد	21	41.18%
ربما	2	3.92%
لعل	3	5.88%
Total	51	100%

Table 3. Modal auxiliary verbs in Arabic

3.5.2.2.2. Lexical verbs

This category includes several verbs that show uncertainty and probability such as تبدو، تداعى، ظننا، أظهر، تزعم، تقترح، تشير. Those verbs are frequently utilized in the Arabic editorials. Below some examples found in the corpus are presented:

• "لذلك عندما عين وزيرا للسردين *قيل* وقتها بأن السردين مات بالضحك وقرر أن يهجر الشواطئ الجزائرية، و *قيل* بأن هناك حروبا سمكية بين أسراب السردين، و هي عادة الحروب التي تنشب من حين لأخر بين الأسماك و تؤدي إلى هجرة الأسماك من الشواطئ التي تنشب فيها هذه الحروب" (الخبر، 15).

• "زعماء أحزاب التحالف التي دعت الرئيس إلى الترشح، جلهم *يصرح* في جلساته الخاصة بأنه ضد العهدة الخامسة..." (الخبر، 5).

• "الذين شعروا أن التهمة موجهة إليهم بالدرجة الأولى، غير أنه لم يصدر تصريح من وزارة التربية التي *يفترض* أن تدفع عن نفسها تهمة "تخريج التكفيريين و الإقصائيين"" (الشروق،14).

• "الأمر *يبدو* عاديا من الوهلة الأولى، ولكن المنطق يقول إن خطيب جامع مثل الأمير عبد القادر بمدينة مثل قسنطينة، من المفروض أن يكون هو القدوة الذي يتبعه غيره و يتلقبون بإسمه و ليس العكس" (الشروق، 8).

3.5.2.2.3. Adjectival, adverbial, and nominal modal phrases

Arabic writers use a number of adjectives and nouns to decrease the degree of commitment to their claims. Data gained reveal that only three adjectives were used in the Arabic editorials, those adjectives are: متوقع، شبه مقتنع، محتمل. For example,

• "أبو جرة سلطاني أنشأ جمعية الوسطية ليس لممارسة الوسطية السياسية و لو بالرقية، بل أنشأها ليعطي لنفسه منبرا يساوم به السلطة كبديل *محتمل* لقيادة حمس" (الخبر، 15).

• "الجيش و الرئاسة شبه مقتنعين بهذا الأمر، وفي هذه تبدو عدم مسؤولية أحزاب التحالف، لأنها فعلا أفرغت من قياداتها التي يمكن أن تفكر بشكل صحيح " (الخبر،5).

Concerning nouns that have the meaning of probability, data show 39 nouns were found in the corpus. This subcategory includes nouns such as إعتبار، إمكانية، إحتمالات، الرأي العام. To enumerate, below are some examples that have been utilized:

• "*إحتمالات* قوية أن يقوم الرئيس بوتفليقة بالإنتقام من أحزاب التحالف على طريقته الخاصة، بأن يرفض الترشح مرة أخرى..." (الخبر، 9).

• "و يرسم آخرون مستقبلهم على ضوء سقطتنا وهم لا يعرفون جيدا أن من لديه تراكمات القوة لا يضيره أن يكبو مرة و مرتين، لأن قوة الإنجاز في روحه تمثل له النموذج العملي *الممكن*." (الشروق، 13).

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

In the corpus of Arabic editorials four types of approximators were found; they were about degree (e.g. عالية جدا), quantity (e.g. أغلبية، بعض، عصبة), frequency (e.g. عدة مرات، يوميا), and time (e.g.

مطلع هذه الالفية الثالثة، الآونة الأخيرة، طوال ربع قرن). This category represents 34.20% from the total number of hedges used in the arabic corpus. The following examples illustrate the use of these approximators:

● " إننا كأفراد و كمجتمع و كأمة نواجه تحديات عديدة و *أحيانا* كثيرة لا نكون مؤهلين للمواجهة فنسقط في وهدة من وهاد الطريق و يظن *البعض* أننا سنتبخر و أن علينا المغادرة من حيز الفعل.." (الشروق، 13).

● "لا بل إن *بعض* المسؤولين لا يشعرون بالخجل وهم يقارنون مستوى الجريمة عندنا مثلا بما يقع في بلد بحجم الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية، حيث *مئات الملايين* من السكان الذين جاؤوا من كل حدب و صوب ..." (الشروق، 12).

