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Hedges and Boosters in College Essays: A Study of Linguistic Modulation in Student Writing

Salome L. Escalona

Language and Letters Department, Bukidnon State University, Philippines
salome_escalona@yahoo.com

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Abstract— *This study explored the utilization of hedges and boosters in the essays written by AB-English and BS-Information Technology students. Specifically, it aimed to identify significant differences in the frequency of these linguistic features when analyzed against variables such as respondents' gender and major field of specialization. Through a detailed examination of the essays written by the respondents, the study revealed that female students tend to employ hedges more frequently than their male counterparts. It was also observed that both male and female students make use of boosters in their writing. The overall frequency of hedges and boosters was found to be relatively consistent across both groups, irrespective of gender. These findings underscore the importance for English educators to actively engage students in understanding the strategic use of hedges and boosters. By highlighting their role in crafting nuanced and effective academic essays, teachers can enhance students' awareness and ability to utilize these linguistic tools to strengthen their academic writing*.

Keywords— ***Academic Writing, Boosters, Essay Writing, Hedges, Linguistic Modulation***

I. INTRODUCTION

In tertiary education, essay writing is a fundamental component of English courses, providing students with a platform to articulate perspectives and arguments within a structured, formal framework. Mastery of academic writing requires proficiency in various skills, which include, as outlined by Hyland (2018), adherence to writing conventions, effective linguistic competence, and cognitive ability to present ideas creatively and maturely. These skills are enhanced by strategic linguistic tools, particularly *hedges* and *boosters*, which enable writers to balance assertiveness with caution, enhancing the depth and credibility of their arguments (Jiang & Hyland, 2016).

This study focuses on the role of hedges and boosters in college essays to better understand how students manage assertiveness in their writing. Hedges help writers present statements tentatively, leaving room for alternative interpretations, while boosters convey confidence and commitment to one's stance. These linguistic devices are essential for constructing a persuasive academic argument and engaging readers effectively (Hyland, 2018). Understanding students' use of hedges and boosters not only sheds light on their development as writers but also reveals challenges they may encounter in achieving a balanced tone in academic discourse.

Furthermore, this study explores gender-based and disciplinary differences in the use of hedges and boosters. Research suggests that gender influences linguistic choices, with female writers typically using more hedges to soften their assertions and foster connection, while male writers may employ more boosters to assert authority (Xia, 2019). Similarly, students' fields of study affect their rhetorical strategies, with disciplines like the humanities often favoring assertive language and the sciences leaning toward cautious expression (Schneider & Connor, 2019). This study's insights are thus valuable for developing more tailored academic writing support, enabling educators to address the diverse linguistic needs of students.

The strategic use of hedges and boosters in academic writing is extensively recognized as enhancing a writer's

credibility and rhetorical effectiveness. Hyland (2018) highlights that these devices allow writers to navigate the delicate balance between asserting their viewpoint and acknowledging the possibility of alternative perspectives. This modulation in language is essential for fostering a mature, persuasive academic voice.

In examining hedging and boosting, Chilton (2019) emphasizes their importance for reader engagement, showing that high-scoring essays often feature a balanced use of both. This finding aligns with Hyland's (2016) study on students in Hong Kong, which found that familiarity with these linguistic tools correlates with academic writing success. By modulating their stance, students not only assert their understanding of the subject but also reinforce their authority within the academic discourse.

Gender has been shown to play a critical role in the use of hedges and boosters, with studies such as Pellby's (2013) suggesting that female writers often employ hedges to maintain politeness and relational harmony, while male writers use boosters to assert a more definitive stance. Tannen (2017) further argues that for many women, communication serves as a medium for building rapport, whereas men may use language more competitively to establish status. These gendered tendencies reflect broader social dynamics that shape linguistic choices in academic writing, highlighting the importance of considering gender when analyzing rhetorical strategies.

