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# A Discursive Psychological-Based Approach to the Impact of Gender on Using Metadiscourse Markers.

**A Study Case of Second Year EFL Students in the Department of English at YAHIA Fares University, Medea**

***Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in Linguistics***

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**ACADEMIC YEAR**

2021 - 2022

# Dedication

In the name of God, most merciful most compassionate

We dedicate this work to our mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, and close friends.

## Acknowledgments

*We would like to express our deepest gratitude to Almighty God for giving us the strength, guidance, knowledge, and courage to accomplish this work.*

*We owe depth of gratitude and appreciation to our supervisor,Mrs**. Zaidi. Hiba**, for her help, support, and guidance at every stage of the development of this thesis. Without her help, this study would not be completed.*

*Our Acknowledgments would not be complete without thanking Mr. **Oussama Boukhelkhal**, for providing advice and showing interest.*

## Abstract

The current case study investigates gender-triggered differences in using Metadiscourse markers, hedges and boosters, by third year EFL students in the English department at Yahia Fares University. More pointedly, it heeds to explore whether a gender-based variable (being a female or male student) bears an impact on the use and distribution of hedges and boosters among EFL students' argumentative written products. For this purpose, and following a psychological discursive-based approach to language, a descriptive case study was conducted with third year EFL students in the English department. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected through two main sources; students' questionnaire and students' writing essay tests. The findings of the research have revealed that female students were more inclined to use hedges in their argumentative writing than boosters. Differently, male students were more committed to use boosters.

**Keywords:** Metadiscourse markers, hedges, boosters, argumentative writing, gender factor.

## النتيجة العامة

يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة الاختلافات بين الجنسين في استخدام الميتاديسكوس (الخطاب الرئيسي) علامات التحوط والتعزيز بين طلاب السنة الثالثة للغة الإنجليزية في جامعة يحيى فارس بولاية المدية. للإجابة على السؤالين الرئيسيين في الدراسة، ينقسم هذا الأخير إلى ثلاثة فصول. يقدم الفصل الأول مراجعة الأدبيات التي تبدأ بمقدمة عامة لعلامات الخطاب الرئيسي في الكتابة الأكاديمية تليها دراسات سابقة حول نوع الجنس والدراسات الطبية ثم تناول معالجة المقاربات الرئيسية للجنس واللغة والكتابة المقنعة .

ويتناول الفصل الثاني المنهجية المستخدمة في هذه الدراسة. شرح كامل لأدوات جمع البيانات وهي: اختبارات المقالات الكمية للطلاب واستبيان نوعي للطلاب وأدوات جمع البيانات بالإضافة إلى إجراءات تحليل البيانات.

نتيجة لذلك، بالإضافة إلى ما تم الإبلاغ عنه في مراجعة الأدبيات، قدم التحليل إجابات قيمة لأسئلتنا البحثية. أما الفصل الثالث فيتناول النتائج ومناقشات أسئلة البحث. تظهر نتائج هذه الدراسة أن الجنس له تأثير إيجابي على كتابة الطلاب الجدلية. فيما يتعلق بالسؤال الرئيسي الأول، تشير النتائج إلى أن طالبات السنة الثالثة من قسم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية يميلون أكثر إلى استخدام التحوط في كتابتهن الجدلية مقارنة بالمحفزات. تظهر نتائج السؤال الثاني أن طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية الذكور كانوا أقل ميلًا لاستخدام التحوطات التي كانوا أكثر عرضة لاستخدام المعززات في مقالاتهم الجدلية مقارنة بالإناث. ومع ذلك، فإن المتعلمات أكثر ميلًا للكشف عن مشاعرهن لتحقيق التضامن مع جمهورهن. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تستخدم الطالبات أسلوبًا للتحوط في كتابتهن الجدلية أكثر من الطلاب الذكور. ومع ذلك، فإن حقيقة أن الطالبات في هذه الدراسة كتبن مقالات أطول بكثير من نظرائهن الذكور يضفي مصداقية على افتراض أن الكلام الأنثوي مرتبط بالهيبة. توضح نتيجة أسئلة الاستبيان بعض الاقتراحات من أجل تعزيز أنواع مختلفة من علامات ما وراء الخطاب. أن القراء يريدون أن تكون التأكيدات مبررة من حيث تقييمات الموثوقية التي تنقلها، وكذلك مناسبة من حيث التفاعلات الاجتماعية التي يناشدونها وتمكين المؤلفين من نقل درجات أكثر تحديدًا من الدقة في تقييمات الحقيقة الخاصة بهم.

تمت الإجابة على أسئلة بحث دراسة الحالة بشكل مرض. تم تقديم العديد من التوصيات والآثار التربوية للمعلمين من أجل فهم أفضل لعلامات ما وراء الخطاب، مثل تضمين أنواع أخرى من الكتابة أو الدراسة في الفرن من سياقات ووجهات نظر أخرى بناءً على نتائج تلك الأسئلة البحثية بين طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة يحيى فارس.

أخيرًا، نأمل أن يكون بحثنا ذا قيمة وأن يكون بمثابة نقطة انطلاق لباحثين آخرين لإجراء بحوث في نفس الموضوع وتغطية مجالات إضافية التي ربما تم تجاهلها في دراستنا.

## List of Figures

**Figure 1:** Skelton's (1988) taxonomy of hedging devices.

**Figure 2:** Salager-Meyer's (1994) taxonomy of hedges.

**Figure 3:** Hyland's (1994) categorization of hedges.

**Figure 4:** Yagiz and Demir's (2015) categorization of boosters.

**Figure 5:** Frequency of modal auxiliary verbs in the corpus.

**Figure 6:** Frequency of modal expressions in the corpus.

**Figure 7:** Frequency of modal lexical verbs.

**Figure 8:** frequency of epistemic adverbs in the corpus.

**Figure 9:** frequency of epistemic lexical verbs in the corpus.

**Figure 10:** Frequency of modal auxiliaries in the corpus.

**Figure 11:** Frequency of epistemic adverbs in the corpus.

**Figure 12:** percentual usage of hedges and boosters by EFL students.

**Figure 13:** Gender and the percentual usage of MD hedges and boosters.

## List of Tables

**Table 1:** An Interpersonal Model Of Metadiscourse.

**Table 2:** The Descriptive Statistics Of Hedging Devices In The Argumentative Essays Of Efl Learners.

**Table 3:** The overall distribution of hedges.

**Table 4:** The descriptive statistics of boosting devices in the argumentative essays of EFL learners.

**Table 5:** The overall distribution of boosters.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Dedication** | |
| **Acknowledgments** | |
| **Abstract** | |
| النتيجة العامة | |
| **List Of Figures** | |
| **List Of Tables** | |
| **General Introduction** | 1 |
| **Background And Motivation To The Study** | **2** |
| **Statement Of The Problem** | 2 |
| **Research Questions** | **3** |
| **Research Hypothesis** | **3** |
| **Aims And Significance Of The Study** | **3** |
| **Structure Of The Dissertation** | **4** |
| **Introduction** | **5** |
| **Metadiscourse Markers In Academic Writing** | **5** |
| **Metadiscourse** | **6** |
| **Hedges** | **6** |
| **Function of hedges** | **7** |
| **Types of hedges** | **7** |
| **Boosters** | **10** |
| **Function of boosters** | **10** |
| **Types of boosters** | **10** |
| **Hyland's Interpersonal Model Of Metadiscourse 2005** | **11** |
| **Previous Studies on Gender And Metadiscourse** | **13** |
| **Main Approaches to Gender and Language** | **14** |
| **Metadiscourse And Persuasive Writing** | **15** |
| **Conclusion** | **16** |
| **Introduction** | **17** |
| **Research Design** | **18** |
| **Context** | **18** |
| **Sampling Procedure** | **19** |
| **Participants** | **19** |
| **Instruments For Data Collection** | **20** |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Definition Of the Corpus** | **20** |
| **Description Of the Corpus** | **21** |
| **Questionnaire For Efl Students** | **22** |
| **Piloting The Questionnaire** | **23** |
| **Data Analysis Procedures** | **23** |
| **Limitations And Delimitations of The Study** | **23** |
| **Introduction** | **23** |
| **Findings** | **27** |
| **Written Essays Tests Results** | **27** |
| **Gender And the Destruction of Hedging and Boosting Forms** | **27** |
| **Questionnaire Results** | **35** |
| **Student's Perception of Metadiscourse** | **35** |
| **Discussion of Results** | **37** |
| **Discussion Of the Questionnaire and Writing Essay Tests** | **37** |
| **The influence of gender on using hedges** | **38** |
| **The impact of gender on using boosters** | **39** |
| **Conclusion** | **40** |
| **General Conclusion** | **41** |
| **Limitations of the study** | **42** |
| **Pedagogical implications** | **42** |
| **Suggestion for further research** | **42** |
| **List Of References** | **41** |
| **Appendices** | **44** |

# General Introduction

This general introduction shed light on the stages of this thesis. First, it tackles the background and motivation for the study, statement of the problem, research questions, aims of the study, the significance of the study, and structure of the dissertation.