● "ظهرت وجوههم "غبرة ترهقها قترة"! وهم ينادون بالعهدة الخامسة و *أغلبهم* لا يعرف حتى ما يقول... وقد ظهر ذلك مباشرة بعد الهجوم على حافلات "الساندويتش كاشير"." (الشروق، 13)

3.5.2.2.5. Introductory phrases

Data obtained show that only five introductory phrases were used in the Arabic editorials. Those phrases include examples such as:

● "*أرى أنه* من حق الأجيال، أن تنزل اللعنة على جيلنا المستكين..." (الخبر،4).

● "*نعلم جميعا* بأن الرجل الحالم بالزعامة، الذي قال بأنه مبعوث من السماء لرئاسة البلاد..." (الشروق،2).

3.5.2.2.6. If clauses

'إذا...فـ ، كان...لو، لو...فـ، سـ...إذا، If clauses included six forms in Arabic, as shown in table 4 below : 'إذا...فـ 'إذا...قد، لو...لـ. It is found that' is the most frequent form used by the arabic writers. To illustrates, below some examples from the corpus are presented :

● "و إذا كانت الجزائر إلى حد الساعة متمسكة بثوابتها و مواقفها المشرفة و الباعثة على الفخر تجاه فلسطين، و بدعمها "ظالمة أو مظلومة"، و بالإنسجام التام مع الموقف الشعبي الرافض قطعا لأي تعامل مع الإحتلال.. فإنها ينبغي أن تدرك تماما أن هناك تحولات دراماتيكية كبيرة في المنطقة..." (الشروق،3).

● "لو وصل إلى الحكم رئيس بفضل وزارة التعليم العالي و ليس وزارة الدفاع، فلن تجد يا أخي نعمان أمثال بن غبريت و غول و عمار بن يونس و بوشارب في الواجهة السياسية للرئيس، يرتكبون بإسمه المناكر السياسية !" (الخبر،3)

If clauses	Frequency	percentage
إذا....فـ	7	35%
كان...لو	2	10%
لو...فـ	3	15%
سـ...إذا	4	20%
لو...لـ	2	10%
قد...إذا	2	10%
Total	20	100%

Table 4. If clauses in Arabic

3.5.3. The use of hedges in English editorials
3.5.3.1. The overall use of hedges in English

Table 5 below illustrates the overall utilization of hedges observed in the English editorials. It indicates that modal auxiliary verbs (35.45%) are the most commonly employed type of hedges. Following closely in frequency are approximators indicating degree, quantity, frequency, and time (27.96%), adjectival, adverbial, and nominal modal phrases (13.74%), and lexical verbs (10.71%). The table further reveals that if clauses (7.20%), introductory phrases (3.14%), and compound hedges (1.80%) are the least utilized types of hedges in the English newspapers.

Concerning adjectival, adverbial, and nominal modal phrases, the data indicate that nouns (40.69%) are more frequently used than adverbs (35.86%) and adjectives (23.44%).

Hedges		frequency		Percentage	
Modal auxiliary verbs		374		35.45%	
Lexical verbs		113		10.71%	
Adjectival, adverbial, and nominal modal phrases	Adjectives	34	145	23.44%	13.74%
	Nouns	59		40.69%	
	Adverbs	52		35.86%	
Approximators of degree, quantity, frequency, and time		295		27.96%	
Introductory phrases		33		3.14%	
If clauses		76		7.20%	
Compound hedges		19		1.80%	
Total		1055		100%	

Table5. The overall use of hedges in English

3.5.3.2. The frequencies and percentages of hedging categories in Arabic
3.5.3.2.1. Modal auxiliary verbs

As depicted in the preceding Table 5, modal auxiliary verbs emerge as the predominant category of hedges employed in English editorials. Nine modals were found. Moreover, table 6 below reveals that will (25.93%), would (16.32%) and can (16.60%) are frequently employed, while be able (1.60 %) and need to (2.40%) are the least used in the editorials. In those newspapers, the writers used modals as follow:

- "Of course the end of free movement of labour means that the British _will_ no longer _be able_ to work in the EU, and vice versa, without permission; and British residents in the EU _may_ not enjoy the same protections as they do today (for example on property taxes). Still, at least it is something." (The independent, 1).
- "The agreement made less salient the questions of identity: under its provisions people in Northern Ireland _could_ be, uncontroversially, citizens of Britain or Ireland." (The guardian, 5).

Modal auxiliary verbs	Frequency	percentage
Will	97	25.93%
May	42	11.22%
Might	18	4.81%
Would	61	16.32%
Could	34	9.09%
Be able	6	1.60%
Should	45	12.03%
Need to	9	2.40%
Can	62	16.60%
Total	374	100%

Table 6. Modals auxiliary verbs in English

3.5.3.2.2. Lexical verbs

The analysis of the corpus indicates that several verbs expressing uncertainty were utilized in the English newspapers, e.g. suggest, expect, predict, state, and seem. Such lexical verbs are exemplified in the following sentences:

- "Because crimes are detected more often where there are police to detect them, the areas in which police are concentrated will tend to have higher recorded crime rates,

which in turn _suggest_ that they need more police sent to them, and so on." (The guardian, 4).