Disciplinary differences also significantly impact the frequency and form of hedges and boosters in writing. Vasquez and Giner (2009) found that disciplines such as sociology and psychology use boosters more frequently, aligning with the subjective nature of these fields. In contrast, Abdi (2017) observed that writers in the natural sciences prefer hedges to maintain objectivity and precision. These variations underscore the importance of tailoring writing instruction to meet the conventions of each academic field, helping students develop skills that resonate with their discipline's expectations.

Building on these insights, it becomes essential to investigate how students' use of hedges and boosters varies across gender and disciplinary lines. Examining these patterns within the academic writing of students not only reveals how they navigate credibility and engagement but also underscores the need for tailored support in writing instruction.

II. RESEARCH PROBLEMS

This study was conducted to identify and analyze the use of hedges and boosters among AB-English and BS-Information Technology students of Bukidnon State University. It answered the following problems:

1. What are the hedges and boosters found in the essays of the AB-English and BS-Information Technology students?
2. Is there a significant difference between the frequency of the hedges and boosters in the essays and the students' major field of specialization?
3. What is the frequency of hedges and boosters found in the male and female students' essays?
4. Is there a significant difference between the frequency of the hedges and boosters in the essays and the respondents gender?
5. What is the implication of the result to language learning and teaching?

III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

According to Hyland (2018) and Myers (2020), boosters enhance the writer's credibility by intensifying the illocutionary force of statements, signaling a high level of commitment to the argument. In contrast, hedges allow writers to express tentativeness, providing a safeguard against overstated claims and promoting a balanced, credible tone in academic discourse. This balance is crucial for fostering a voice that is authoritative yet open to dialogue, a skill necessary for credible academic writing.

The taxonomy of hedge and booster proposed by Hyland (2005) was used in this study. These devices are listed in table 1.

Table 1. Taxonomy of hedges and boosters

Hedges
About, apparent(ly), approximately, almost, appear, argue, assume, around, assume, around, broadly, can, cannot, certain amount, claim, could, doubt(ful), essentially, estimate, fairly, feel, felt, frequently, from my perspective, from my perspective, generally, guess, indicate, in my opinion, mostly, likely, mainly, maybe, may, might, largely, often, ought, perceive, perhaps, plausibly, possible postulate probable, prove, quite, rather, relatively, seem, should, somewhat, sometimes, suggest, suppose, will not, would, wont, tend to, typical(ly), uncertain, unclear, usually, unlikely, will, suspect.
Boosters
Actually, always, believe, believed, believes, beyond doubt, certain, certainly, clear, clearly, conclusively, decidedly, definite, definitely, demonstrate, demonstrated, demonstrates, doubtless, establish, established, evident, evidently, find, finds, found, in fact, incontestable,

incontrovertible, incontrovertibly, indeed, indisputable, indisputably, know, known, must, (possibility), never, no doubt, obvious, obviously, of course, prove, proved, proves, realize, realized, realizes, really, show, showed, shown, shows, sure, surely, think, thinks, thought, truly, true, undeniable, undeniably, undisputedly, undoubtedly, without doubt.

IV. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research used the quantitative design as it attempted to collect quantifiable information to describe and measure the level of occurrences on the basis of numbers and calculations (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Data were collected through an essay. Frequency count on the occurrence of hedges and boosters was done. Analysis was made to describe "what exists" or the current status of a phenomena with respect some variables or conditions.

Research Locale

The study was conducted at Bukidnon State University (BukSU) in Malaybalay City, Bukidnon, Philippines. BukSU is a state-run institution in Mindanao offering a wide range of undergraduate and graduate programs across fields such as education, arts and sciences, business, information technology, and public administration. The university also has earned recognition as a Center of Development in English Language Studies by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED).

Research Instrument

This study utilized student essays to analyze the use of hedges and boosters. Respondents were instructed to compose an essay on the topic, *"Education is Important,"* within one hour and thirty minutes. The researcher facilitated the activity from start to finish, including distributing bond paper for writing and collecting the completed essays. To ensure clarity, detailed instructions were provided. Respondents were not informed of the specific research focus to capture a more natural language response, yielding a genuine representation of their linguistic choices.