From a social perspective, writing is seen as a communicative engagement between the writer and the reader within the text. Writing academically in the target language is quite challenging and more perplexing for a foreign learner, mainly when the writer is supposed to write in a manner that supplies the reader with a cautious analysis of the collected data and enables him to distinguish opinion from fact. Based on Halliday's beliefs (1994), language has three metafunctions, textual, ideational, and interpersonal functions. First is the ideational function, which refers to the use of language to express, build or maintain our ideas. It is known as propositional content. Second, the textual function which refers mainly to the use of language to produce a cohesive and coherent text. The last function which is the core concern of this research is the ideational function. It pertains to the use of language to interact, communicate or participate with others (p.355). Indeed, writing proficiently requires the writer's full awareness and the mastery of various aspects of written texts like coherence, cohesion, formality, and tentativeness. These aspects would collectively be achieved through triggering the role of metadiscoursal features, particularly, hedges and boosters in a way that suitably convinces the receiver. These features imply a state of certainty and uncertainty which is fundamental in argumentative writing, the rhetoric, and interactional aspects of academic writing; they define the influence of academics acquiring acceptance for their research and writings due to hedging and boosting. Despite the fact that a few studies have demonstrated the value of hedging as a resource for expressing doubt in academic contexts, it is a system in applied linguistics that allows writers to boost or diminish the force of their statement, transmitting both affective and cognitive meanings, and it not only helps the writer in his level of confidence but also affects the reader's attitude and behavior

However, related literature showed that the use of hedges and boosters is affected by many extra-linguistic factors such as culture, genre, community, and gender. As far as gender is concerned, it has remarkably captured the attention of various scholars as being a highly influential component for the usage and distribution of hedges and boosters in EFL writings. A gender-based

differences approach to metadiscourse features claims that the use of hedges and boosters in academic writing might differ from masculine use to feminine use.

## 1. Background and Motivation to the Study

In many areas of language learning, a remarkable growth of interest has been disposed to gender-linked studies in recent years. In this case, studying language does not only depict reality, rather language is seen as a piece of interaction between writer/speaker and reader/listener. i.e., Language functions as a semiotic tool and, therefore, it allows the gender identity to be revealed (Halliday, Hassan & Meyer, 1987, p.355). Additionally, gender is seen as a "social product" (Aydinoglu, 2014, p.233). The writer/speaker gender has been widely considered as an influential component on male and female writing styles in addition to the distribution of their linguistic features or linguistic practice to convey meaning. Seeking the correlation between gender and language, which identifies along with dominance, deficit or difference, is echoed after Lakoff's 1970 work. He noted, *"Language uses us as much as we use language"* (p.45). Lakoff assumes that gender differences in language use mirrors various and unmatched roles and status. For instance, in order to reveal the sense of femininity, women should learn to acquire an assertive style of communication through opting for a set of rhetorical apparatus including 'hesitations, intensive adverbs, empty adjectives, super polite forms, intensifiers, tag questions, and compound requests. Hedges and boosters are considered to be part of this group (p.624). He maintained that women tend to use more hedges than men, as they show a strong inclination towards hesitation and tentativeness. In other words, women's speech reveals a lack of confidence.

## 2. Statement of the Problem

The current study overall problem stems from an observation we have made at the level of third year EFL writing classes at Yahia Fares University of Medea where female and male students use metadiscourse markers differently in their argumentative essays. The observation was consolidated by analyzing 20 written samples by both genders in the target style. The samples were investigated based on a gender-linked test about the use of hedges and boosters. In light of their performances, we inferred that the two markers abound in both genders' samples of argumentative essays, yet female students seem to be more inclined to the use of hedges than men. In an attempt to address the problem mentioned above, the present study seeks to determine the difference in the use of

metadiscourse markers (hedges and boosters), by the effect of gender, in EFL's argumentative writings following a recursive psychological approach to language, more notably, by referring to Tannen (1990) Difference Theory.

## 3. Research Questions

The present study addresses the following questions:

1. Are female learners more inclined to use hedges in their argumentative writing?

2. Are male learners more inclined to use metadiscourse markers (boosters) in their argumentative writing?

## 4. Research Hypothesis

The present research is grounded on the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis1: Female students might opt for using hedges other than boosters in their essays.

Hypothesis2: Male students might use boosters more than hedges in their argumentative essays.

## 5. Aims and Significance of the Study

This study aims at highlighting the different usage of hedging and boosting devices among male and female EFL students at UYFM. It also heeds to raise EFL students' awareness of the restrictive use of these types of metadiscourse markers in the argumentative essay more than any other types of essays.

Based on the above-mentioned issues, the results of this study are expected to help with distinguishing and understanding the nature of a gender-bound differences in using hedges and booster among EFL students' writings. Moreover, they are to be taken as good predictors of the large use of these discourse markers in argumentative essays. Also, they constitute as a pathway to raising students' and teachers' awareness towards such kinds of devices since they form and play a crucial role in academic writing.

## 6. Structure of the Dissertation

This study is divided into a general introduction and three chapters. First, the general introduction tackles the background of the study, statement of the problem, research questions, aims, and significance of the study. The first chapter deals with the literature review on the key concepts of metadiscourse markers; hedges and boosters, and gender-linked studies. The second chapter is devoted to the methodology used in conducting this research. The last chapter presents the results and discussion of the findings of this study, pedagogical implications, recommendations for teachers, suggestions for further studies, and a general conclusion.

# CHAPTER ONE

# Review of the Literature

| | |
|---|---|
| Introduction | 02 |
| Metadiscourse markers in academic writing | 03 |
| Metadiscourse | 03 |
| Hedges | 04 |
| Functions of Hedges | 05 |
| Types of Hedges | 05 |
| Boosters | 07 |
| Function of Boosters | 8 |
| Types of Boosters | 08 |
| Hyland's Interpersonal Model of Metadiscourse 2005 | 10 |
| Previous Studies on Gender and Metadiscourse | 12 |
| Main Approaches to gender and language | 14 |
| Metadiscourse and Persuasive Writing | 15 |

# Introduction

The concept of metadiscourse and gender is new in the field of applied linguistics, many scholars paid immense attention to this new field of inquiry. In this chapter, we will review some previous investigations on gender differences in the use of metadiscourse markers in EFL contexts. The first section will define the main concepts of metadiscourse, hedges, and boosters. The second section introduces key approaches and previous studies on gender differences. The last section provides the notion of metadiscourse and its relation to persuasive writing.

## 1.2Metadiscourse markers in academic writing

In academic writing, the transferred message, information, or opinion is very important, since it shows how writers see themselves in a correct type of language for a particular audience. According to Livingstone (2019), academic written texts should portray an interaction between the writer and the reader in a manner where academic writing will be seen as a social engagement. The use of metadiscourse markers is essential in academic writing because writers must be capable of processing their writing to make difference between opinion and fact. Being a professional academic writer is not an easy task, to be one, means to be able to communicate ideas clearly and successfully conducive to coherence and intelligibility.

Al-Rubaye (2015) indicated that metadiscourse focal point bears on the way the writers create their texts and their ideas. It also represents the idea presuming different personalities, assumptions, and attitudes and not only to interchange information of those who are communicating. Metadiscourse is a universal linguistic aspect of different languages, it shapes the principal aim of writing as a social act, to increase the communicative relationships between the writer and the reader (p.13). In the same line of thought, Hyland (2000) argued that MD provides scaffolding for understanding communication as social engagement, it projects light on some features of how we see ourselves in our discourses by communicating our attitudes as regards with content and the audience.

The concept of metadiscourse was developed by Williams (1981), Vande Kople (1985) and Crismore (1989) who initiated a range of discourse features, for instance, hedges and boosters to reveal the way writers and speakers influence the reception of information and ideas. Metadiscourse

is defined as the range of devices used by writers so as to clearly and easily organize their texts and attract readers to indicate both their material with their audience.

### 1.2.1 Metadiscourse

The notion of metadiscourse was first initiated by Harris (1959), who described text components that talk about the main figures and details of a text; however, he accommodates exclusively unnecessary information and details. Thus, metadiscourse was overlooked in the ’60s and ’70s to be reinitiated in 1980 by other scholars (Williams, 1981, Kopple1985& Crismore, 1989) who were implicated in writing instructions. This development brought about a new whole aspect of text. Metadiscourse is a recent and interesting field of language analysis that is considered through its major role in making and organizing convincing writing formed upon people's involved standards and beliefs. In this regard, Yousefi (2010) noted, *“Metadiscourse represents the concept that speaking and writing are more than just a communication of ideas and the performance of ideational meaning however it’s considered social acts that include writers readers speakers and listeners to merge to influence the presente and understood ideas”* (p. 159).

Metadiscourse is established as a conduit of social interaction as it exposes how writers and readers collaborate in the text *“Once we speak or write we are arranging with other people decisions about the types of effects we could have on our listeners and readers”* (Hyland and Tse 2004 as cited in Amiryousefi & Rasekh, 2010, P.164). In the same line of thought, Hyland&Tse (2004) maintained that metadiscourse is a cogitative linguistic material referring to the development of the text, writer, and the reader of that text. It is formed on an aspect of writing as a social engagement in academic contexts. It shows the ways that writers see themselves in their discourse to indicate their attitudes towards both the propositional content and the audience of the text. Regardless of the considerable interest in metadiscourse by applied linguists and teachers, yet, it has declined to achieve its explanatory potential because of the lack of theoretical rigor and empirical confusion (p.156-177). There are different types of metadiscourse taxonomies and classifications accessible in the literature. The development of these taxonomies theoretically and functionally is remarkable among time and practice.

