Research Article

Do Pakistani English writers hedge more in linguistics research than native English writers?

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Abstract

The purpose of this corpus-based study is to compare the use of hedges and associated linguistic constituents in the linguistic research articles authored by Pakistani English Writers (PEWs) and native English writers (NEWs). NEWs hedge more than their PEWs peers, as per the outcomes of the two corpora (20 linguistics research articles by PEWs and 20 linguistics research articles by NEWs). Nevertheless, the statistics revealed that both corpora employed hedging types that were quite similar. To minimize the legitimacy of their assertions and arguments, both factions relied primarily on lexical and hedging strategies, and both groups avoided utilizing hedges such as adverbs of frequency. Likewise, neither group used epistemic nor possibility hedging much. Nonetheless, the use of linguistic elements of hedging by PEWs and NEWs authors differ considerably. PEWs are more committed to their opinions being more appealing and persuasive, owing to the clear impact of first language and culture.

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1.   Introduction

A key role of academic writing in general, and research articles in particular, is to present new knowledge, assertions and claims (Flottum et al., 2006). In research articles, authors must develop significant and persuasive assertions based on facts and proof when authoring their research articles. Simultaneously, they must express their ideas and arguments with caution in order to persuade their audience. Hedges may be one way to do this since they allow authors to reduce the strength and confidence of their assertions to persuade their audience (Hyland, 2005; Hinkel, 2005). As suggested by Lee and Deakin (2016) authors employ hedges, a type of metadiscourse, for lowering the certainty and clarity of their assertions and propositions, writers use hedging as a metadiscourse signal to make their arguments less aggressive and authorial.   As a result, the impact of hedging in research discourse, whether written or spoken, may have an impact on the meaning or message delivered (Taweel et al., 2011). "Hedging is used to indicate a lack of comprehensive conviction to the certainty of the concept and a readiness not to explain the commitment categorically," (Hyland, 1996, p.115). Consequently, hedging is achieved by employing language devices like adverbs, adjectives, nouns, modal verbs and more (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Hedging devices in academic discourse are thought to be influenced by cross-cultural variations, according to the research suggested by Vassileva (2001) in the research. English authors, for example, have a different perspective on hedging than (PEWs) Pakistani English writers. Since augmentation and reinforcement are features of Pakistani speech, English hedge more and are thus less committed to the idea, whereas Pakistani English authors hedge less (Hinkel, 2005). Previous research on hedging by Pakistani English authors and native English writers has not looked at this form of "cross-cultural misinterpretation" (Vassileva, 2001, p. 84). The findings are anticipated to help in reducing cross-cultural misconceptions generated by diverse viewpoints on hedging. As a result of the aforesaid void in earlier research, the current study was conducted to analyze hedging categories and related linguistic items in PEWs' and NEWs' linguistic research articles. The frequency of hedging usage, the patterns of choosing various hedging kinds, and the use of linguistic hedging elements are all compared between the two corpora. The major purpose of the present research is to demonstrate a detailed account of how PEWs and NEWs hedge and use linguistic terms. As a consequence, Pakistani English Writers (PEWs) would have a better understanding of how hedges are employed to develop ideas in academic writing. As a result, Pakistani English writers would be able to increase their L2 pragmatic competence, argumentation and claiming strategies. This study attempted to answer the research questions: a) Do PEWs hedge more than NEWs or vice versa in linguistics research articles? b) What are differences (if any) between PEWs and NEWs in employment of hedging types? and c) How do PEWs and NEWs realize hedges linguistically?

