



## APPLICATION OF HEDGES BY AUTHORS PROVIDES OPPORTUNITY FOR PROPER UNDERSTANDING OF HOW WORDS ARE USED TO ACHIEVE DIFFERENT EFFECT IN COMMUNICATION PROCESSES

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### ABSTRACT

Application of hedges by authors provides opportunity for proper understanding of how words are used to achieve different effect in communication processes. To this effect hedges have very wide universal application. The word hedge is a subfield of pragmatics that enables authors to convey ideas, concepts, feelings and observations to readers and allow them to make some deductions. It is in this regard that this study tries to examine hedges as politeness strategies in Flora Nwapa's *Efuru*, *One is Enough* and Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* and *Second Class Citizen*. In order to achieve this, descriptive and qualitative research designs were adopted. The descriptive research design allowed the researcher to observe anything related to the object of the research without having a right to control. On the other hand, as a qualitative research, the data used for the research were non-numerical. Following this, four novels written by two seasoned Nigerian authors were selected for the study. Similarly five research questions were designed for the study. In the same manner, related literature were reviewed under the following subheadings- conceptual review, theoretical review, empirical review and the summary of the literature of the review. As a method of generating the data for the research, the four novels were read and words used as hedges to portray politeness strategies were identified and analysed. Also, the hedges identified as politeness strategies were used to answer the five research questions. At the end, the following were identified as findings:- that there were words that can be used as hedges to portray politeness strategies to maintain a better communication environment and that authors can use hedges as politeness strategies for saving face and to achieve the purpose of self-protection. The following were the recommendations:- authors should endeavour to use different types of hedges in order to produce different conversational effects and intentions in different contexts; writers should pay more attention to linguistic environment to be able to accommodate more hedges in their works and ensure a better communication environment.

### Introduction

Writers may use many strategies to convey ideas, concepts, feelings and observations to readers and allow them to make some deductions. The use of language in various forms of writing distinguishes one form of writing and expression from the other. It is in this regard that linguistic studies old analysis involve semantics, syntax, morphology, phonetics, phonology and pragmatics.

Among the various subfields of linguistics, pragmatics is concerned with the study of the use of language in social contexts. Through the knowledge of pragmatics and its study, writers relate their intentions to readers and proper interaction is achieved.

According to Fraser (2015), Pragmatics is the ability to communicate one's intended message with all its nuances in any socio-cultural context and to interpret the message

as it is intended. In his own contribution, Ruzaite (2016) define pragmatics as the study of meaning in language with special reference to context of use. This meaning can be applied to entire texts or to single words. If an author possesses pragmatic competence, such an author has the ability to communicate his/her intended message with its nuances in any socio-cultural context of his/her interlocutor as intended (Fraser, 2015). Pragmatics offers a multitude of perspectives to analyze all forms of sectional language such as novels, dramas, movies, speeches etc. According to Jucker and Locker (2017) conceptualization of pragmatics includes the social context in which communication takes place, both at the level of the *extradiagetic* communication between the creator of a fictional text and its recipients, and at the level of the *intradiagetic* communication between the characters depicted within the fictional texts. According to them, extradiagetic level of communication refers to communication between an author or scriptwriter and his or her audience. On the other hand, intradiagetic communication refers to communication that deals with all those aspects of language use that pragmaticists generally investigate on the basis of natural language and with the specificities provided by the fictional nature of the data (Jucker and Locker, 2017). From the discussion above, a literary work has a performative dimension and may be analyzed as “a way of doing things with words (Jucker and Locker, 2017). This is achieved through many pragmatic strategies. Among them is hedging. This introduces the concept of hedging as an aspect of pragmatic strategy. Hedging as an aspect of pragmatics involves the manipulation of words or phrases in sentences to express ambiguity, probability, caution and indecisiveness in order to allow a reader to profer his/her opinion about the

views expressed. In their contributions on hedging, Machin and Mayr (2012) emphasize that hedging serves as an important way of communicating identity as it shows what an author commits to, what he or she is cautious about and how he or she expresses this. Machin and Mayr believe that language must not only be able to convey information, but must also allow the audience information to gauge how the speakers relate to this information. This implies that hedging cannot only be used to express views but must as well allow readers to express their opinions on the views expressed by the writer.