#### 1.2.1.1 Hedges

Within the framework of linguistics and language, hedges are devices used to decrease the intensity of an utterance and temper the impact of a declaration. Lyons (1977) determined a hedge as a component of language which a speaker adopts to qualify his or her need for commitment to the

truth of a proposition he or she reveals (p.797). This definition epitomizes what a hedge is, in addition to having different labels and considerations for hedges, which involve “downgraders”, “compromisers”, “downtowners”, “softens” and “weakness” And “politeness Markers”. They are good indicators for the addressee to help with allocating preciseness of the given information. They can be used to make it easy for the addressee or to put emphasis on the preciseness of the given information. In this respect, Livingstone (2019) maintained that hedges have complex functions and multifunction Purposes, and the writing context allows being carefully deliberated when using them (p.24).

Hyland (2005) depicted hedges as weakening of a belief through an accurate qualification of the writer`s commitment. This probably reveals doubt and indicates that information is presented as a point of view (p.353). In this respect, he emphasized that hedges are the most remarkable considered features of this audio-oriented condition (p.353).

Similarly, Myers (1989) advocated that academic writers use hedges to reduce the possible threat of new claims induced on other researchers by approaching acceptance and challenging and demanding their work.

#### 1.2.1.2 Functions of Hedges:

In Brown and Levinson’s (1987) terms, hedges function to express negative politeness. Myers (1989) also considers hedging as a politeness strategy in scientific articles. He suggests that academic writers employ hedges to minimize the potential threat of new claims.

#### 1.2.1.3 Types of Hedges:

Several linguists like Hyland (1998), Meyer (1994), and Skelton (1988), among others, tried to set different typologies of hedges. In this section, we will present the most important and comprehensive types, but in our research, Hyland’s (1994) taxonomy will be used because of its relevance with the current research.

### 1.3 Taxonomy of Skelton

Skelton (1988) concluded, in his cross-disciplinary study of commentating (as shown in figure 1 bellow), on which he built his data analysis and study that particularly showed to be allied with skepticism and uncertainty, he recognized four important elements that can be possibly used as subdivisions of type one comment. first adjectival and adverbials; this kind of comment supplies two main objectives, commenting on the amount, one; commenting on the intensity of certainty or

possibility of a proposition, and two; commenting on the degree to which the proposition is identified as significant or interesting. Second, lexical verbs, for example, doubting and arguing. Third, modal auxiliaries are used to undeniably point to uncertainty. Fourth, copulas were designed for the expression of uncertainty or possibility.

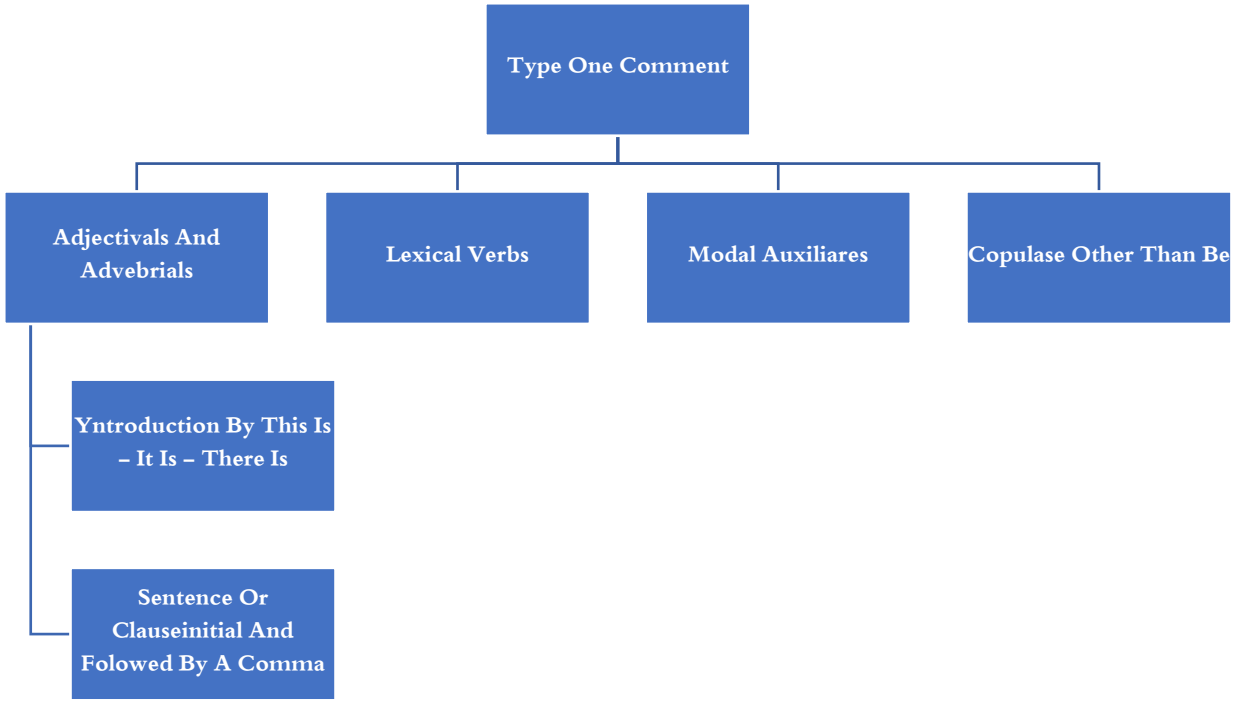



**Figure 1.** Skelton's (1988) taxonomy of hedging devices.

## 1.4 Taxonomy of Meyer (1994)

Meyer became aware of a greatly used taxonomy containing the possible forms and functions of hedges after a very deep analysis of a corpus of 15 highbrow level articles. Her categorization combines five important grades. First, approximators, emotionally charged intensifiers, compound hedges, shields, and expressions of the author's doubts and direct involvement.

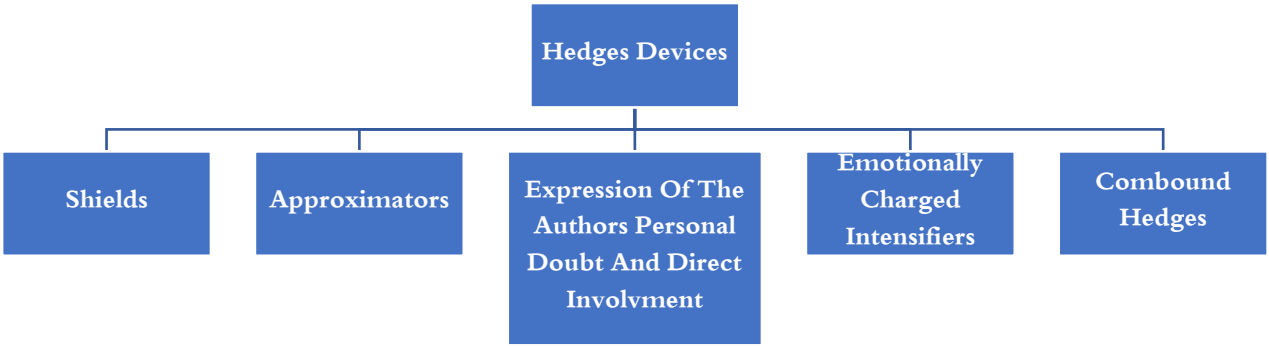



**Figure 2**: Salager-Meyer's (1994) taxonomy of hedges.

## 1.5 Hyland's (1994) Taxonomy of Hedges

The current taxonomy proposed by Hyland (1994) has been widely used by researchers and linguists, to study hedges devices, especially in ESP courses and academic writing, and how the device is used in L1 and L2 language. Hence, this taxonomy will be used in our research. The former's taxonomy (1994) model demonstrates the identification of hedges under three types, i.e., modal lexical verbs, modal auxiliary verbs, and modal expressions (nouns, adverbs, and adjectives). In his study, Hyland also added four other branches; impersonal phrases, time reference, passivation, and question forms.