2.   Theoretical Background and Literature Review

2.1.   Hedges

The term "hedging" was first used in literature by Lakoff (1973). Since the concept of hedging has been extensively researched, there is agreement on the definition of hedging (Hyland, 1996). "For me, perhaps one of the most intriguing problems is presented by the study of terms whose function is to make things more or less ambiguous," Lakoff took hedges as an indication

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of fuzziness (Lakoff, 1973, p. 195). Hedging was described in several ways by scholars, including vagueness, cautious phrasing, indirectness, and ambiguity (Varttala, 2001; Hyland, 1998). Hedging is described by Hyland (1996) as "the articulation of tentativeness and prospects in academic writing, where the requirement to explain untested assertions with caution and accuracy is vital" (Hyland, 1996, p. 115). Hedges are essentially a way of reducing strength of assertions made by authors. Hedging is defined as any linguistic strategy employed by research writers to communicate "(1) an absence of commitment to the truthfulness of an underlying claim or (2) a wish not to articulate that commitment unequivocally," (Hyland, p. 01). As a result, hedging words and phrases like *possibly, appear, I assume, may be, kind of, and sort of* are used in diverse ways. The next section has more instances.

2.2.   Classification of hedges

Hedges have been classified differently by several academics. For example, Prince et al. (1982), divided hedges into two categories: approximators and shields according to their respective purposes. The approximators, are hedges that impact the certainty content and the condition (*according to*) (Markannen & Schroder, 1997, p. 13). The latter is defined as "hedging techniques that do not modify the truth-conditions but show the author's conviction to the proposition's truth-value" (e.g., I believe, seem) (Markannen & Schroder, 1997, p. 12). Further, Salager-Meyer's (1994) taxonomy adds three categories to Prince et al. (1982) 's categorization of hedges that includes: This classification includes shields (*probably, seem, suggest, might*), approximators (occasionally, approximately), the language of the writers' subjective doubt and undeviating participation (*to our knowledge, I believe*), intensifiers with an emotional charge (*extremely difficult, absolutely interesting,*) and multiple words hedging (*It would seem likely that…, it may suggest that ...*) (Salager-Meyer, 1994, pp. 154-155). These two classifications, on the other hand, are problematic because they are founded on medical corpora and are undoubtedly impacted by the discipline's character (Varttala, 1999).

Hedging Categories	Examples
Epistemic	according to, actually, apparently, indeed, approximately, broadly, clearly, unlikely comparatively, essentially, likely, most, normally, potentially, probably, rarely, somehow, somewhat, theoretically.
Lexical	(at) about, (a) few, in a way, kind of, (a) little + noun, maybe, like, many, more or less, more, most, much, several, something like and sort of.
Possibility	by (any/some) chance, hopefully, perhaps, possible, in (the) case (of), if you/we know/understand (what [pronoun] mean(s)), if you catch/get/understand my meaning/drift, if you know what I mean (to say)
Downtoners	at all, a bit, all but, a good/great deal, almost, as good/well as, at least, barely, basically, enough, fairly, hardly, in the least/slight, just, merely, mildly, nearly, only, partly, partially, practically, pretty (+adjective), quite (+adjective), rather, relatively, scarcely, simply, slightly, somewhat, sufficiently, truly, virtually.
Assertive pronouns	any-word (anybody, anyone, anything), any, some-pronominal (somebody, someone, something), some.
Adverbs of frequency	annually, daily, frequently, monthly, occasionally, per day/moth/year, often, regularly, seldom, sometimes, usually, sporadically, weekly, sporadically
Full verbs	seem, appear, suggest, indicate, propose, argue, think, tend, estimate, assume, believe

Figure 1: Linguistic realizations and hedging categories (Hinkel, 2005, pp. 37-38)
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Added to this, Hyland's (1994) grammatical-based hedging taxonomy types is another categorization to be discussed here. "Modal verbs (e.g. can, may, might), lexical verbs (seem, suggest, believe), modal adverbs (often, rarely, a little), modal adjectives (few, barely, just), and modal nouns (possibility, assumption, estimate)" are included in this taxonomy (Hyland, 1994, p. 244). This categorization is noticeably incomplete, as it excludes forceful downtoners and pronouns hence it was not used as a foundation for the current study's research.