Meyer (2015) is of the view that by authors hedging their statements, they leave readers with the possibility to judge them (authors) and consider other opinions as well. Meyer (2015) adds that the more subtle a hedge is, the Stronger it acts as a face-saving strategy, because the reader may not identify it consciously as a discourse strategy. Writers in trying to portray the regular activities of characters in their works, use various words or phrases to express their feelings and ideas. As earlier stated some of these words are hedges. Lui (2020) observes that these words and phrases may be explicit or implicit. Lui goes on to observe that hedging allows writers make their expressions polite and euphemistic. In his own contribution Ives (2018) states that hedging is concerned with meaning-making which concentrates on how language users avoid ambiguity and show intent. In their comments Li and Li (2020) state that hedging is one of the most commonly used meta discourse strategies in academic genre which includes a number of linguistic forms used to reduce aggressiveness and increase discursive space. From their own point of view, hedging is used to minimize aggressiveness and allow more contributions. This contribution comes

from the readers who are allowed to pass their judgements based on what the author has written.

It is essential to note that, hedging is an effective strategy in pragmatics for negotiating ideas across context. Li and Li (2020) state that the purpose of hedging is to help the readers or audience to understand the meaning, in both spoken and written language. In literary works, writers tend to use hedges to provide a suitable representation of their ideas. Similarly, in casual interactions, hedging words are employed as a method for turn taking, conveying politeness, reducing face-threats and underrating vagueness (Hassane and Faraharie, 2014).

I in his contribution on hedging, Hyland (1995) in Li and Li (2020) sees hedging as the “expression of tentativeness and possibility in language use.” Hylans goes further to say that hedging is a salient feature in academic genre for the “statement is rarely made without subjective assessment of truth”. It shows that writers include hedging in their statements and as well ensure that those statements are made based on perceived truth by the authors.

In their own assessment of hedging, Brown and Levinson (1987) cited in Azizah (2021) state that “hedges are particles, words or phrases that modify the degree of membership of a predicate or a noun phrase in a text. “Hedges take the following forms:

- a. Lexical hedges as fillers; like, well, you know, I mean, probably, actually, just etc
- b. Lexical hedges as lexical verbs; it seems, I think etc.
- c. Lexical hedges as modal auxiliary verbs; would, could, ought, dare etc (Azizah, 2021).

The above are used in various ways to reflect hedging. As earlier stated, one of the

functions of hedges is to avoid making explicit statements and thus sound more polite. Hedging devices are useful in expressing opinions while softening them in the process (Alimusaway, et al. 2019). Hedges are utilized as connecting tools to the type of the conversation topic so as to neutralize the sensitivity of the assertions (Mohajer and Jan, 2015). As indicated above, hedges can range from a single lexical item to syntactic structures which do not ease the task of establishing a definition and hedges can appear alone or in clusters (Hassane and Razmdideh, 2019).

To minimize misunderstanding and aggressiveness during discussion, parties involved ought to be cautious and civilized in their manner of utterances. This helps to ensure mutual understanding, reduction in negative effects arising from the discussion and maximizing of the positive effects. This leads us to another aspect of pragmatics otherwise known as politeness strategies. As a linguistic behaviour, Cruse (2016) opines that politeness is a matter of minimizing the negative effects of what one says on the feelings of others and maximizing the positive effects. The emphasis here is on how to minimize the negative effects of what one says on the feelings of others, as well as highlighting the positive effect. Thus Held (2015) contend that politeness may be understood as a specific type of linguistic structure, which expresses the speaker’s attitude and is thus not explicable by semantic, but rather by pragmatic means. Hussein and Raheem (2016) states that defining politeness is further complicated by the fact that utterances seen as being polite by laymen may not necessarily be considered so by linguists. They further assert that although most people would label expressions such as “*Thank you or Have a nice day*” or address terms “*Sir*” and “*Madam*” as polite, Watts

(2003) in Hussein and raheem (2016) prefers to group them under the term “politic behavior”. According to Watts (2003) cited in Hussein and Raheem (2016) politic behavior is a linguistic behavior geared towards maintaining equilibrium of interpersonal relationship within the social group. From their assertions above, politic behavior is a standard behavior expected by society in certain situations. Its negligence or omission may be considered as unpolite, rather than neutral behavior. Watts in Hussein and Raheem therefore insists that utterances would be interpreted as polite only if they go beyond politic behavior and are in excess of what is minimally required.

In his own contribution, Krisnoni (2013) is of the view that politeness is important in characters making request. Krisnoni goes further to explain request as speech act whereby a requester conveys to a requestee that he/she wants the requestee to perform an act which is for the benefit of the requester. The act may be a request for an object, an action or some kind of service etc. or it can be a request for information (Krisnoni, 2013). In conclusion, Krisnoni asserts that request is an aspect of politeness strategy used by characters as a face saving and achieving the purpose of self-protection. The popular notion why writers make use of hedging and politeness strategies is that they want to make their utterances polite and euphemistic. It is in this regard that this research aims at investigating hedging and politeness strategies in female writers using Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*, *Second Class Citizen* and *Flora Nwapa's Efurua and One is Enough*.