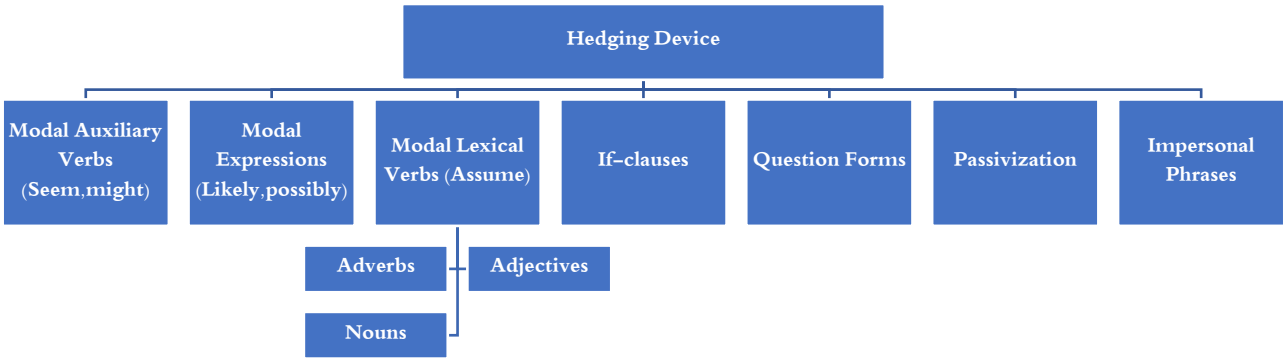



**Figure 3.** Hyland's (1994) categorization of hedges.

## 1.5Boosters

Boosters are linguistic materials that enhance the force of an utterance in making a sentence or a statement more effective. In this regard, Hyland (1998) stated that *"boosters give the impression to disapprove such conciliatory and defensive tactics, it indicates the force of prepositions and affects commitments to statements, by that maintaining the writer's beliefs and contradicting the negotiating accessible space to the reader; however, there is a possible risk tactic though boosters permit writers to strategically to interact with colleagues,* (As cited in Livingstone p, 246-353). In parallel with this, Holmes, (1990) considered that boosters are cues used to reveal the speaker's intentions with confidence and powerful beliefs. Also, they are observed to take a major part in creating conversational unity between participants, even though they got special consideration in academic writing (Holmes,19984,1990) (p.67,68).

### 1.5.1 Function of Boosters

Boosters as a means of expressing certainty and strong conviction have received less attention from scholars and linguists in academic writing compared to hedges. They play a crucial role in generating conversational solidarity between partakers According to Holmes (1982), boosters are lexical items that function to convey the speaker's commitment to the truth of what is being asserted, and they may also work to boost the illocutionary force of a variety of speech as they show positive politeness (p.12).

In the same vein, Hyland (1998) claimed that boosters permit or give access to writers to negotiate the position of their information, aiding them to set up its perceived truth by strategically presenting it as consensually given (p.353). Holmes (1990) addressed boosters in terms of their function in expressing the speaker's intentions with confidence and strong conviction. Although they have received little attention in academic writing, boosters are seen to play an important role in creating conversational solidarity between participants. In Brown and Livingston (1987) terms, boosters can be seen as forms of expressing positive politeness.

### 1.5.1.2 Types of Boosters

Yagiz and Demir (2015) classified boosters into four important divisions, first; is modal auxiliaries like will and must. Second; Epistemic lexical verbs like the show, and demonstrate. Third; Epistemic adverbs like clearly and literally. Fourth; Epistemic adjectives like superior and marvelous. Through these categories, they accomplished their comparative study of boosting academic texts. This categorization of boosters has helped and suited our research purposes.

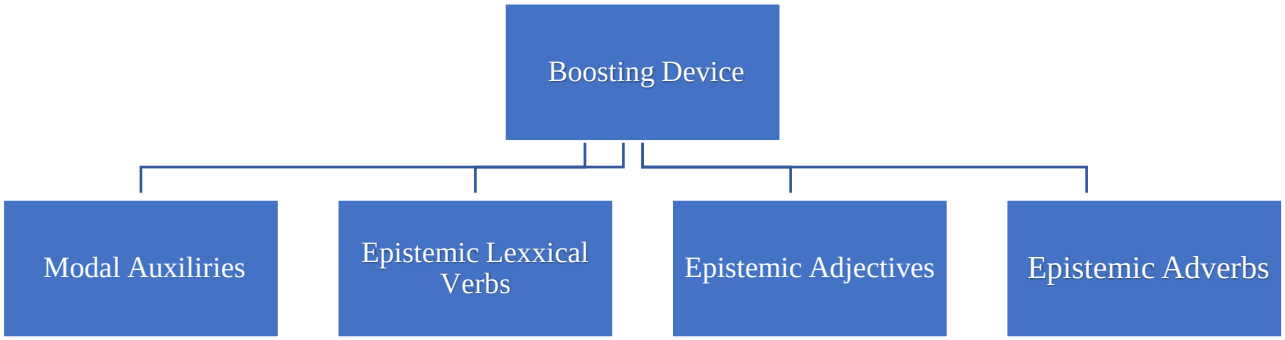



**Figure 4:** Yagiz and Demir's (2015) categorization of boosters.

### 1.5.1.3 Hyland's (2004) Taxonomy of boosters

The former categorization (2004) of boosters contains five divisions: a-Tentative verbs and modals b-Tentative adverbs and adjectives c-Solidarity features d- Self mention reference (as cited in Haifiku & Kangir 2017).

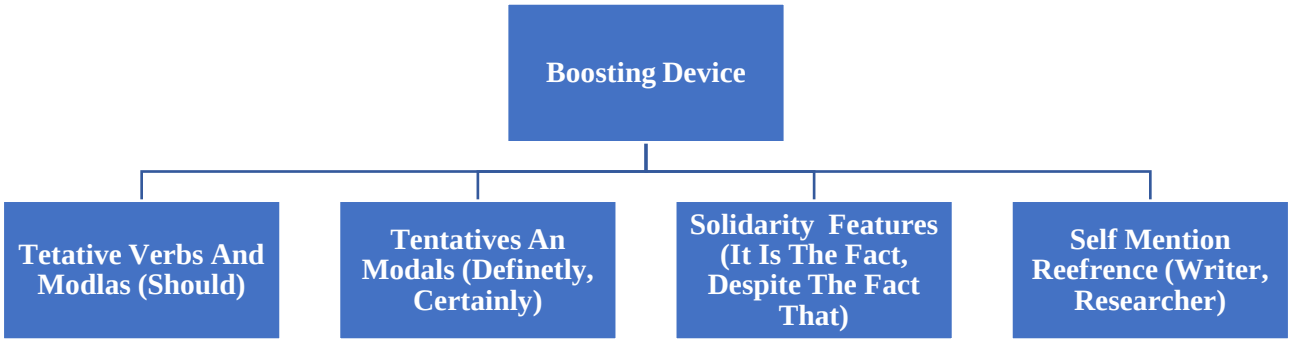



**Figure 2.** Hyland's (2004) categorization of boosters.

## 1.6 Hyland's Interpersonal Model of Metadiscourse 2005

Textual and interpersonal metadiscourse can be quite challenging to both ESL and EFL learners. Textual metadiscourse aid the writers to add and share their ideas in a given text and a specific context, though, interpersonal metadiscourse has gained the attention of various scholars in the few past years. Hyland and Tse (2004) claimed that metadiscourse is a way of comprehending the interpersonal resources that writers employ to deliver propositional content (p.156). Most of the previous studies on metadiscourse taxonomies have emerged intending to classify metadiscourse markers. These taxonomies have been categorized and classified in different manners, (Adel, 2006;

Crismore, 1989; Hyland, 2005; Vande Kopple, 1985, as cited in Amiryousefi& Rasekh, 2010, P.161). Hyland (2005) utilized the antecedent models developed by various scholars like Vande Kopple and Crismore (1985) in establishing his representation, but it seems that Hyland suggested the clearest empirical model which clearly explains the notion of metadiscourse, as it provides categories and subcategories of metadiscourse without any gaps or overlaps. According to him, metadiscourse features in academic writing are divided into two broad categories: interactive and interactional.

Hyland (2005) indicated that successful academic writing is linked to the ability of writers to provide a credible representation of themselves and their work by claiming solidarity with readers and distinguishing opinion from fact (p.129). Hence, the interactional category proposed by Hyland (2005) which is adopted from Thomson's (2001) distinction between interactive and interactional, engages readers in the argument and appropriately allows them to play a part in the discourse by informing them of the author's perspective on both propositions and the readers themselves (p.52). In other words, it concerns the author's efforts to make his point clear and to get the readers engaged in the argument. In this study, the focus is on the interactional part since it tackles the sub-categories of hedges and boosters as mentioned and shown in the table below.

| Interactional | Involve the reader in the argument | Resources |
|---|---|---|
| Hedges | withhold the writer's full commitment to the proposition | might / perhaps / possible / about |
| Boosters | emphasize force or writer's certainty in the proposition | in fact, / definitely / it is clear that |
| Attitude markers | express writer's attitude to pro-position | Unfortunately, / I agree / surprisingly |
| Engagement markers | explicitly refer to or build a relationship with the reader | Consider/note that / you can see that |
| Self-mentions | explicit reference to author(s) | I / we / my / our |

**Table1**: AN INTERPERSONAL MODEL OF METADISCOURSE (Hyland, 2005, p.49)

**1. Hedges:** devices mark or present the author's unwillingness to the propositional information categorically, they can be perceived through the use of lexico-grammatical forms as epistemic modal verbs.