Hinkel (2005) divides hedges into six groups based on their purposes and parts of speech: downtoners, lexical, epistemic, possibility, frequency adverbs and assertive pronouns, Hinkel (2005, p. 39) elaborated on her six-way categorization as follows:

- Epistemic hedging relates to the author's limited knowledge (*probably, potentially*);
- Lexical hedging is equivalent to epistemic hedges in that they cannot change expressions (for instance, many, numerous);
- Possibility hedging may have a representation of probability (hopefully, perhaps)
- Downtoners serve to define the sense and emotive connotation of nouns, adjectives and verbs (all, a little);
- Assertive pronouns can be used to alter noun phrases (for example, anybody, anyone,);
- Adverbs of frequency "ubiquitously operate as hedges" because of their ambiguity (daily, frequently).

The corpora we examined according to the hedges types and their linguistic realisations are shown in figure 1 since this categorization was based on research done on English as a First language and English as a second language research articles produced by non-native and native English writers. In addition, entire verb type items existed in the corpora and were not classified by Hinkel, thus these items were included in the analytical framework.

2.3. Earlier research on hedging

Several single/cross-discipline, single/cross-genre, cross-cultural, and cross-linguistic studies have been undertaken to investigate the employment of hedges in research discourse, whether it be research papers, doctorate and masters' thesis, or undergraduate learners' writeups.

A few research has looked at how Pakistani-speaking English authors use hedges in academic writing in certain genres. Al-Mudhaffari et al. (2020), for instance, studied the usage of hedging techniques in thirty-four applied linguistics published papers authored by Yemeni English authors. According to the findings of this study, Yemeni L2 authors' use of hedging is restricted, since they rarely hedge while forming assertions. Gomaa (2019) looked at how hedging was used in 100 English Linguistic master's dissertations authored by Pakistani scholars. The findings of this research demonstrated that Pakistani English writers rarely used hedging. The students' lack of pragmatic ability and cross-cultural variance was attributed to this finding.

There have been several cross-cultural studies on the use of hedges in academic writing among non-native English writers and native English writers in various fields and disciplines. Hinkel (2005) studied 745 articles to determine whether non-native and native English speakers used hedging devices frequently.

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The results revealed that authors, particularly Arabic English writers, employ hedging techniques far less than native English writers, but that non-native English writers use hedging devices often in oral interactions. Likewise, EIMalik and Nesi (2008) probed the contrast of using hedging instruments in one genre by comparing 20 medical articles written by British writers and Sudanese, finding that British and Sudanese authors use hedges differently, with hedges being used to a greater extent in the British native English writers' articles than the Sudanese nonnative English authors'

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Numerous studies on the usage of hedging across languages have also been done..In the study (Akbas & Hardman, 2018) the employment of hedges in the discussion section of research articles of nine theses authored by both L2 English and Turkish L1 authors. The findings revealed that English L1 writers and Turkish L2 writers utilised hedges in comparable ways. Furthermore, Bonyadi et al. (2012) discovered that the usage of hedging by Iranian L2 and English L1 authors differed, but that L1 authors in Iran hedged less than English authors. Abdollahzadeh (2011) examined hedges in 60 conclusion sections of applied linguistic publications produced by Anglo-American and Iranian authors, finding that hedges are nearly identical between the two corpora. Falahati (2004) studied how hedging devices were used in the introduction and discussion parts of research papers in three fields (chemistry, medicine and psychology) in Persian and English. She discovered that hedging devices are often used in English research papers more than in Farsi research papers, which she attributed to the type of language and the general nature of the discipline.

Hu and Cao (2011) compared the usage of hedging instruments in academic paper abstracts between Chinese applied linguist authors and English applied linguist writers using a corpus of 649 abstracts obtained from 8 journals of applied linguistics. The data suggested that hedges were utilised more in English abstracts than in Chinese abstracts. This result was linked to linguistic/cultural differences, and often a lack of English competence as a second or foreign language. Martín-Martín (2008) analysed the frequency of hedges in 40 research papers in clinical and health psychology genres written by English and Spanish in a comparative cross-linguistic study. The results of this study imply that English research papers contain more hedging devices than Spanish research articles, particularly in the rhetorical parts.

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The essence of the languages used by writers may impact the distribution of hedges; for example, native English authors appear to be even more cautious when making statements than other authors speaking Spanish or Persian.