#### **Research Questions**

The following research questions are designed to provide a guide for this study;

1. What are the types of hedges used as politeness strategies in the four novels selected?
2. How have the authors used hedges as politeness strategies to maintain a better communication environment in the novels?

#### **Literature Review**

##### **The Concept of Hedging**

Hedging as a concept in pragmatics has been approached from different angles by different scholars, pragmatists and researchers. According to Idowu and Owuye (2019), hedges have eluded any widely accepted definition. They further state that the problem of acceptable definition can be attributed to divergence in approach to the nature and realization of hedging. Idowu and Owuye (2019) maintain that hedges were initially considered to be semantic modifiers or approximators in the spirit of the original definition by Lakoff (1972) who coined the term “hedge”, to describe a word or phrase that is meant to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy. In this instance fuzzy means to make things or statements or utterance vague or imprecise. This implies that Lakoff is only concerned with hedges in terms of the semantic contribution they make to the statements in which they occur (Loewenberg, 2014). This also shows that hedges can weaken or strengthen the illocutionary force of an utterance.

Further analysis of the definition as portrayed by Wikitionary shows that the use of hedge is intentional to allow either a reader or listener opportunity to make some deductions from a speech or text. While describing terms associated with hedges, in Idowu and Owuye (2019) include hedges among other mitigating devices in their politeness marker category. They called these devices hedges, playdowns, understaters, or minus committers. In another contribution on

hedges, Swales (2014) in relation to academic writing states that hedges are rhetorical devices used for projecting honesty, modesty and proper caution in self reports by diplomatically creating space in areas heavily populated by other researchers. Hubler (2013) maintains that people use hedges to make their utterances more accessible so that hearers are willing to talk to them. In Mauraren's view (2017), hedges are the expressions which make the meaning of utterances uncertain. According to Brown and Levinson (1978) in Andreas and Locher (2017) to a great degree, hedge provides opportunities for people, mainly listeners and readers to react to issues in question. In another development in Lui (2020) also pays attention to the study of hedges. He regards hedges as conversational implication which can give the implicit meaning of utterances when people talk to each other.

Lui (2020) is also of the opinion that researches on hedges may date back to the 1960s. According to Lui, Zadeh (1972) first proposes the fuzzy set theory. He analyzes English hedges as very, much, more or less, highly and slightly from the point of semantics and logic. Liu (2020) also identifies that Lakoff (1975) is the first scholar who introduced the term hedge/hedging. He defines hedges as lexical units whose job is to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy. Prince, Fraser and Bosk (1982) in Makejeka (2017) distinguish two types of hedges according to the speaker's commitment to the truth value of a proposition. Their classification of hedges provided a pedestal for further studies. In furtherance of this classification by Prince, Fraser and Bosk (1982) Brown and Levinson (1978) in Andreas and Locher (2017) view hedges as a politeness strategy in verbal communication in which they are used to avoid disagreement and express negative

politeness, since hedges help reduce threats to one's face. As for Zuck (1986) and Fraser (1990) in Liu (2020), they conducted a research on hedges with the specific discourses in the context. Their aim was to probe into the probable applications in their research findings and pragmatic functions of hedges by analyzing the distribution characteristics. In his own contribution Salager-Meyer (1997) in Azizah (2021) characterize hedges into several different grammatical forms, namely, "Auxiliary verbs, modal lexical verbs, adjectival, adverbial and nominal modal phrase, approximator, introductory phrases, if-clauses and compound hedges". Azizah states that all these taxonomic are ways of being precise in reporting results.