Participants of the Study

There were 75 students who participated in this research study. Forty-seven (47) are enrolled in AB-English Language program while thirty- eight (38) are enrolled in the BS Information Technology course. All students are 3rd year college. Of the 75, 16 are male and 59 are female. The BS-IT students are students of the researcher in their *Scientific and Technical Writing* class while the AB-English respondents are students of *Manpower and Development* subject.

The selection of the groups of students considered their year level and field of specialization. Year level was considered because certain aspects could contribute to the results when the year level of the two groups of respondents is not the same. The field of specialization was also a consideration. The reason for this variety is on the possibility that the researcher may find differences in the occurrence of boosters and hedges from different discipline.

Ethical considerations were carefully applied throughout the data-gathering process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring they understood their rights, including the voluntary nature of participation and the confidentiality of their responses. The anonymity of each respondent was maintained, with no identifying information attached to individual essays, thereby safeguarding their privacy. Furthermore, participants were given the option to withdraw at any stage without penalty. These measures were implemented to respect and protect the integrity and rights of all respondents involved in the study.

Statistical Treatment of Data

To compute the data, the following statistical tools were used: for problems 1 and 3, frequency count; for problem 2, t-test was done to evaluate the means of the 2 groups; and for problem 3, t-test to evaluate the means between the 2 groups and Anova to test the difference between the 3 means.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Research Problem 1: *What are the hedges and boosters found in the essays of the AB-English and BS-Information Technology students?*

Table 1 *Frequency of the hedges in the essays of the students* (see Appendix 1) shows that of the 54 hedging words listed in Hyland's (2005) taxonomy of hedges, 40 were used by the students in their essays. This means that they show carefulness or cautiousness in presenting their stance of a particular topic. This also shows how confidently uncertain they are with their position of an issue. They would like to emphasize 'probability' in their words rather than direct words. As Hyland (1996) pointed out, the use of hedges indicates the writer's decision to withhold complete commitment to a proposition, allowing information to be presented as an opinion rather than accredited fact'. Moreover, the use of these indirect words or hedges could also show that students were humble rather than arrogant or all-knowing. They wanted their readers to know that there are other sides to the story.

Their sides of the issue are only examples of how the issue can be analyzed.

Of the 40 hedging words, students used *could* more often than the other hedging words. This modal auxiliary verb connotes possibility. *Could* as a hedge makes the students withhold giving bold generalization, signifying a probability. This means that the writer knows that there are other positions to what he/she finds logical or illogical. The use of this hedge in the essays of the students also means that the student- writers acknowledge the fact that their opinions of the issue are possible opinions and there are still other opinions, some similar to their opinions while others different from their opinion. Two sentences from two essays of the student-respondents that show this is presented below.

> a.) Education is one important thing we *could* ever have.
>
> b.) Lastly, through education we *could* fulfill our dreams and goals in life.

The two sentences above are used with the hedge *Could*. This shows probability of the utterance. The student-respondents knew that aside from what they have mentioned, there are still other reasons that can be pointed out. As Hyland (1998 b) cited, the use of hedges is to withhold the writer's commitment in order to protect him or her from too strong assertions, which may later prove to have been made in error.

This use of the hedges alone in an essay is not advisable. According to authorities, there should be a balance between uncertainty to certainty and possibility to definiteness. This can be done through the use of boosters. As mentioned by Holmes (1986), boosters refer to lexical items that the writer can use to show strong conviction for a statement, and strengthen the utterance's illocutionary force. In other words, instead of indicating tentativeness or uncertainty, boosters signal the writer's or speaker's confidence regarding the plausibility of his or her utterance.

Table 2 (see Appendix 2) shows the frequency of the student-respondents use of boosters as shown in their essays. As can be seen in the table, 24 kinds of boosters are used by the respondents from the 64 list of boosters given in Hyland's (2005) taxonomy of hedges and boosters. This means that respondents show confidence in their stance of some issues.