Consequently, the following points may be given based on the studies discussed above: First, in independent research, in linguistic research publications, no prior investigations compared the use of hedges by Pakistani English writers to native English writers. Even though Hinkel (2005) had included articles authored by Arab L2 writers, these articles had been written by undergraduates; furthermore, the almost all cross-cultural research papers' research findings suggest that native English writers use hedges far more than nonnative English writers; next, a few cross-linguistic research demonstrated differences in findings in which hedges appear in a similar manner used by different authors from various backgrounds; and lastly, some cross-linguistic research documented variations in the outcome in which hedges showed up similarly among different authors from various backgrounds, for instance, chemistry, medicines and psychology. More significantly, neither of the researches cited above has compared the patterns of hedges types used. The emphasis has been on the common use of hedging by Pakistani English authors with native English authors. The purpose of this study is to investigate these topics further.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Corpora

To address the research questions, forty English linguistics research articles written by Pakistani English Writers (PEWs) and Native English Writers (NEWs) were selected randomly, 20 were collected from the web of science for native English corpus and 20 research articles were collected for higher education commission's recognized journals for Pakistani English writers. All of the published studies that were chosen were published between 2011 and 2018, and making total word count is around 60000–70000 words. The IMRD standardized template (Introduction, Method, Results, Discussion/Conclusion) was followed to ensure uniformity. The corpora consisted of 20 Pakistani English non-native writers in linguistics. The 20 native English writers were American and British Anglo-Americans. The native English writers were identified using several factors, including their first and last names, Facebook and Twitter accounts and internet profiles and CVs.

The discussion section was the only part of these research articles that was examined because this is where graduates assert their opinions and claims, equally Hyland (1998) presented, "it is in discussions that writers render their claims, deem the relevance of outcomes, contemplate about what they might imply, going further than their data to provide the far broader vision...., the level of generalization, and thus the size distribution of hedging instruments, is much higher here." (Hyland, 1998, p. 154). Furthermore, looking at how hedges are used in one domain will reveal the differences in how the hedging discourse marker is used.

3.2. Procedures and data analysis

The discussion parts of the chosen articles are the object of research. To begin, the number of words in each article's discussion section was counted using AntConc 4.0.10. The NEWs corpus contained 49,601 running words, while the PEWs corpus contained 46,593. Second,

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both corpora were examined using the same software for various types of hedges and their linguistic phrases (*lexical, epistemic, possibility, entire verb hedges, assertive pronouns, downtoners and adverbs of frequency*) (see Figure1 in section 2.2).

The frequency rates of each form of hedging device were counted independently in NEW's and PEW's research articles to obtain the occurrence percentages of their use in both corpora. The instances of hedging devices such as *possibility, lexical, assertive pronouns*, *epistemic, frequency adverbials, full verbs and downtoners,* were tagged by TagAnt software in the corpora after which AntConc retrieved occurrences and counted the frequencies through the phrases and keywords search terms to see how similar or different NEWs and PEWs use them. The total frequency of every single hedging term was then calculated using through Microsoft Excel programme. For comparison, the original hedging frequency per 1000 words was estimated to achieve a balance between the two corpora.

4.   Results and discussion

4.1.   Hedging across the PEWs and NEWs Corpora

This study is significant for two basic reasons: (1) it provides total frequencies of hedging category usage by PEWs and NEWs, and (2) it analyzes patterns of hedging category chosen by the two groups. Table-1 revealed that the overall frequency of hedging in the NEWs corpus is 21.06 per 1000 words, which is significantly higher than the PEWs corpus's 12.96 per 1000 words. According to this research, PEWs used less hedging than NEWs. As a result, we expect PEWs will be less hesitant to establish an assertion when reviewing the study outcomes in the discussion part. This result corresponds to the earlier research that suggests non-native English writers/authors may not be proficient enough to utilize linguistics strategies to lower the legitimacy of their assertions. (Ho & Li 2018; Hinkel, 2005; Crompton, 2012; Hyland & Milton, 1997; Yang, 2013; Rezanejad et al., 2015; ElMalik & Nesi, 2008; Yang, 2013; Rezanejad et al., 2015).