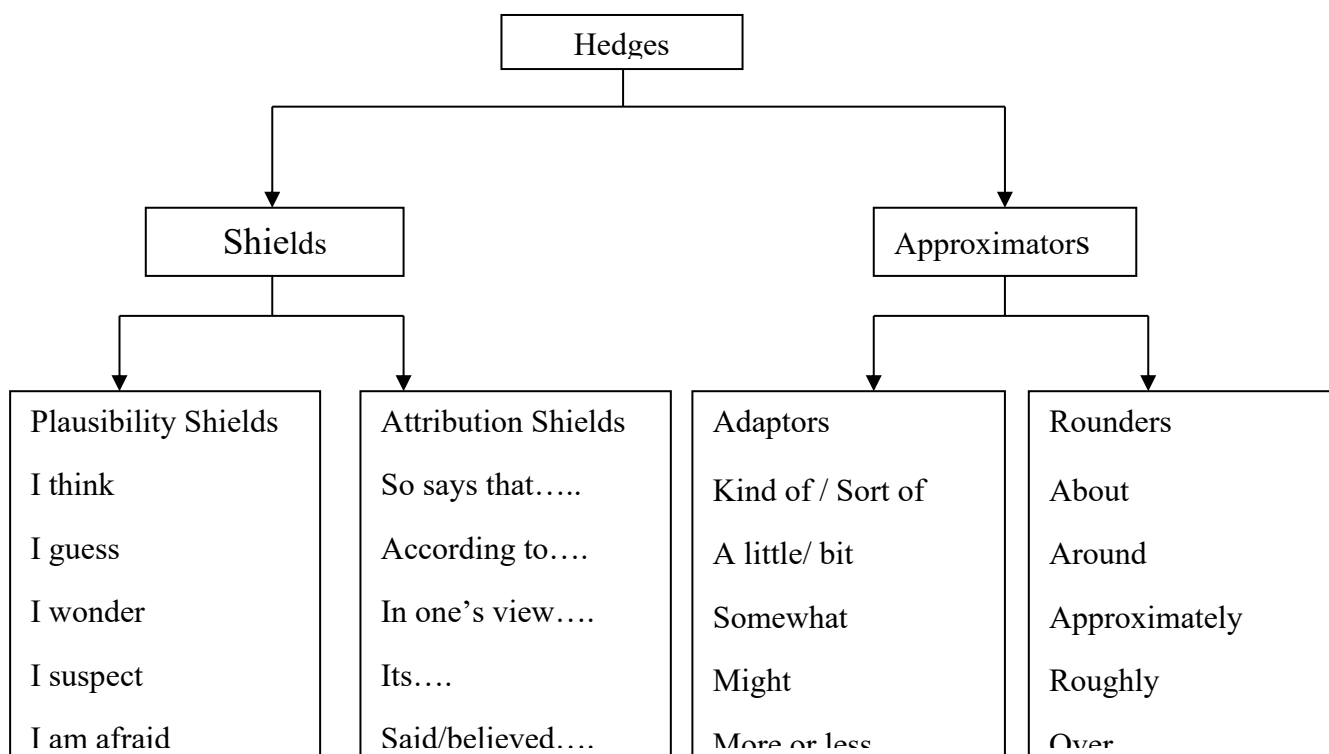
### **Categorization of Hedges**

Liang (2017) is of the view that categorization is the process through which ideas and objects are recognized, differentiated, classified, and understood. Bearing this in mind, Prince et al (1982) cited in Anisa (2018) classified hedges into "approximators and shields in the field of pragmatics. As stated by Anisa (2018) approximators can change people's perception on topics of conversations and the original meaning of discourse structure according to communicative context. From this postulation, approximators can change the true value of discourse, or make a certain degree of amendments based on the given facts or provides certain range of variation to the original discourse. This simply implies that the concept of approximators allow an interlocutor to input his/her opinions or change or amendments in discussion. On the other hand Prince et al (1982) in Anisa (2018) opines the unlike approximators, shields as an aspect of hedges do not change the content and true value of discourse; they simply



convey speakers doubt or reservations towards the discourse and also show speakers' attitudes indirectly to moderate the

tone. To further buttress Prince et al's classification, here is a table.



Adapted from classification of hedges by E.E Prince, J.Frader and C. Bosk (1982), cited in Anisa (2018).

In the same manner, Makejeva (2017) says that Namasarev (1967) provided a characterization of the hedging strategies, which could be used in a research without connecting hedges to the maxims, but rather the context or situation overall. This implies that the classification is not based on rules rather than the speech situation. The

- classification is based on the following;
- Interdetermination: This adds a degree of uncertainty or fuzziness to an utterance (longer utterance or single word).
  - Depersonalisation: This entails avoidment of direct reference by the use of inclusive “we” or impersonal

- words such as the researchers/authors, etc.
- Subjectivisation: The use of personal pronoun, “*I plus verbs*” *thinking (thinking, suppose, assume, etc)*. It serves as a signal of the subjectivity of term, stating that it is only an opinion, rather than absolute truth.
  - Limitation: Removal of vagueness or fuzziness by a limitation.