Meanwhile, the data in the table shows that the word *Really* is frequently use by the respondents to show their certainty of a particular point. By the use of really, the respondents intensified or highlighted the importance of one particular stance. Some sentences that use this word is shown below:

> a. If you *really* know how to value what you have accomplished as a student and all the sacrifices and hardwork that your parents have given you, you would *really* know how to appreciate the value of education.

In the sentence above, the respondent used the word "*really"* twice. The said word functions as a booster to emphasize the certainty of the utterance. It is clear that the student would like readers to understand the importance of the topic (education). With the use of the said booster, the respondent was able to stress the point she would like to emphasize about education.

> b.In today's society, education is *really* essential in order to be successful economically and socially.

In this sentence from the data, the use of the word "*really*" puts the adjective essential on a certain status. The respondent could just have said essential but she said *really essential*. Because of the adverb *really*, the meaning of the sentence changed. The use of the adverb "really" boosts the sentence and gave it another meaning.

Moreover, it can be deduced, as shown in both tables 1 and 2 that the students have not use many boosters, less than 50%, compared to their use of the hedges, thus, are more of a hedge user than a booster user. This means that students are not direct in their statements. Although they display confidence in their utterances, this is surpassed by the data that shows they use more hedges rather than the boosters. This also means that the respondents are cautious with their words. They know that they only have presented an opinion instead of a fact. According to Myers (1989), hedges may show doubt and indicate that information is presented as opinion rather than accredited fact, or it may be to convey deference, humility, and respect for colleagues' views.

Research Problem 2: *Is there a significant difference between the frequency of the hedges and boosters in the essays and the students' major field of specialization?*

To identify if there exist a significant difference between the two courses of the respondents considering the frequency of the hedges and boosters, a T-test was performed. A t-test assesses whether the means of two groups are statistically different from each other and is appropriate whenever you want to compare the means of two groups,

Table 3 *T-test between the frequency of the hedges and boosters in the essays and the students' major field of specialization*

	T-value	P-value
Course	0.545	0.463

The results above show the T-value and the P-value when the frequency of the boosters and hedges used by the respondents were analyzed based on their field of specialization. The T value is 0.545 which when converted gave a probability value of 0.463. Since the p-value 0.463 is lesser than the pre-determined null hypothesis 0.05, then the Ho is rejected. There is therefore no significant difference in the two courses' use of hedges and boosters.

This result means that both groups used more or less the same frequency of hedges and boosters. There was an expectation that the courses of the student-respondents could be a factor that there would be a difference in the frequency of the boosters and hedges used. However, the results show that it does not have. This could probably be accounted to the fact that the BS-Information Technology course has a high cut-off score. The students are academically high performing. Although they only have lesser English subjects compared to the AB-English students, the English subjects required of their course are enough to enhance their proficiency of the language. And since they are still in the University, they use the language all the time as this is the medium of instruction in the university.

It should also be worth noting that the t-test above is the general result. When viewed using the results in tables 1 and 2, it can be seen that the BS-Information Technology students used more hedging words (32 hedges) compared to the AB-English students with only 28 hedges. With the use of boosters, it is the AB-English students who used more rather than the BS-Information Technology students. This pattern could be attributed to the nature of disciplines of the students, where the BS Information Technology students may feel a greater need to convey caution and acknowledge uncertainty due to the technical and rapidly evolving nature of their field. In contrast, the AB-English Language students, immersed in a disciple that often encourages persuasive and assertive expression, might rely more on boosters to reinforce their arguments. This result augment the findings of Varttala (2001) who cited that different disciplines may not be altogether uniform according to the unique rhetorical demands of each field.

Research Problem 3*: What is the frequency of hedges and boosters found in the male and female students' essays?*

Table 4 *Frequency of the hedges found in the essays of the male and female respondents* (see Appendix 3) shows the frequency of hedges and booster found in the essays of the male and female respondents.