Hedging Categories	NEWs		PEWs	
	Freq.	Freq. per 1000 words	Freq.	Freq. per 1000 words
Epistemics	131	2.63	70	1.49
Lexical	436	8.82	261	5.57
Possibility	50	1.02	38	0.78
Downtoners	231	4.67	105	2.27
Assertive pronouns	155	3.11	36	0.76
Frequency Adverbs	31	0.64	12	0.27
Full verbs	10	0.19	86	1.83
Total	1044	21.06	608	12.97

Table-1: Frequency of the hedging categories used by NEWs and PEWs

One reason for NEWs' minimal use of hedging could be a cultural one: Pakistanis tend to be forceful and straight without jeopardizing the conviction of their assertions and arguments in order to convince others (Hinkel, 2005; Hyland, 2005). Consequently, PEWs authors may endeavour to fortify their claims to make them more credible. The variation between NEWs and PEWs is a result of this cross-cultural variability in conviction marking (Vassileva, 2001).

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Earlier single genre studies have confirmed PEWs' lack of hedging usage of second language English academic writing (Al-Mudhaffari et al., 2019). Moreover, as previous research in other languages has shown (Bonyadi et al., 2012; Akbas & Hardman, 2018; Martn-Martn, 2008; Hu & Cao, 2011), the nature of the PEWs might influence their hedging distribution. In comparison to NEWs, the influence of Pakistani English authors needs an additional investigation into how PEWs hedge their statements.

Table 1 shows that NEWs and their PEWs peers exhibited a high amount of similarity in the hedging types they chose. Moreover, Lexical hedges were the most common, with a percentage of 8.82 and 5.57 per 1000 words in the NEWs and PEWs corpora, correspondingly. Downtoners was the second most likely hedging type in both corpora, with frequency percentage of 4.67 and 2.27 per 1000 words, accordingly. NEWs favoured aggressive hedging after downtoners, whereas PEWs preferred complete verbs. In the two corpora, epistemic and possibility hedging ranked fourth and fifth, respectively. Lastly, complete verbs were the least common hedging category in NEWs discussion parts, while adverbial hedges were the least common marker in PEWs articles' discussion sections. According to these findings, both NEWs and PEWs prefer to communicate their assertions and arguments primarily through lexical hedges. It's also worth noting that NEWs and PEWs regard downtoners as a necessary component of their ambiguous language. The two corpora appear to use epistemic and possibility hedging as secondary strategies. Both native and non-native English writers did not find adverbial hedging methods to be necessary.

The prevalence of lexical hedging in both corpora may be ascribed to their extensive use in English, primarily in formal writing, i.e., this type contains far more mitigation strategies (Hinkel, 2005). In addition, Downtoners were the next type of hedging adopted by both corpora which contrast earlier research (Hinkel, 2005). This indicates that both NEWs and PEWs try to keep their assertions as generic as possible. The use of assertive pronouns was more frequent in the NEWs data than in the PEWs data, indicating that NE authors use this hedging signal to limit the extent of generalisation in their statements and claims (Hinkel, 2005). Since assertive is not often employed in Pakistani English writings, PEWs did not utilise them to hedge assertions in their discourse. Furthermore, assertive pronouns are utilized to demonstrate ambiguity and allow writers to articulate their views in a consistent manner (Hinkel, 2002). Because they are rare in spoken and written discourses, adverbial hedging was the least frequently used in the two corpora (Channell, 1994).

In conclusion, the table-1shows that PEWs authors are more driven to propositions and assertions than NEWs, since they used fewer hedges and its types. PEWs' underuse of hedges might be attributed to cultural reasons. Hedging was mostly limited to lexical and downtowners hedges by both NEWs and NNEWs. Both sets of the author did not stress epistemic and possibility hedging while establishing knowledge claims and making suggestions and inferences. Lastly, adverbial hedging techniques were infrequently utilised by native and non-native English writers in Pakistan. The linguistic hedging elements utilised by NEWs and PEWs are presented in the following sections.