Makejeva (2018) notes that there is a risk associated with above classification. Makejeva is of the opinion that through such categorization be, can be used in research, it involves certain risk. According to him the risk stems from the fact that research deals with the native and non-native English speakers and as a result some of the hedges as well as politeness strategies might be transferred from one language and culture (native language) to another (English). For this reason, lexical and grammatical patterns are better suited for achieving validity of the results.

Also Zuck and Zuck (1986) cited in Makejeva (2018) proposed a list of items that are usually used as hedges, and of probability or certainty. The categories according to them were;

- Auxiliary verbs (may, might, could);
- Semi-auxiliary verbs (seem, appear);
- Full verbs (suggest);
- Passive voice;
- Adverbs and adverbials (probably, relatively, almost);
- Adjectives;
- Indefinite nouns and pronouns.

However further research reveals that the list is endless, as two years later Markannen and Schroder (1987) cited in Makejeva (2018) produced a similar list of

items, though added a few specifications of their own. They also claimed that, apart from the provided list, usage of a particular word (pronoun, noun, verb) and avoidance of another, as well as a specific choice of a vocabulary can also be treated as the manifestation of hedges. From the above usage of words determines whether those words can be treated as hedges or not.

In another classification Martin-Martin (2008) cited in Anisa (2018) considers the socio-pragmatic context in which hedges occur as it appears, that it is virtually impossible to attribute a function to a hedge without considering both the linguistic and situational contexts. Martin-Martin is of the view that his classification is based on hedges found in literature. He opines that preliminary analysis of the corpus revealed that the linguistic devices which the writers in both language (linguistic and situational) use at a lexico-grammatical and syntactic level for the explicit function of hedges can be described as realizing the following basic strategies:

1. Strategy of indetermination, by giving a proposition to a colouring, lesser semantic, qualitative and quantitative explicitness as well as uncertainty vagueness and fuzziness. Thus strategy may comprise:
  - a. Epistemic modality, which can be realized by means of; modal auxiliary verbs expressing possibility, such as may, might, can;, semi-auxiliaries such as to consider, to appear; Epistemic lexical verbs such as to suggest, to speculate, to assume, that is, verbs which relate to the probability of a proposition or being true, verbs of cognition such as to believe, to think; Modal adverbs such as perhaps, possibly, probably; Modal

- nouns such as possibility, such as possible, probable, likely.
- b. Approximators of quantity, frequency, degree and time such as generally, approximately, most, relatively, frequently, etc which indicate an unwillingness to make precise and complete commitment to the proposition expressed.
  2. Strategy of subjectivation: This includes:
    - a. The use of first person personal pronouns (i/we) followed by verbs of cognition (think, believe) or performative verbs (suppose, suggest), that can be interpreted as the writers sign, what they say are simply their personal/subjective opinion. In this way, the writers show respect for the reader's alternative opinion and invite the reader to become involved in the communicative situation.
    - b. Quality- emphasizing adjectival and adverbial expressions, such as 'extremely interesting, particularly important'
  3. Strategy of Depersonalization: This refers to those cases which the writers diminish their presence in the texts by using various impersonal, agentless and passive constructions in order to relieve themselves of responsibility for the truth of propositions expressed. This strategy is syntactically realized by means of:-
    - a. Agentless passive and impersonal constructions such as an attempt was made to see...; 'it seems/appears that.'
    - b. Impersonal active constructions in which the personal subject is replaced by some non-human entity such as findings, results, data, as in the following examples: 'The findings

suggest/reveal..., 'these data indicate....'. The above reveals the typology of hedging and hedging functions proposed by Martin-Martin (2008) and cited by Anisa (2018).

### **Classification of Hedge and Hedging strategies by Hyland(1996)**

Another classification of hedge and hedging strategies that is worthy of discussion in this work is that of Ken Hyland. Hyland (1996) cited by Livytska (2019) classified hedges according to their pragmatic function into two types; they are content-motivated and readers-motivated hedges, content-motivated hedges consist of attribute hedges, reliability hedges and writer-oriented hedges. Content-motivated hedges based on Hyland's classification are generally related with the writers' wish for their assertions to meet adequacy conditions in order to be accepted by the target audience while reader-motivated hedges work towards the fulfillment of acceptability conditions for facilitating the successful acceptance of newly introduced information. On the other hand content-motivated hedges must be expressed in such a way that the target readers perceive claims as adequate (appropriate, accurate, precise, objective). Through the used of reader-motivated hedges, claims can be accepted by the audience because they were assigned a provisional character and introduced as personal opinions pending the ratification of the writer's peers within the interactive process of knowledge creation (Anisa, 2018). In an attempt to further the discussion on hedges Hyland classified forms of hedging devices into two: lexical hedges and strategic hedges. Lexical hedges consists epistemic lexical herbs, nouns, adverbs, epistemic adjectives, and modal verbs while strategic (non-lexical) hedges contain admission to a lack of knowledge, reference to a model,



theory or methodology, and reference to limiting experimental conditions (Daririn, 2015). It is important to look into other linguists and researchers' contributions towards expanding these classified forms of hedging devices by Hyland.