- "Having _claimed_, absurdly, that the Democrats "cannot legitimately win" the 2020 presidential election, the president has now repeated offensive remarks about Elizabeth Warren's Native American ancestry, and seemingly made a thinly veiled joke about the Trail of Tears – a series of forced relocations of Native Americans in the 1800s, regarded by many as a genocide." (The independent, 10).

3.5.3.2.3. Adjectival, adverbial, and nominal modal phrases

This category of modal phrases comprises nouns, adverbs, and adjectives. The obtained results show that nouns (40.69%) are more frequently used than adverbs (35.86%), and adjectives (23.44%). Such type of nouns includes items like suggestion, proposal, uncertainty, and claims. Adverbs include examples like possibly, perhaps, apparently, and seemingly whilst, adjectives cover examples like possible, likely, and quite. To illustrate, below there some examples taken from the corpus:

a. Nouns :
"It was also encouraging that John McDonnell, the shadow chancellor, reacted so emphatically to a caller on a radio phone-in on Tuesday who described _claims_ of antisemitism in the Labour Party as "smears"." (The independent, 9).

b. Adverbs:
"Turning Point UK, which, given its name, _presumably_ wishes to have a revolutionary edge to its counter-revolutionary activities, is planning to visit British universities, which its leaders say will cause a "disruption in socialist ideology"." (The independent, 4).

c. Adjectives:
"This makes it all the more essential that it is _possible_ to scrutinise what is happening in family courts." (The guardian, 15).

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

The findings indicate that English writers employ various types of approximators associated with degree, quantity, frequency, and time (such as "so much of," "kind of," "about," "often") to convey vagueness and uncertainty. Among the approximators identified in the corpus are:

- _"Often_ the results are ludicrously inaccurate; _sometimes_ they are creepily precise." (The guardian, 4).
- "This has become something of a mantra, yet it does not come packaged with the _kind of_ detail that makes it appear plausible." (The independent, 3).

- _"Now_ they need _some_ winning policies, and a candidate who refuses to be intimidated by the man with the orange tan." (The independent, 10).

3.5.3.2.4. Introductory Phrases

Introductory phrases include expressions such as "it is our view" "we believe", and "I see". This type of phrases is used to highlight the writer's involvement in the text. Examples illustrating the usage of these adjectives are demonstrated as follows:
- _"We cannot be sure_ what happened next, but on Friday the no-confidence motions were withdrawn and the Wavertree Labour Party cancelled the meeting. Someone speaking for Mr Corbyn, but asking to be identified only as a source in the leader's office, said: "It was the right decision."." (The independent, 9).

- *"Although we know* of few murders that he himself directly committed – one witness testified to seeing Guzmán shoot a suspected traitor and then have him buried alive – he must have ordered countless deaths." (The guardian, 13).

3.5.3.2.5. If clauses

As it is shown in table 5, if clauses (7.20%) are less used compared to modal auxiliary verbs (35.45%), approximators (27.26%), and modal phrases (13.74%). Those types of clauses include examples like:

- *"If* the introduction of universal credit was misguided, then refusing to collect statistical information that could prove or disprove its impact was a dereliction of duty." (The independent, 11).
- "The perils are real if the result is close. *If* Mr Abubakar edges ahead, much will depend on whether Mr Buhari is as willing to go as his predecessor was, in turn influenced by the calculations of political "godfathers" who shifted to the challenger last time." (The guardian, 10).

3.5.3.2.6. Compound hedges

This category of hedges comprises a combination of two or three hedges together. To clarify, those hedges include a blend of a modal auxiliary verb and a lexical verb, a lexical verb and an adverb, or a modal auxiliary, a lexical verb, and an adverb or an adjective. For example,
- "If, as *would seem likely*, Mr Farage runs candidates against Ukip, and against pro-May Conservatives, the results could be chaotic, but *would probably* split the Leave vote, and take more votes from the Conservatives than Labour, with the obvious consequence of making a Corbyn government more likely." (The independent, 1).
- "Given the extent of the cuts – £950m has been sliced from the total budget since 2010, with the amount falling from £2.5bn to £1.6bn in real terms – critics were unimpressed. While the extra money *can be expected* to ease the situation for a small minority of litigants, for the majority nothing will change." (The guardian, 15).

3.5.4. The use of hedges in both languages

3.5.4.1. Frequencies and percentages of hedging in both languages

Table 7 below presents the results obtained in both languages. A quick glance at the table, show that there is a variance in the overall count of hedges used in Arabic and English (as also was shown in table1). The present section discusses descriptively, the differences between these two languages in employing hedges in editorial newspapers.