4.2   Hedging categories and linguistics items

This section will look at how the two corpora employ linguistic items and hedges. The category of assertive pronouns is not included because the emphasis is on the most frequently occuring lexical elements where comparison is relevant.

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4.2.1. Epistemic hedges

The epistemic hedging in table 2 demonstrated that this instrument was the most regularly used element in both corpora, with the NEWs corpus having a 14% edge over PEWs corpus (26% and 12% correspondingly). The word 'likely' appeared 24 times (12%) in the NEWs corpus and 11 times (5%) in the PEWs corpus. Both NEWs and PEWs corpora contained the epistemic 'according to' at varied frequencies (9 % and 6 % respectively). The phrase 'presumably' did not appear in the NEWs data, although it did occasionally appear in the PEWs data (0% and 5%, respectively). PEWs did not utilise the instruments *'potentially', 'essentially' and 'comparatively'* but NEWs did. Both NEWs and PEWs did not employ several additional epistemic devices, such as 'somehow' and 'usually.'

Table-2: Epistemic hedging items

Epistemic hedging	NEWs		PEWs	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
mostly	51	26%	22	12%
likely	24	12%	11	5%
according to	18	9%	10	6%
actually	14	8%	6	3%
clearly	10	6%	6	3%
somewhat	8	4%	2	1%
unlikely	5	4%	2	1%
apparently	0	0%	8	3%
normally/somehow	0	0%	0	0%

4.2.2. Lexical hedging

The item *'more'* was ustilized more frequently by NEWs and PEWs both with varying frequency percentages, as shown in table-3, although NEWs used it significantly more than PEWs (41% and 20 % , respectively). Likewise, NEWs seemed to use the hedging signal *'at about'* more, although PEWs didn't seem to use it much. The lexical phrase *'most'* appeared less in PEWs (8%) corpus than NEWs (6%). A few lexical hedging devices, such as *'something like,' and 'sort of'* did not appear in the PEWs corpus but they did occasionally appear in the NEWs corpus. Further, the one lexical marker *'in a way'* was not employed by PEWs and NEWs.

Table-3: Lexical hedging items

Lexical Hedging	NEWs		PEWs	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
more	192	41%	94	20%
(at) about	41	9%	8	2%
most	38	8%	30	6%
a little + a noun	12	3%	6	1%
may be	3	1%	24	5%
kind of	2	0%	4	1%
more or less	0	0%	12	3%
in a way	0	0%	0	0%

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4.2.3. Possibility hedging

Table 4 shows that the marker *'possible'* was the most prevalent linguistic phrase in both corpora, with a larger proportion in the data (44 % in the NEW and 25 % in the PWEs corpus). NEWs also used the word *'maybe'* more frequently than PEWs (23 % and 11% respectively). Remarkably, linguistic meanings such as *'if you understand my meaning'* , *'if you comprehend'*, *'by some chance,'* ,and *'if you know what I mean'* did not appear in the NEWs corpus at all, although they did appear in the PEWs corpus just marginally. The item *'hopefully'* is one of the possible hedging devices that did not appear in both NEWs and PEWs corpora.

Table-4: Possibility hedging and its itmes

Possibility of hedging	NEWs		PEWs	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
possible	32	44%	18	25%
perhaps	12	23%	2	4%
in case of	6	8%	0	0%
hopefully	0	0%	0	0%
if you know what I mean , if you understand, by some chance and if you catch my meaning	0	0%	1	1%

4.2.4. Downtoner hedges

In both the NEWs and PEWs corpora, the most often used downtoners marker was *'only,'* however it appeared more frequently in the NEWs corpus than in the PEWs corpus, as shown in Table-5 (46 % and 16 %, correspondingly). NEWs favoured *'Just'* by a 5 % margin over PEW writers. Some downtoners' linguistic phrases, such as *'sufficiently', 'merely', and 'barely,* were absent from both corpora. Other downtoners devices were found in NEWs corpus but not in PEW corpus.