First lexical verbs, Boncea (2015) states that lexical verbs are used to perform acts like *evaluating, assumption or doubting* rather than mere describing. Other words that fall into this category include; '*seem, appear. Believe, assume, suggest, estimate, tend, think, argue, indicate, propose, speculate, suppose* etc. Boncea (2015) further states that when used epistemically as hedging elements, these verbs earlier mentioned express the speaker's strong belief in the truth of the utterance or on the contrary, the speaker's unwillingness to vouch for understanding the utterance as more than a personal opinion. Lexical verbs, the most common hedges in Hyland's opinion can be described, according to Palmer (1986) in Yagiz and Demir (2015) as speculative, deductive, quotation, or sensory. Speculative verbs are verbs of prediction or subjectivity (e.g. *believe, assume* etc). They convey the author's opinion on a matter without committing to stating it as truth. Deductive verbs suggest that the author arrived at a proposition through logical reasoning (e.g. *conclude*). These verbs also called subjectivizers and are markers of stance and attitude expressing a speaker's subjective opinion. Four subjectivizers according to Yagiz and Demir (2015) include; *I think, I guess, I don't know* and *I believe*. *I guess* is normally used in informal situation (Sabet and Zahang, 2016). These verbs, when used as hedges are intended to outline a path from an observation to a conclusion. Quotative verbs express attribution to a source other than the author (e.g. *suggest, opine*). These verbs can reference another person or the data

obtained by the writer. On the other hand sensory verbs describe the author's perception (e.g. *appear, look like*). Such terms suggests that trust in the writer's perceptive abilities is necessary to accept the conclusions drawn from these propositions (Cassidy, 2015). Further in epistemic adjectives propounded by Hyland, epistemic meaning of an adjective would attribute to an interpretation if only the result is imagineable rather likely. Sequel to this Boncea (2015) adds that modal adjectives functions as device to reduce the strength of the noun such as '*likely, possible, probable* etc.

On the discussion about epistemic nouns, Bocea (2015) states that modal nouns are used to render certainty. It consists of words such as '*tendency, possibility, assumption, claim* etc. Also in Epistemic adverb, Hyland explains that adverbial forms function to reduce the force caused by the verb acting as downtoners and might act as disjunct that conveys comment about the truth-value of the proposition. Hyland also adds that when the epistemic adverb is put in initial, it would mark what follows as hypothetical and subjective. It consists of '*slightly, presumably, almost, usually, relatively, probably, practically* etc.

Similarly, modal auxiliaries were excluded from further investigation because they express one type of epistemic meaning possibility/probability (Takimoto 2015). Palmer (2017) considered epistemic and evidential modalities as a propositional modality that relates to the speaker's/writer's attitude toward the truth-value of the proposition. According to Palmer (2017), included under epistemic modality are three types of judgment:- One that expresses uncertainty (e.g. *John may be in his office*), one that indicates an inference from observable evidence (e.g., *John must be in his office*), and one that indicates inference from

what is generally known (*John will be in his office*). In other words epistemic modality concerns the way speakers or writers communicate their doubts, certainties, and guesses. These are identified as speculative, deductive, and assumptive and overlap with hedging. and boosting (Takimoto, 2015).

Boncea (2010) states that Modal auxiliaries - *may, might, can, could, should, would, must* – can be used in their epistemic senses. Modal verbs reflect the speaker's attitude and help them express ideas indirectly, which makes modal verbs perfect candidates as hedging devices. Moreover, they allow speakers to be fuzzy about an informational content, avoid face threatening acts and formulate illocutions so as not to offend the hearer.

#### **16) Factors Influencing the Choice of Politeness Strategies**

Brown and Levinson (1983) in Goody, (2018) state that there are two factors which influence a speaker to deliver certain politeness strategy. Those two factors are payoff and relevant circumstances.