The table shows two information. One is on the frequency of hedges used. While the female respondents have used 32 hedges, the male respondents used only 26 hedges; and while both male and female respondents have the same top 3 hedges, they have different top 4 and top 5 most used hedge. The top 5 most used hedge among the female are: *could, will, would, should* and *about*, and mainly; while the top 5 most used hedge among the male are: *could, will, would, unlikely* and *cannot*.

It is worth mentioning that many female respondents have used the hedge *Mainly* (top 5 in female) but not one has used the hedge *Unlikely* (top 4 in male). Further, even when most of the males have used *Unlikely*, none of them used the hedge *Mainly*. This variation aligns with existing research on gendered language use, where female writers often employ hedges like "mainly" to soften statements and foster inclusivity, reflecting a tendency toward positive politeness. In contrast, male respondents' use of hedges like "unlikely" suggests a more assertive approach to expressing uncertainty, consistent with an epistemic function that communicates cautious speculation rather than relational harmony. These findings corroborate Brown and Levinson's (1987) observations, highlighting how gender-specific communication styles influence linguistic choices in academic writing.

In the case of boosters, table 5 Frequency of the boosters found in the essays of the male and female respondent (see Appendix 5) shows the results. As can be seen in table 5, both respondents used the booster *believed* more than they used the other boosters. It also shows that they have used more than 60% of the boosters in Hyland's (1998b) list. However, while the females used 22 boosters, the males used only 17. This finding suggests that both male and female respondents recognize the value of boosters, particularly "believed," to strengthen their assertions and convey conviction in their arguments. The frequent use of this booster highlights its role in academic discourse as a tool for establishing credibility and asserting confidence (Hyland, 1998b). However, the higher use of boosters by female respondents could indicate a greater need to reinforce their statements and ensure clarity in their stance, aligning with studies that suggest women may use additional linguistic resources to assert authority in traditionally male-dominated or competitive environments (Coates, 2016; Tannen, 1990). This gendered difference in booster frequency supports the idea that female students may strategically employ language to enhance their presence in academic discourse, underscoring the nuanced ways gender influences rhetorical choices.

Research Problem 4: *Is there a significant difference between the frequency of hedges and boosters in the essays and the respondents gender?*

The succeeding tables reveal the significant difference between the frequency of hedges and boosters used and the gender of the respondents. Table 6 shows the result on the frequency of hedge used and the gender of the respondents, table 7 shows the result on the frequency of the booster used and the gender of the students and table 8 shows the result when the combined frequencies of the hedges and boosters used and the gender was computed.

Table 6

T-test on the frequency of hedges used and the gender of the respondents

	t-value	P-value
Gender	-2.783	0.007

The statistical analysis reveals a significant difference in hedge usage between male and female students, with a p-value of 0.007, well below the 0.05 threshold. This result confirms that female students use hedges more frequently than their male counterparts. Lakoff's (1975) work on gendered communication styles offers insight into this pattern, suggesting that women's language often prioritizes relational harmony and deference, sometimes at the cost of perceived authority. According to Lakoff, this stems from socialization processes in which women are encouraged to communicate in ways that are less assertive, a tendency that can manifest in the frequent use of hedges.

Moreover, hedges allow speakers to present ideas with flexibility, accommodating differing perspectives and reducing the potential for conflict. This nuanced approach to language can lead to perceptions of female communication as tentative or lacking decisiveness. However, modern studies suggest that this hedging strategy may also reflect a sophisticated awareness of audience needs and a rhetorical sensitivity often undervalued in traditional assessments of authority (Coates, 2016; Holmes, 1995). This finding thus underscores both the communicative strengths and societal expectations that shape female students' use of hedges in academic writing.

Table 7 shows the result of the test made between the gender and the frequency of the use of boosters as seen in the essays of the respondents.

Table 7

Boosters only

	t-value	P-value
Gender	0.637	0.527

Table 7 presents a p-value of 0.527, which exceeds the 0.05 significance threshold, indicating no statistically significant difference in booster usage between male and female students. This result suggests that both genders employ boosters at relatively similar levels, reflecting a shared understanding of the importance of assertiveness in academic writing.