Table-5: Downtoners hedging and its items

Downtoners	NEWs		PEWs	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
only	105	46%	34	%16
just	12	6%	3	%1
at all	10	5%	3	1%
at least	10	5%	3	1%
somewhat	8	4%	4	2%
relatively	5	2%	3	1%
a bit	3	1%	0	0%
almost	3	1%	4	2%
sufficiently, merely, and barely	0	0%	0	0%

4.2.5. Adverb of frequency

The adverb 'often' was the most prominent marker in both corpora, as shown in Table-6; nevertheless, it occurred far more frequently in the NEWs corpus than in the PEWs corpus (32% and 10%, respectively). The adverbs *' frequently and sometimes'* were the second

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and third choices in both groups, with the NEWs corpus showing larger percentages. The PEWs and NEWs corpora also lacked adverbs of frequency such as *' yearly, seldom, routinely, weekly, and sometimes.'*

Table-6: Adverb of frequency and its items

Adverbs of frequency	NEWs		PEWs	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
often	14	32%	5	10%
sometimes	11	22%	4	7%
frequently	7	18%	3	4%
occasionally	3	7%	0	0%
Annually, regularly, seldom, weekly, and occasionally	0	0%	0	0%

4.2.6. Verbs hedges

Table-7 shows that full verbs were not preferred by NEWs, whereas PEWs writers highly marked them. For example, the verb *'seem'* occurred 29 times (47%) in the PEWs data, it was completely absent in the NEWs data. Likewise, the verbs '*believe and suggest*' also accounted for 14% in the PEWs data and 5% in the NEWs corpus. Both NEWs and PEWs writers did not use the verbs '*tend, propose, estimate and argue*' in these corpora.

Table-7. Full verbs and its items

Full verbs	NEWs		PEWs	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
seem	0	0%	29	47%
believe	0	0%	10	16%
assume	2	3%	2	3%
suggest	3	5%	9	14%
estimate	0	0%	0	0%
tend, propose, estimate and argue	0	0%	0	0%

In brief, the ratios of linguistic elements employed in both corpora revealed varied results. For instance, both PEWs and NEWs preferred phrases like, *'more', 'possible' and 'often',* however, these hedging featured far less often in the PEWs discussion part. NEWs also use linguistic phrases such as *'likely', 'at around',* 'sometimes', 'mostly', 'maybe', 'often', 'according to', and 'most' as secondary option. PEWs, on the other hand, tended to rely on fuller verbs like *'suggest', 'seem',* and *'appear'* to lessen the validity of their assertions, whereas NEWs did not appear to rely on such verbs to the same amount. This contradicts Hyland's (1998) findings, which found that these hedging devices were the most used terms for neutralizing assertions in scientific research papers. Furthermore, both groups did not utilise linguistic phrases like *"propose," "tend," "estimate,"* and *"argue,"* which confirms Varttala's (1999) result that American authors do not favour such terms in their scientific publications. Because spoken discourse is more prevalent than written writing, the linguistic items sometimes, *'likely', 'according* to' and *'most',* were not frequent among the PEWs authors (Hinkel, 2005; Channel, 1994). Moreover, adverbs of frequency like *'occasionally' 'seldom', 'weekly', 'regularly',* and *'annually'* were not employed by both NEWs and PEWs writers, which this finding is not

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congruent with the findings of (Channel, 1994) in that these adverbs are more common in conversations. To sum up, NEWs and PEWs differ in the use of hedging linguistic expressions.

5.   Conclusion

The current research analyzes the use of hedges types and related linguistic elements in the discussion parts of PhD thesis written by PEWs and NEWs . According to the findings, NEWs authors hedge more than their PEWs peers. Nevertheless, it was discovered that both groups shared some similarities in their hedging categories selection. Both PEWs and NEWs authors corpora employed lexical hedges the most, followed by downtoners. Both groups of writers did not prioritize epistemic and possibility hedging while making knowing claims. Consequently, adverbial hedging was infrequently used by NEWs and NNEWs in Pakistan. Except for the linguistic elements: *possible, more often,* feasible, which were used more frequently in both groups, the linguistic items of the hedging categories were utilised differently in the two groups.

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