Hedges		English editorials			Arabic editorials		
		frequency	Percentage		frequency	Percentage	
Modal auxiliary verbs		374	35.45%		51	16.61%	
Lexical verbs		113	10.71%		84	27.36%	
Adjectival, adverbial, and nominal modal phrases	Adjectives	34	145	23.44%	13.74%	3	42	7.14%	13.68%
	Nouns	59		40.69%		39		92.85%	
	Adverbs	52		35.86%		0		0%	
Approximators of degree, quantity, frequency, and time		295	27.96%		105	34.20%	
Introductory phrases		33	3.14%		5	1.63%	
If clauses		76	7.20%		20	6.52%	
Compound hedges		19	1.80%		0	0%	
Total		1055	100%		307	100%	

Table7. Frequencies and percentages of hedging in both languages

As depicted in Table 7 above, modal auxiliary verbs (35.45%) emerge as the most prevalent form of hedging utilized in English editorials. Conversely, approximators indicating degree, quantity, frequency, and time (34.20%) are the predominant type employed in Arabic. Moreover, the table highlights additional disparities in hedge usage between the two languages. Notably, adverbs and compound hedges are absent in Arabic editorials, whereas they are present in English counterparts.

Indeed, the findings indicate variations in the frequencies of hedges between the two languages. Specifically, English editorials employ a higher percentage of introductory phrases (3.14%) and if clauses (7.20%) compared to Arabic editorials, where introductory phrases account for 1.63% and if clauses for 6.52%. Additionally, the results demonstrate that Arabic newspapers utilize a greater proportion of lexical verbs (27.36%) than English newspapers, which only account for 10.71%.

3.6. Discussion and conclusion

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the utilization of hedging devices in two distinct languages, namely Arabic and English. The results obtained indicate that the four newspapers, both in Arabic and English, demonstrate a preference for incorporating hedges in their written content. However, the findings also uncover variations in the frequencies of hedges when comparing the two languages. Overall, there exists a discrepancy in the overall usage of hedging between them, with English editorials employing more hedges than their Arabic counterparts. This finding contrasts with the conclusions drawn by Sultan (2011), who observed that Arabic research articles (311) utilize more hedges compared to English ones (237). Similarly, this disparity does not align with the findings of Taweel, Saidat, Hussein, and Saidat (2011), who noted that Arab politicians employ more hedges than their English counterparts.

The finding that English writers employ a greater number of hedges than their Arabic counterparts may indicate a cultural distinction between English and Arabic practices, as noted by Tahririan and Shahzamani (2009:215). They suggest that differences in hedge frequencies do not necessarily imply variations in authority or impoliteness, but rather reflect differing societal perceptions and cultural norms. This divergence could be attributed to the tendency of Arabic writers to be more assertive than their English counterparts. However, Wierzbicka (1999) challenges the notion that Western cultures are inherently more assertive than Oriental ones.

Considering the focus of this study on journalistic discourse, it appears that while English writers may lean towards assertiveness in general, they exhibit a less assertive tone in journalistic contexts.

In terms of hedge categories, this research reveals that English editorials exhibit a higher frequency of modal auxiliary verbs compared to other types, while Arabic editorials show a preference for employing approximators related to degree, quantity, frequency, and time. Additionally, the findings indicate that Arabic writers refrain from using proverbs and compound hedges, unlike their English counterparts.

The results of this study align with previous research that has highlighted how differences in cultural backgrounds can contribute to variations in linguistic features such as hedging. For instance, Salahshoor, Asl, and Tofigh (2014) identified differences in hedging usage between American and Iranian editorials, noting that English editorials employ more hedges and metadiscourse markers than their Iranian counterparts. Similarly, Samaie, Khosravian, and Boghayeri (2014) explored hedging in research article introductions by Persian and English native authors, finding that English native writers utilize modal auxiliaries, evidential main verbs, adjectives, and nouns as hedges in research articles more frequently than their Persian counterparts. These findings suggest that cultures vary in their utilization of rhetorical devices such as hedges.

The examination of both Arabic and English newspaper editorials indicated that English editorials exhibited a higher degree of hedging compared to their Arabic counterparts. This discrepancy could be attributed to linguistic and thematic variations influenced by cultural distinctions between the two communities. From an educational perspective, it is imperative for learners to be instructed in the utilization of rhetorical devices, particularly hedges. Moreover, learners should be encouraged to explore and discern the appropriateness of hedging strategies and be cognizant of the conceptual, cultural, social, and psychological factors that underlie them.

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