##### **a. Payoff**

Brown and Levinson (1983) in Goody, (2018) concludes that a speaker may get some payoffs related to each strategy he/she performs. For an example, by going on record, a speaker makes the hearer believe that he/she is an honest person and put a trust to the hearer. In addition, since the speaker does the face threatening act without having effort to minimize it, the speaker can avoid the misunderstanding. On the other hand, by going off record, a speaker leads the hearer to interpret the real intention of his/her utterance. Furthermore, the speaker will get the advantage in avoiding the responsibility of the hearer's

potentially faced damaging interpretation. In addition, by going off record, the speaker also will give the hearer an opportunity to be seen as a caring person.

The advantage to satisfy the hearer's positive face is a payoff for a speaker who chooses to perform positive politeness strategy gets. A speaker may minimize the face threatening act by indicating that he/she belongs to the same group with the hearer. In addition, by performing positive politeness strategy, a speaker can avoid face threatening acts such as request and offer. On the other hand, a speaker who chooses to perform negative politeness strategy may get benefit in satisfying the hearer's negative face. By performing this strategy, a speaker may get some benefits such as avoiding a future debt of doing a face threatening act, paying regard to the hearer, and maintaining the social distance between the both parties.

##### **b. Relevant Circumstances**

Besides payoff, the choice of a certain politeness strategy is also influenced by relevant circumstances. Brown and Levinson (1983) in Goody, (2018) determines three kind of relevant circumstances which influence a speaker in performing politeness strategies due to its seriousness of a face threatening act. Those circumstances are social distance, relative power, and rank of imposition.

##### **1) Social Distance**

According to Brown and Levinson (1983) in Goody, (2018) social distance can be defined as a symmetric relationship between the

hearer and the speaker. The dominant element of social distance is on the social attribute of the two parties. Social distance can be determined by some factors such as gender, age, and intimacy. For the example, if the hearer and the speaker are similar in the terms of gender and age, the politeness strategies between them may be less formal rather than those who have same gender but difference gap in terms of age.

## 2) Relative Power

Based on Brown and Levinson (1983) in Goody, (2018) relative power is an asymmetric relation between the speaker and the hearer. The power of a person, in this term, can be defined as the role of a person in society. In order to determine whether someone has a power or not can be seen based on him/her material control and metaphysical control. That factor affects the decision of choosing the politeness strategies. For an example, if a boss and an employee have a conversation, the boss may use less formal politeness in uttering the conversations since the power is bigger than the employee. By contrast, the employee has to be polite when he talks to his boss since his power is lesser.

## 3) Rank of Imposition

According to Brown and Levinson (1983) in Goody, (2018) the rank of imposition is happened in a peculiar situation. Further, Brown and Levinson mention that absolute ranking of imposition is determined by the degree of the positive-face wants and the negative-face wants of the agents. The rank of impo-

sition is categorized as one factor which influences the politeness strategies since there are some people who cannot accept some kind of face threaten in acts.

It is essential to note here that the study on politeness as an aspect of pragmatics has helped a lot in ensuring cordiality in communication and interpretation of communication-content. With this, let us now look at theoretical framework of this study.

## Research Method

The research design employed for this study is a descriptive and qualitative research design. The area of the study is hedging and politeness strategies in Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*, *Second Class Citizen* and Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* and *One is Enough*. In collecting the data for this research, the researcher read the texts involved; writes the hedges and politeness expression used in the texts and uses the hedges and politeness expressions written down to address the research questions. In analyzing the data, the researcher shall adopt the following steps: Identify the types of hedges as politeness strategies used in the texts and state how the authors used hedges as politeness strategies to portray the major characters that featured in the novels.

## Results

**What are the types of hedges used to portray politeness strategies in the novels selected for the study?**

**Types of hedges used in *One is Enough* by Flora Nwapa.**

The use of primary auxiliaries as hedges. There is the use of primary auxiliaries as hedges to foster a better communication environment as seen on excerpt one.

*I should not have replied to what you said. I am very sorry, mother. Please don't throw me away, mother.*

The author through the protagonist Amaka expresses politeness by appealing to the mother inlaw not to throw her out of the house as a result of her childlessness. With the hedges, the speaker (Amaka) was able to maintain a better communication. This is the position of Leech (1983) cited by Lui (2020) that certain primary auxiliaries would act as hedges when they are presented in certain construction as conveyed in the excerpt above. Here through the use of the hedges Amaka was polite and maintained a better communication environment with the mother inlaw.

The use of Lexical (main) verbs as hedges: The following lexical verbs, See and understand were used as lexical verbs to portray hedges as politeness in excerpt two.