**2. boosters:** are words that imply certainty and emphasize the force of the proposition.

## 1.6Previous Studies on Gender and Metadiscourse

Since the core concern of this research is about the effect of gender on the use of metadiscourse markers in the EFL writing context, this section will portray the correlation between language and gender from a macro perspective and the relationship between gender and metadiscourse markers from a micro perspective. Gender in the past few years has gotten the attention of various scholars as an influential component in the usage and the distribution of hedges and boosters in EFL's writing. Hedges and boosters were studied through different approaches and contexts, but the most important one is a gender-based differences study. It is claimed that the use of hedges and boosters in academic writing might differ from the masculine to the feminine. Gender is considered as an important influential component that affects academic writers' linguistic choices. In this section, we will provide various investigations of differences between women's and men's writing styles via different approaches and contexts, some of them are cross-disciplinary studies, while others are cross-cultural studies. Hence, it is remarkable that some of the antecedent studies examined gender and oral communication more than gender and writing. These studies have collectively asserted that gender differences play an important role in the use of hedges and boosters devices. To find out the differences in how researchers appealed to hedges and boosters in their academic writing, we will discuss the following four studies.

Yeganeh and Ghoreyshi (2005) selected 40 research English written articles that were published in international journals by Persian native speakers written by both genders. The study discovered that gender difference is the main factor affecting the use and distribution of hedges and boosters. The findings of the study indicated that Persian females tend to use more hedges than males considering that hedging as a device is used to minimize the potency of an utterance and mitigate the influence of the statement. However, Persian males tend to use more boosters than females. Finally, the study has also revealed that boosting is a device that augments or strengthens the force of an utterance.

On the other hand, the study conducted on gender by Serholt (2012) explored the use of epistemic modality to express doubt (hedges) and certainty (boosters) in twenty randomly chosen comparative essays written by Swedish advanced learners and their relation to gender differences as well as, studied how these modifiers are dispersed in the essays following the IMRAD model (introduction, method, results, discussion, and abstract + conclusion). The final results of the study showed that gender does affect neither the use of hedges and boosters nor their distribution hence,

females were more disposed to use stronger commitments to the propositional information they provided while both females and males used hedges more than boosters.

Another study was concerned with exploring the influence of gender differences on the use of interactive metadiscourse markers in the college of Languages and Translation of Al-Imam Mohammed Ibn Saudi Islamic University, KSA by (Alqahtani&Abdelhalim (2020). The study used a mixed-method approach (qualitative and quantitative) using a sample of 60 written essays. The participants were (30male and 30 female) Saudi EFL undergraduate students for the academic year 2018/2019. All of them were chosen randomly during the second semester. There were two main findings. The first was that there was a remarkable difference between female and male writers regarding applying interactive metadiscourse markers, which means they use them differently. The second was that gender was not the only influential factor but, the cultural, social, and psychological components of female and male writers also determined the type and frequency of metadiscourse markers used by students.

In another study conducted by Parasibu at Santa Dharma University (2017), a descriptive qualitative approach was used to investigate twenty academic essays written by both male and female EFL learners. Results of the study indicated that females and males used more interactive markers than interactional marker since both genders employed transition markers frequently to guide the readers, nevertheless, a cultural component could affect the writers' to not use transition markers to manifest arguments. Moreover, male students used more interactional markers, likewise, females students employed more markers in interactional subcategories expect self-mention.

It is worthy to note, that this research is precursory to conduct a qualitative descriptive case study on gender-based differences in a different context (Yahia Fares University of Medea, Algeria). Moreover, the notion of metadiscourse markers has been far neglected or received limited attention by researchers. This investigation aims at discovering whether female and male writers use hedging and boosting devices differently in their writing depending on Tannen's Difference Theory, taking third-year students of English as a case study.

## 1.7Main Approaches to gender and language

Several studies and research investigated language and gender via different approaches and contexts; deficit, dominance, or differences. In this section, we will provide a general view of the the frameworks of gender and language. Some of these approaches are: Firstly, the deficit approach emerged after the famous study of Robin Lakoff (1975). This approach claims that women's

language lacks authority or their speech is powerless compared to the language of men. Second, as a response to the previous practice, emerged the dominance model which argues that women and men express language differently because men are more dominated or powerful in society (O'Barr,1980).

### 1.7.1 Tanne's (1990) Difference Theory

Tannen's (1990) Difference Theory takes on a psychological recursive approach to language studying. It is triggered by the attempt to determine the differences in the use of the writing styles of female and male partakers in argumentative essays. The main premise of the theory lies in the idea that females and males approach the world differently as they belong to different sub-cultures or preferences and, therefore, speak differently. The theory gives rise to six main differences between female's and male's ways of using language:

- **Status vs. Support:** language is seen by men as a means of maintaining dominance while women perceive it as a tool for supporting ideas and confirming.
- **Independence vs. Intimacy:** men favor independence and handling it alone; women seek to rather reinforce it.
- **Advice vs. Understanding:** men prefer using language to solve their problems; women prefer it as a tool of sympathy.
- **Information vs. Feelings:** males are interested in facts; women are more concerned with emotional issues.
- **Orders vs. Proposals:** men are inclined to imperatives; women tend to use hidden directives.
- **Conflict vs. Compromise:** male prefers to argue; the female seeks to gain an intermediate position.

## 1.8Metadiscourse and Persuasive Writing

The appropriate use of appeals is critical in the academic context, evidentially when the core objective of the writer is to convince or debate an idea or argument effectively. In other words, persuasion is a crucial characteristic of academic discourse from a rhetorical point of view. Thus, the inappropriate use of hedges and boosters results in unmeaningful text. Effective academic writing requires the employment and the mastery of metadiscourse features, in addition to the writer's capacity of grasping the reader's expectations of how ideas are communicated. However, metadiscourse as a feature of discourse was neglected over the decades. Hyland (2005) asserted that up to 40 percent of MD is found in textbooks because interactional MD is more commonly

associated with argumentative and persuasive genres. These rhetorical devices permit the writer to be more credible and convincing (p.163). Nippold, Ward-Lonergan, and Fanning (2005) claimed that through writing argumentative essays, writers must choose a particular point of view and work hard to persuade the reader of the essay to accept the ideas held by the writer (p.126).

In Hyland's (1999) view, the linguistic term 'metadiscourse' is generally conceived as a crucial tool in persuasive writing because it supports the writer's argument and engages the readers in the text or the argument (p.7.6). On the other hand, Forbes and Cordella examined argumentative discourse to determine the effect of gender on the discourse of Chilean Spanish speakers. The former explained in their study that argumentative discourse is a speech activity in which participants demonstrate dissenting opinions using linguistic methods in a turn-taking format (p.277,278). In their seminal study, Hyland& Tse (2004) made up a conclusion from previous research, that in academic argumentation, men and women employ their linguistic resources differently to interact with others as well as men are found more likely in competitive and assertive styles whereas, women's style is more personal, polite and affiliative (p.1233). In Similarly, Morgan (2011) said that interaction between writer and reader in argumentative essays displays a vital role in addition to the mastery of the linguistic elements employed to express meaning. Argumentative essays are seen essentially as a social act in the modern conceptions of writing (as cited in Anwardeen, Luyee, Gabriel& Kalajahi 2013, p.84).

To conclude, in argumentative essays, using words that enhance stress or reduce the strength of the arguments, a writer can better demonstrate his/her knowledge and awareness of the subject. Thus, hedges and boosters are more likely to be used in this type of essay. After reviewing the related literature, metadiscourse seems a novel notion to penetrate the field of applied linguistics, hence, studies on investigating the effect of gender on using the two cues (hedges and boosters) are few. Moreover, there seems to be no definitive definition before the aforementioned terms.

## Conclusion

This chapter tackled literature review of metadiscourse markers hedges and boosters. It was divided into three parts, In the first section; we have started with the different definitions of hedges and boosters, their functions, and their various types.

In the second section, we carried on with previous studies on gender and metadiscourse in which we addressed gender versus sex and the main approaches to gender and language.

In the last section, we focused on persuasive writing regarding the metadiscourse field.

# CHAPTER TWO

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

| | |
|---|---|
| Introduction | 18 |
| Research design | 18 |
| Context | 18 |
| Sampling procedure | 19 |
| Participants | 19 |
| Instruments for data collection | 20 |
| Definition of the corpus | 20 |
| Description of the corpus | 21 |
| Questionnaire for EFL students | 22 |
| Piloting the questionnaire | 23 |
| Data analysis procedure | 23 |
| Limitations and delimitations of the study | 23 |
| conclusion | 23 |

## Introduction

To begin with, academic writing is a commitment between the writers and the readers. The writer is supposed to write a text for the reader to make a difference between opinions and facts. In addition, the writer's text should combine cohesion with coherence to understand the writer. These aspects would be achieved through functioning the metadiscoursal features of hedges and boosters to prescribe certainty and uncertainty in a way to convince the receiver of the given information. Recently, many scholars have studied the difference between males and females in the use of the metadiscourse features of hedges and boosters in academic writing. So, is there a difference between males and females in using hedges and boosters? and does it affect their texts? if so, who uses it more. This chapter deals with the methodology of the present study.