The consistent use of boosters, regardless of gender, may highlight a common academic strategy among students to reinforce their arguments and demonstrate confidence. This alignment could suggest that while hedging may be influenced by gendered communication patterns, the use of boosters is more universally valued in academic contexts for establishing credibility and clarity (Hyland, 1998b). Such findings imply that the academic environment encourages both male and female students to assert their arguments with similar levels of emphasis, reinforcing the idea that the perceived effectiveness of a statement often benefits from a balanced use of certainty markers.

Meanwhile, the combined results of hedges and boosters and the gender of the participants of the study were also computed. The result is presented in table 8.

Table 8

Hedges and Boosters (Combine) and the gender of the respondents

	F-value	P-value
Gender	0.408	0.525
Course	0.545	0.463
Gender*Course	0.623	0.433

Table 8 indicates that the p-values of the computed variables exceed the 0.05 significance level, demonstrating no statistically significant difference in the overall use of hedges and boosters between male and female students. This finding suggests that, despite subtle differences in individual hedge and booster types, both genders adopt a balanced approach to these linguistic tools within their academic writing.

This balance in the use of hedges and boosters may reflect shared academic conventions that encourage all students, regardless of gender, to effectively balance caution with assertiveness. It aligns with the understanding that academic writing requires both careful modulation of claims and confident assertion of ideas (Hyland, 2005). Consequently, this lack of a significant difference underscores how the academic setting may promote a uniform rhetorical approach, where both male and female

students aim to meet similar standards of credibility, persuasiveness, and audience engagement.

Research Problem 5: *What is the implication of the results to language teaching and learning?*

The results highlight the critical role of hedges and boosters in academic writing, underscoring the need for their inclusion in language learning curricula. Specifically, these findings suggest that instruction on these rhetorical tools could significantly enhance students' writing proficiency by helping them navigate tone, stance, and argumentation in various academic contexts.

a) Given the observed differences in hedge and booster use across genders and disciplines, teaching should incorporate explicit instruction on these devices to raise students' awareness of their strategic value. Students should be guided in understanding how hedges can convey humility or caution, while boosters assert confidence and authority, both of which are essential for crafting persuasive and balanced arguments. Teaching students the context-dependent use of these devices allows them to better adapt to the communicative norms expected in academic writing (Hyland, 1998b; Coates, 2016).

b) Educators should also recognize that disciplines vary in their preferred discourse styles, with some fields favoring assertive language and others prioritizing cautious or tentative expression. By integrating instruction that highlights these disciplinary differences, teachers can prepare students to write confidently within their fields. For instance, students in technical or natural sciences might focus more on hedging to reflect precision and objectivity, while those in social sciences and humanities might use boosters to support interpretive arguments (Varttala, 2001; Vasquez & Giner, 2009). Tailoring language instruction in this way enables students to meet the rhetorical demands of their specific disciplines.

c) Furthermore, this emphasis on hedges and boosters can foster critical thinking, as students learn to assess the strength of their claims and the necessity of varying degrees of assertiveness. This skill not only improves writing quality but also deepens students' engagement with their subjects, as they consider the impact of language on meaning and reader perception (Holmes, 1995; Tannen, 1990).

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of this research, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The observed gender differences in hedging indicate that female students are more inclined to use hedges than their male counterparts. This suggests a more detailed approach to assertiveness among female students, possibly reflecting a communication style that prioritizes relational harmony and caution in presenting claims. Recognizing these tendencies allows educators to provide targeted guidance on balancing assertiveness and caution to meet academic standards for both genders.

2. The comparable use of hedges and boosters between AB-English and BS-Information Technology students implies that academic language proficiency, rather than field-specific differences, largely influences the use of these rhetorical devices. This finding suggests that effective use of hedges and boosters can enhance clarity and persuasiveness across disciplines.

3. The integration of rhetorical strategies into classroom instruction is crucial for developing students' versatile language skills that can be applied across diverse academic contexts

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1.