*"You see, I don't understand this nonsense. I just do not understand why ...."* Here on the excerpt, the husband to Amaka negatively expresses his opinion on his mother's approach towards the childless situation of his family. The speaker Obiora uses negative politeness in fostering the communication. Obiora feels that the mother is interfering unnecessarily in the affairs between him and his wife.

This has a close relationship with sympathy maxim of Leech (1983 in Lui 2020) which is of the view that the writer or speaker should make a sympathetic reaction towards other's complaint or unlucky sufferings. In the excerpt from the novel above Obiora sympathizes with his wife who has found herself in childless situation and being persecuted by his mother.

## **Research Question Two**

**How have the authors used hedges as politeness strategies to maintain a better communication environment in**

## **portraying the characters used in the novels.**

According to Tact maxim propounded by Leech (1983) and cited in Liu (2020), in a communication, writers usually obey the principles in order to express the respect for readers and try to avoid offending readers. So they often use some euphemistic statements deliberately to make the language ambiguous. This is to protect the readers face in some way so as to maintain a better communication environment. For example, in the novel *One is Enough* by Flora Nwapa, the protagonist of the novel Amaka decides to go and tender apology for an offence she (Amaka) did not commit. In the conversation Amaka started. "Mother, forgive me; she heard herself saying. 'It will not happen again. I should not have replied to what you said. I am very sorry, mother please don't throw me away, mother. (Sentence 1).

In her reply, the mother inlaw said; "Go on and tell me, why are you yawning this early morning? Didn't you have a good sleep?"

"I slept badly, mother" Amaka, replied "so did I. I have been sleeping badly for the past year. Don't you see how thin I am? Was I as thin as this when you married my son six years ago? So don't complain of sleeping badly for just one night. Now go on and say why you are here."

In this conversation, Amaka was gentle and humble enough by using the hedges "forgiveme" and I amvery sorry. This portrays the character of Amaka as one who is humble and very respectful. On the other hand, the reply and attitude of her mother inlaw shows is one who is very quarrelsome and nagging. In her comment (mother inlaw), "I have been sleeping badly for the past year. Don't you see how thin I am? Was I as thin as this when you married my son six years ago? So don't complain of sleeping badly for just one night. In the conversation above,



there were the use of hedges like questioning, sleeping badly and six years ago, to portray the characters of Amaka and her mother inlaw in the novel.

### Discussion of Findings

Hedges play an important role in human interaction both in written and spoken forms. It is a common but essential phenomenon which attracts many linguists to pay more attention to it and further development and expansion of the areas under it, This research analyses hedges in the works of Nigerian female writers- Flora Nwapa's *One is Enough* and *Efuru* as well as BuchiEmeta's *Second Class Citizen* and *The Joys of Motherhood*. From the analyses of the novel the following are the major findings.

1. Various words can be used as hedges to portray Politeness Strategies evident in the novels used for the analysis. For instance the primary auxiliary in the novel *One is Enough* like “have” “will” and don't are used to express possibility.  
  
In the same manner, there is also the use of lexical verbs I see and understand that are also used as hedges to portray politeness. This is very glaring in *One is Enough* by Flore Nwapa.
2. Authors can use hedges as politeness strategies to maintain better communication. In order to ensure a better communication, authors normally obey the principle of Tact maxim which is propounded by Leech (1983) cited in Liu (2020). This is possibly done to exercise the respect for the readers which in some instance result in the use of euphemistic expressions deliberately to make language ambiguous. In this process what is achieved is the protection of readers' face in certain

way so as to maintain a better communication environment. We can observe in *One is Enough* by Flora Nwapa, the heroine of the work Amaka decided to go and tender apology for an offence she (Amaka) did not commit.

### Conclusion

Through the process of analyzing the four novels used for this study, it was discovered that hedges play an important role in daily communication activities. Writers use different hedges to meet their communicative intention. In this attempt, the context where hedges are used as crucial and remarkable. These hedges are used in various ways to portray politeness. In the same manner authors use hedges as politeness strategies to maintain a better communication environment. In their role as hedges words can be used to show politeness strategies for saving face and to achieve the purpose of self-protection. In the same vein authors can use hedges as politeness strategies to make words more appropriate and acceptable in the novel. Finally, authors use hedges as politeness strategies to portray the character that feature in their novels. Hedges as politeness strategies provide an opportunity for readers to be in better position to read texts and make their deductions.

### Recommendations

From the findings, the following recommendations are made.

1. Authors should endeavour to use different types of hedges in order to producedifferent conversational effects and intentions in different contexts.
2. Writers should pay more attention to linguistic environment to be able to accommodate more hedges in their works and ensure a better communication environment.



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