## 2.2 Research Design

A research design is a practical plan used by researchers to give logical answers to the questions in a precise and objective way, as it aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in the procedure (Biber et al., 1998, p. 5). It exemplifies the followed procedures and the way data is collected and analyzed to be able to answer research questions. Researchers have to bear in mind that research should arrange the sources and the types of information relevant to the research problem and identify which approach will be used for gathering and analyzing the data (Kothari, 2004, p.32)

The ongoing research is a case study that employs an exploratory approach since, as already stated in the general introduction, the objective of this research is to discover whether female and male EFL learners at the Department of English, Yahia Fares University differ in using and manifesting hedges and boosters devices in their argumentative writing. To be more precise, it seeks to explore whether female students are more inclined to use hedges or males are more tilted towards using boosters in their argumentative writings. So, to check the validity of the suggested Difference Theory in addressing the current issue, twenty written essays were collected along with a questionnaire was designed.

## 2.3 Context

Our present study was conducted during the second semester of the academic year 2021-2022 with third-year university students in the English department at Yahia Fares University.

Yahia Fares University English Department was established in 2014 with approximately 12 teachers and more than 100 students. Thus, today it has 25 teachers and more than 400 students. The department provides Algerian students and students of other nationalities a variety of degrees, including a license degree that consists of three LMD school years followed by a Master's Degree that lasts two years.

The major goal of the License and Master's program is to prepare students for potential employment (Teaching), or further studies (Doctoral Studies) by providing them with specific language knowledge and skills. In terms of the first LMD schooling year, the courses that correspond to the goals defined are based on a competency-based approach which focuses on developing and enhancing students communicative skills. Regarding third university school year, the courses relate to student's language skills such as; writing, speaking, reading and listening …., including other courses linguistics, ESP and literature.

## 2.4 Sampling Procedure

Sampling is a technique of selecting individual members or a subset of the population to make statistical inferences from them and estimate the characteristics of the whole population. Different sampling methods are widely used by researchers in market research so that they do not need to research the whole population to collect actionable insights. It is also a time-convenient and a cost-effective method and hence forms the basis of any research design. Sampling techniques can be used in a research survey software for optimum derivation.

Among the various types of sampling, convenience sampling is the type applied in this research study. It includes the individuals who happen to be most accessible to the researcher. In this case, EFL third-year students at Yahia Fares University are chosen since they are conveniently available to participate in our present research and to answer the designed questionnaire and analyze their written essays test.

### A. 2.4.1 Participants

In this study, our data were collected from third-year males and female EFL students of the English department at UYFM. They participated in both questionnaire and essay writing tests. In the current study participants were third-year students whose age ranged from 19 to 29 years old, their mother tongue was Arabic and most of them were girls (females students 80%, male students20%).

We selected third-year students for the following reasons; first, their proficiency level along with their level and experience in writing are much higher and better than those of first- and second-

year students. Also, the second reason is that L3 students have the ability of writing essays following the argumentative type.

## • 2.5 Instruments for Data Collection

In an attempt to collect reliable and valid data, every researcher is required to follow a research methodology to carry out their works. Oxford (2003) claimed that research "should combine as many perspectives as possible and no single perspective should be considered authentic to any other" (p.90). So, A triangulation process, where both qualitative and quantitative approaches are used in this current research, wad adopted. Data of the current study were collected during the second semester of the academic year 2021-2022. The first source of data consists of Twenty essays written by third-year EFL students who were randomly chosen. The second source of data collection is a questionnaire submitted to 15female and male third-year students of the English department.

### 2.5.1 Definition of the Corpus

The tremendous growth of interest in the area of academic textual texts led to the emergence of corpus linguistics. This latter was popularized in the 1980s ever since multiple definitions have been offered by various corpus theorists in terms of defining what corpus linguistics is. Bowker (1996) defined CL as *"the study of language based on text corpora"* (p.29).

In the line of this definition, one can deduce that CL is not a branch of linguistics; rather, it is a methodology for language study, thus a method to analyze and draw data quantitatively and qualitatively. By examining a large number of running texts, CL has got access to linguistic data that could previously be collected on a small scale or not at all. Corpus-based analysis facilitated the investigation for researchers in other various areas like lexicography, language teaching and learning, machine translation and linguistic grammar, and text critiquing. But, as mentioned in Taylor (2008), there have been significant differences among analysts to give a definitive definition of the term CL being it a methodology, an approach, a discipline, a tool, or a theoretical approach (p,180).

The term corpora have gained a wide scope of interest in linguistics. literally speaking, the word corpus means "body"; but when the concept was linked to corpus linguistics it no longer implicational for the body. As mentioned in the work of (Rühlemann) 2019, "corpus" refers to a collection of electronically, searchable stored texts or data. He reported that when dealing with corpus analysis, three criteria should be respected as follow: the corpus should be electronically stored, the texts or the language analyzed should be from an everyday natural language, not an

edited language, and the last criteria is the collection of texts should be ranging from, say, 1000.000 words to trillions of words. i.e., a corpus is typically a large computerized collection of texts. (p.1). The importance of corpora lies in the fact that it is beneficial when it comes to testing and verifying many linguistic pre-existing theories or hypotheses or giving rise to a new one taken from everyday authentic language.

Likewise, Manca (2012) provided a comprehensive definition of the term corpus, a large collection of texts stored electronically on a computer. These texts contain authentic language used in real-life situations and can represent both spoken or written language. According to her, a corpus is designed for different reasons: to check the presence or examine words, to create illustrations for the creation of teaching materials, to compare the use of words in various dialects of the same language (p.25). After providing a comprehensive definition of the term corpus and as a conclusion of the literature review, a corpus can be taken as a large collection of electronically written or spoken stored data used for linguistic analysis where the core objective is to test, confirm or deny the pre-existing hypothesis or theory.

#### 2.5.1.1 Description of the Corpus

The corpus of this study consists of twenty argumentative essay written tests of the third year EFL learners who were randomly chosen. Their essays tackled different topics such as “the effects of smoking” “social media” “volunteerism” and “technology”, to observe their use of metadiscourse markers of hedges and boosters in their argumentative writing. The corpus which was analyzed by the latest version of Antconc (3.5.8 version), which is according to Dev (2019) a multi-purpose used platform used for analyzing and concording electronic texts, as well as, it is time-saving and effective. It was drafted by Laurence Anthony of Waseda University. This platform contains seven instruments that help to reveal different patterns of language, one of these instruments that could help our study is the ‘concordance tool’ which indicates the results in a ‘KWIC’ (Key Words in Context) format. The written texts should be available in “txt” format so it makes it easier to convert them into “PDF” so that it can analyze the electronic texts

Furthermore, the data that were collected were inserted in the Corpus Files column one after another, after that they were scanned to capture hedges and boosters markers used in the texts. The frequencies of development of the various types of hedges and boosters were determined in the text using KWIC concordance. The instrument concordance that was used reveled the way boosters and hedges were used in the context. A mixed-method approach was used in the present study by

collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data gathered from EFL learners' written tests helped with supporting the qualitative data collected through the questionnaire. The questionnaire data were analyzed manually. The two analytical frameworks were used in conducting the analysis phase following Hyland's model of hedges (1994) and Yagiz and Demir's (2015) taxonomy of boosters:

Hyland (1994):

- Modal auxiliary verbs:
- Modal expressions:
- Modal lexical verbs:
- Adverbs
- Adjectives
- if clauses
- questions forms
- passivation
- impersonal phrases

Yagiz and Demir (2015):

- modal auxiliaries
- epistemic lexical verbs
- epistemic adjectives
- epistemic adverbs

To achieve the aim of our research, we have chosen two models of Hyland, Yagiz, and Demir as a framework because they were adopted and used by many researchers in their previous works. The two models were used to find out and classify hedges and boosters used by EFL learners' tests.

### 2.5.2 Questionnaire for EFL students

The students' questionnaire was used in this study to investigate the difference between male and females EFL learners in the use of metadiscourse markers, hedges, and boosters in their argumentative essays. The questionnaire as a qualitative-based instrument was composed of 13 questions; however, it was organized into two main sections. It is a mixture of close-ended questions and open-ended questions. The first section contains four general questions to know students' background information such as gender, age, nationality, and how long they have been learning

English. For the second section, nine questions dealt with the students' perception of metadiscourse markers, which device they use more in their argumentative writing, hedges or boosters, how they support their argument in writing essays, and if their teachers raised their awareness about such kinds of devices. We submitted the questionnaire to 15 (4 females and 9 males) students which were randomly asked to carefully read the items. Students did not face any difficulties in understanding the questions because an introductory paper was delivered to them to introduce and clarify any ambiguity that bears on the notion of metadiscourse and its terms.

#### 2.5.2.1 Piloting the questionnaire

The questionnaire adopted in the current study was designed and prepared. But, before its delivery to the participants, it was subjected to a methodology-specialized teacher who made some observations and remarks for the researchers to improve the questionnaire in terms of the form and questions. After that, the questionnaire was also checked by our supervisor so it can be delivered to 15 male and female students who were randomly chosen.

## 2.6 Data Analysis Procedures

In this research, a mixed approach is used by gathering both quantitative and qualitative data. The qualitative data collected through the questionnaire helped with reinforcing the quantitative data gathered from the written essay tests. The student's tests were analyzed statistically by using the freeware multiple platform analysis toolkit Antconc (3.5.8 Version). A numerical value was given to the types of hedges and boosters used by female and male learners to calculate the frequencies and percentages in the analysis of data according to the selected taxonomies as demonstrated in the literature review. However, A content-based analysis was used to analyze the student's questionnaire properly for the qualitative data. At this level, we analyzed every question to determine which gender is more likely to use boosters and hedges in their argumentative essays.