Table 1

Frequency of the hedges in the essays of the students

Hedging Word	BS-IT	AB-Eng	Total	Hedging word	BS-IT	AB-Eng	Total
About*	22	16	38	Ought	0	5	5
Almost	6	4	10	Often	6	6	12
Appear	10	8	18	Perceive	4	5	9
Around	0	7	7	Perhaps	0	2	2
Cannot	11	19	30	Possible	0	4	4
Can	14	30	44	Probable	4	3	7
Could*	61	73	134	Prove	3	0	3
Doubt	3	0	3	Quite	0	2	2
Essentially	0	4	4	Rather	3	4	7
Estimate	2	0	2	Seem	0	3	3
Feel	3	0	3	Should*	10	22	32
Frequently	6	0	6	Sometimes	4	0	4
Generally	4	4	8	Somewhat	3	0	3
Guess	0	13	13	Suggest	2	0	2
Largely	4	8	12	Tend to	4	0	4
Likely	5	0	5	Unlikely	7	5	12
Mainly	16	10	26	Usually	5	0	5
May	8	15	23	Will*	73	59	132
Maybe	4	0	4	Will not	12	9	21
Might	9	6	13	Would*	38	36	74

Appendix 2

Table 2

Frequency of the boosters in the essays of the students

Booster	BS-IT	AB-Eng	Total	Booster	BS-IT	AB-Eng	Total
Actually	8	12	20	Must	4	4	8
Always	7	13	20	Obviously	8	10	18
Believe/d	18	12	30	Proves	2	0	2
Certainly	4	9	13	Realize/d	12	0	12
Clearly	5	5	10	Really	10	20	30
Definitely	6	7	13	Surely	9	10	19
Evidently	0	2	2	Thought	9	3	12
Find	0	2	2	Truly	7	7	14
In fact	0	2	2	Undeniably	2	6	8
Indeed	4	4	8	Undoubtedly	6	11	17

Know	10	0	10	Without doubt	4	4	8
Known	1	2	3	Undisputedly	0	5	5

Appendix 3

Table 4

Frequency of the hedges found in the essays of the male and female respondents

Hedging word	Male	Female	Total	Hedging word	Male	Female	Total
About*	8	30	38	Ought	2	3	5
Almost	0	10	10	Often	5	7	12
Appear	0	18	18	Perceive	5	4	9
Around	0	7	7	Perhaps	2	0	2
Cannot	10	20	30	Possible	0	4	4
Can	8	22	44	Probable	4	3	7
Could*	19	115	134	Prove	0	3	3
Doubt	3	0	3	Quite	0	2	2
Essentially	4	4	4	Rather	4	4	7
Estimate	0	2	2	Seem	3	0	3
Feel	3	0	3	Should*	2	30	32
Frequently	1	5	6	Sometimes	0	4	4
Generally	2	6	8	Somewhat	0	3	3
Guess	3	10	13	Suggest	2	0	2
Largely	5	7	12	Tend to	4	0	4
Likely	5	0	5	Unlikely	12	0	12
Mainly	0	26	26	Usually	0	5	5
May	7	16	23	Will*	17	115	132
Maybe	0	4	4	Will not	0	21	21
Might	0	13	13	Would*	13	61	74

Appendix 4

Table 5

Frequency of the boosters found in the essays of the male and female respondents

Booster	Male	Female	Total	Booter	Male	Female	Total
Actually	7	13	20	Must	3	5	8
Always	4	16	20	Obviously	6	16	22
Believe/d	10	20	30	Proves	0	2	2
Certainly	3	10	13	Realize/d	4	8	12
Clearly	4	6	10	Really	4	17	21
Definitely	0	13	13	Surely	4	15	19
Evidently	2	0	2	Thought	0	12	12
Find	0	2	2	Truly	3	11	14
In fact	2	0	2	Undeniably	5	3	8
Indeed	0	6	6	Undoubtedly	5	12	17
Know	0	10	10	Without doubt	4	4	8

Known	0	3	3	Undisputedly	3	2	5