## 2.7 Limitation and Delimitations of the Study

the current study aims at investigating gender differences in the use of metadiscourse markers of hedges and boosters in an academic context of English learning and teaching. Hence, it has some limitations. The first limitation of this study is in its sample size, only twenty students were able to write tests because of their limited sessions of learning at the university due to covid conditions. Addition, only 15 students answered our designed questionnaire. Larger sample size can be used in future research. The second limitation is the lack of male gender in third-year classes at UM University as most of them were female students. The third limitation is the newness of the

concerned concepts and its complexity, which requires extended investigations to be broadly explored.

In other ways, the study's delimitation can be considered in the use of a variety of data collection methods which are written tests and questionnaire.

## Conclusion

To sum up, this chapter has initiated the methodology of the current study. This chapter contains the study research design, sampling, and participants. Subsequently, instruments for data collection, a description of the corpus, and data analysis procedures have been provided. In addition to a brief discussion of the main limitations and delimitations of the study. In a nutshell, the ongoing research is a case study that enrolls both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Data were collected through various instruments which are written essay tests and questionnaire with EFL third-year students.

# CHAPTER THREE

# FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

| | |
|---|---|
| Introduction | 27 |
| Findings | 27 |
| Written essays test results | 27 |
| Gender and the distribution of hedging and boosting forms | 27 |
| Questionnaire results | 354 |
| STUDENT'S PERCEPTION OF METADISCOURSE | 36 |
| Discussion of the results | 37 |
| Discussion of the questionnaire and writing essay tests | 37 |
| The influence of gender on using hedges | 38 |
| The impact of gender boosters on using boosters | 39 |
| conclusion | 40 |

## Introduction

The third chapter presents the findings of the current study. Yet, these results are divided into two sections. The first section presents the results of the student essay written tests, while section two presents the student's questionnaire. Besides, each of the quantitative and qualitative data is analyzed to answer the study's suggested questions.

### 1.13.2 Findings

### *3.2.1 Written Essays Tests Results*

The current study aims at investigating gender differences in the use of metadiscourse markers hedges and boosters in students' argumentative writing. Hence, 20 third-year EFL students were asked to write argumentative texts. The results that we came up with from the students' tests are presented in this section under four sub-titles; gender and the distribution and frequency of hedging devices in students' written tests and gender and the distribution and frequency of boosters devices.

- **3.2.1.1Gender and the Distribution of Hedging and Boosting Forms**

In this research, we used Antconc software to evaluate the distribution of hedges for both females and males in the corpus to answer the research questions. The graphs and tables bellow provide a clear image of how hedging devices are spread in the argumentative essays of EFL learners in terms of gender differences, however, the descriptive statistics of the data collected were calculated through SPSS software.

***Table2:*** the descriptive statistics of hedging devices in the argumentative essays of EFL learners.

| Gender | Frequency of Hedging devices | Percentage% |
|---|---|---|
| **Female** | 200 | 60.57% |
| **Male** | 70 | 39.43% |

As reported in table 2, hedging forms frequency by (female, 200; male, 70). According to the results shown in this table and based on the adopted theory (Difference Theory), it can be seen that female EFL learners were more inclined to use metadiscourse markers hedges in their argumentative essays and in writing their arguments, female use hedges more to soften their claim. However, male EFL learners were less likely to use hedging devices in their argumentative writing. In terms of using

MD, this group of female learners preferred to use hedge more in their argumentative writing rather than males.

**Table3:** The overall distribution of hedges.

| Hedges | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| **Modal auxiliary verbs** | 130 | 50% |
| **Modal expressions** | 80 | 26.3% |
| **Modal lexical verbs** | 60 | 23.7% |
| **Total** | 270 | 100% |

Based on Hyland's taxonomy of hedges (1994), the table above (table3) shows the overall frequency of hedging devices in the corpus of 20 argumentative writing essays. The data in this table demonstrate that modal auxiliary verbs such as (could, may, might, would, should, will…) have the highest rate of frequency 130 and percentage50%. Modal expressions were the second most frequent type in terms of use with a rate of 80 and a percentage of 26.3%. Finally, modal expressions were followed by modal lexical verbs in terms of use with a rate of 60 and a percentage of 23.7%, resulting in a total of 270 hedges in the whole corpus. In a nutshell, in terms of hedging, this group of EFL learners both female and male favored the usage of some types of hedges over others.

**Modal Auxiliary Verbs**

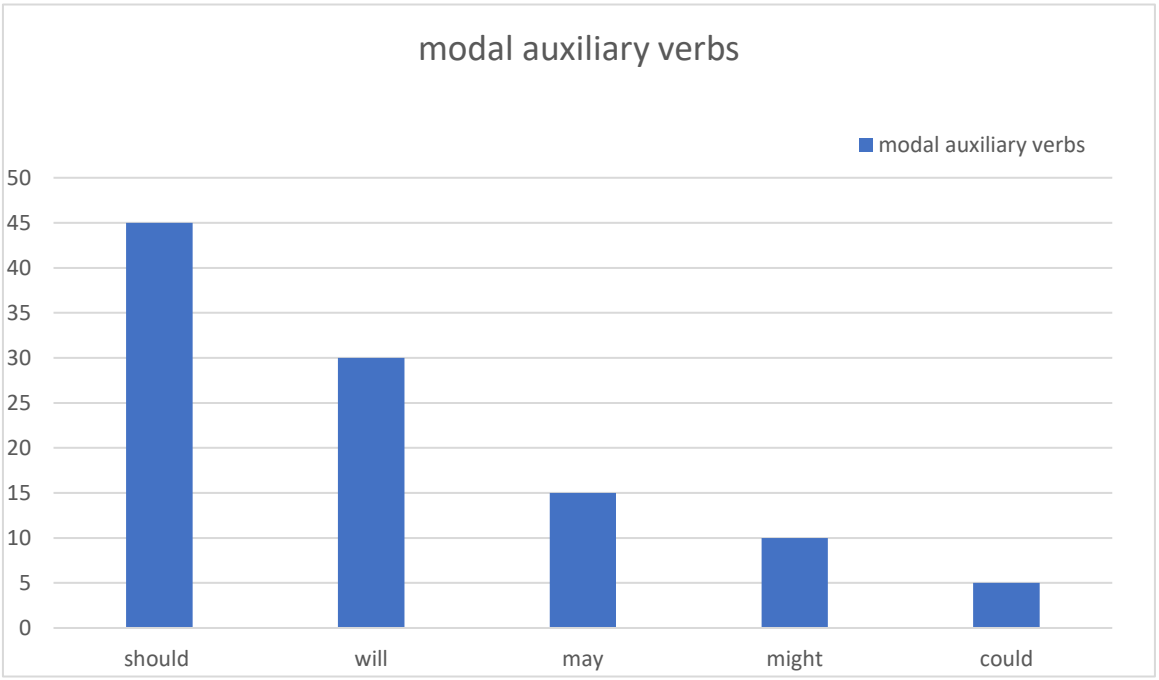



**Figure5:** Frequency of modal auxiliary verbs in the corpus.

The examination of hedging devices in the corpus revealed that modal auxiliaries were the most commonly utilized devices in EFL's argumentative writing by both females and males. The modal *should* have the greatest frequency of 45, followed by the modal *will*, which was used 30 times. In third place, the hedging mean *may* was employed at a rate of 15. Finally, the two models might and could were the least often utilized and were close in terms of frequency, with ratings of 10 and 5.

**Modal Expressions**

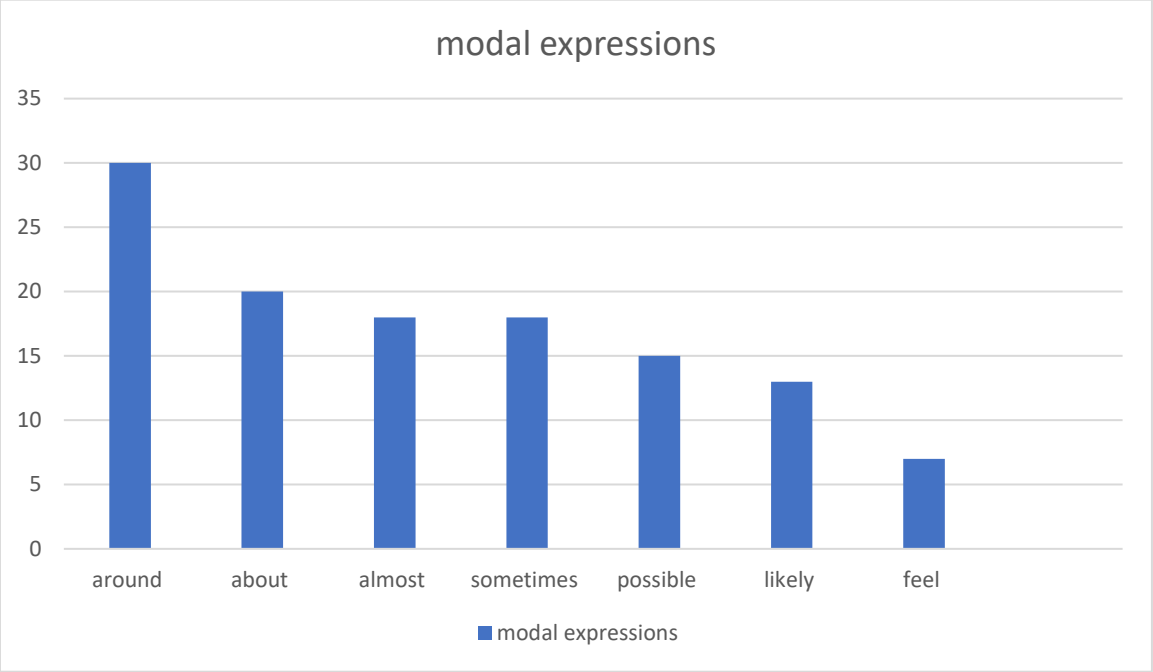



**Figure6:** Frequency of modal expressions in the corpus.

The results gathered from the analysis of hedging mean in the corpus show that modal expressions are the second most frequently used category. The graph shows that there are two dominant subcategories *around* and *about* with a rate of 30 and 20 used by EFL learners. The three next most frequently subcategories used are *almost*, *sometimes*, and *possible* with a rate of 18 and 15, followed by *likely* with a rate of 13. The least used modal expression by EFL learners in their argumentative essays is *feel* with a rate of 7.

**Modal Lexical Verbs**

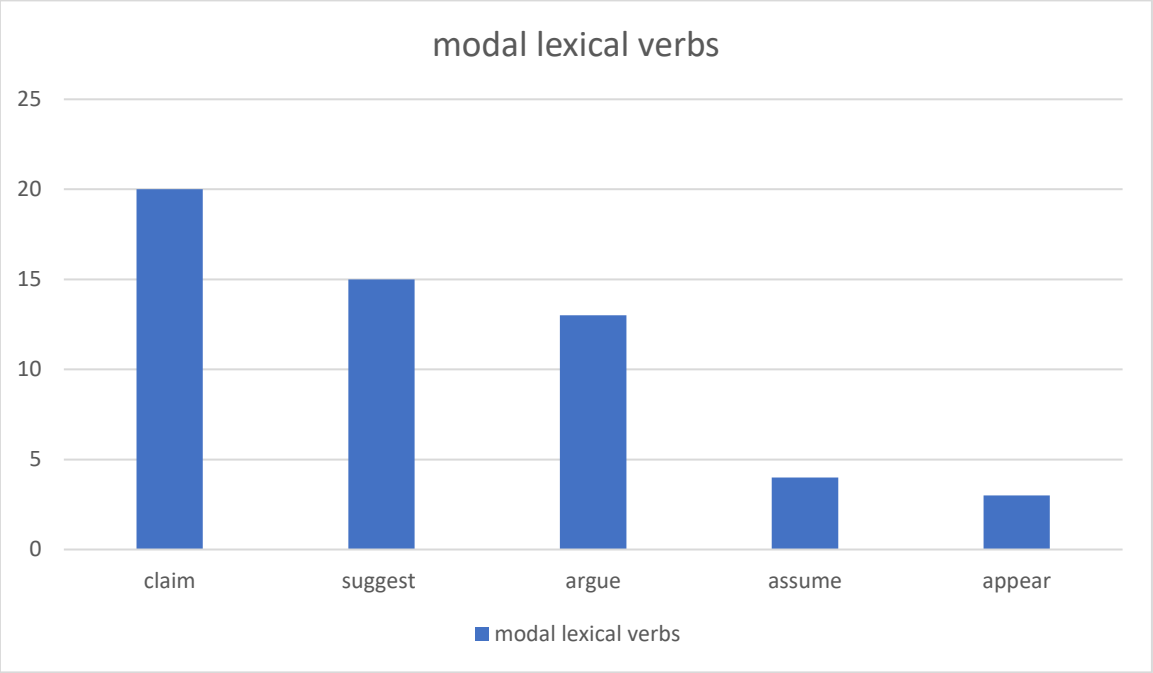



**Figure7:** Frequency of modal lexical verbs.

The figure above indicates the frequency of modal lexical verbs in EFL learners' corpus (both female and male) was the least employed category of hedging device. As it is demonstrated, *claim* is the most frequent sub-category used in the corpus with a rate of 20. The second most frequent sub-category is *suggest*as its rate was 15, followed by *argue* reaching the rate of 13. The two last modal lexical verbs *appear* and *assume* their rate was 4 and 3. It seems that claim was the most frequent sub-category used by learners in their argumentative writing in comparison to the other subcategories yet, all of them are of great importance.

**Table4: the descriptive statistics of boosting devices in the argumentative essays of EFL learners.**

| Gender | Frequency of boosters | Percentage% |
|---|---|---|
| **Female** | 15 | 9% |
| **Male** | 40 | 91% |

Boosters forms frequency by (female 15; male,40).It can be seen in table 3 that male students use more boosters in writing their argumentative essays with a rate of 40 frequency. Meanwhile, the female students with a rate of 15 frequency.

**Table5:** The overall distribution of boosters.

| Boosters | Frequency | Percentage% |
|---|---|---|
| **Modal auxiliaries** | 13 | 10% |
| **Epistemic lexical verbs** | 15 | 25.4% |
| **Epistemic adjectives** | 2 | 3.1% |
| **Epistemic adverbs** | 25 | 61.5% |
| **Total** | 55 | 100% |

The table above (table5) demonstrates the frequency of boosters in students' argumentative essays (both female and male), based on Yagiz and Demir's (2015) categorization of boosters. The data obtained in this table shows that both female and male EFL learners used epistemic adverbs more in their writing with an average of 61.5%, to expand on, epistemic adverbs used by students are (always, surely, especially, actually). On the other hand, epistemic lexical verbs, such as, find, show, think and shows are the second most frequent subcategory with a rate of 25.4%. Epistemic lexical verbs are followed by modal auxiliaries with an average of 10% (must have to, has to, will). The least used subcategory which was used only two times is epistemic adjectives (certain) with a rate of 3.1%.

**Epistemic Adverbs**

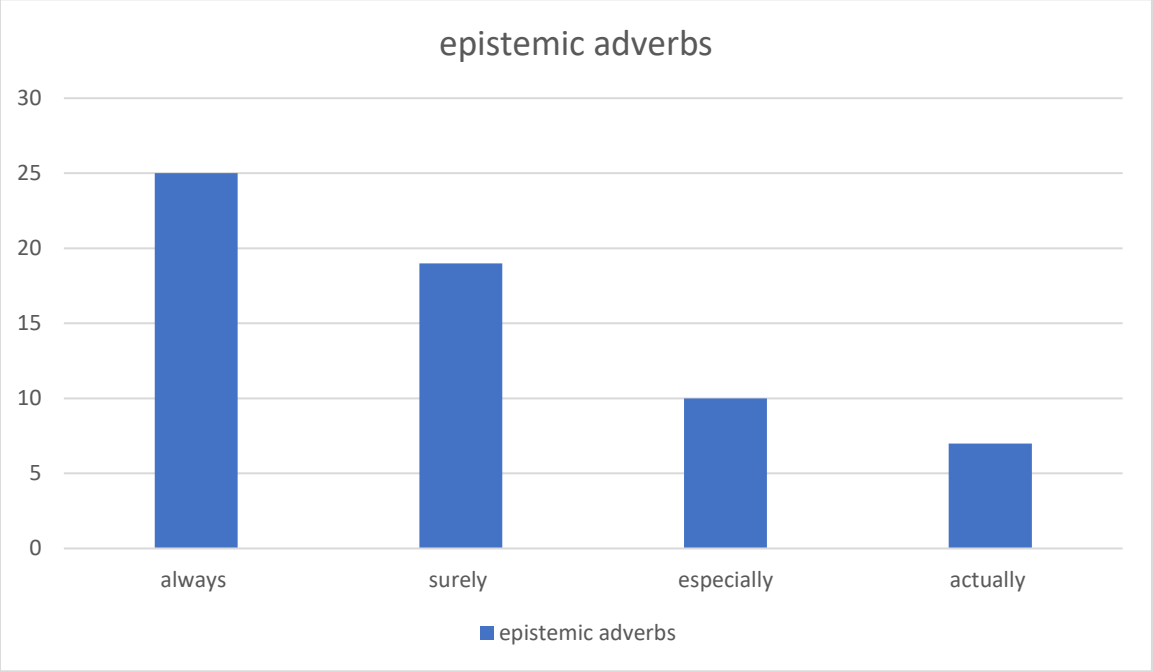



**Figure8:** frequency of epistemic adverbs in the corpus.

The graph above shows the frequency of the first frequent subcategory of boosters (epistemic adverbs) which represents 61.5%. As it is shown, *always* and *surely* are frequently used 25 and 19 times. Then it comes *especially* with a rate of 10. Finally, *comes* is the least used with an average of 7.

**Epistemic Lexical Verbs**

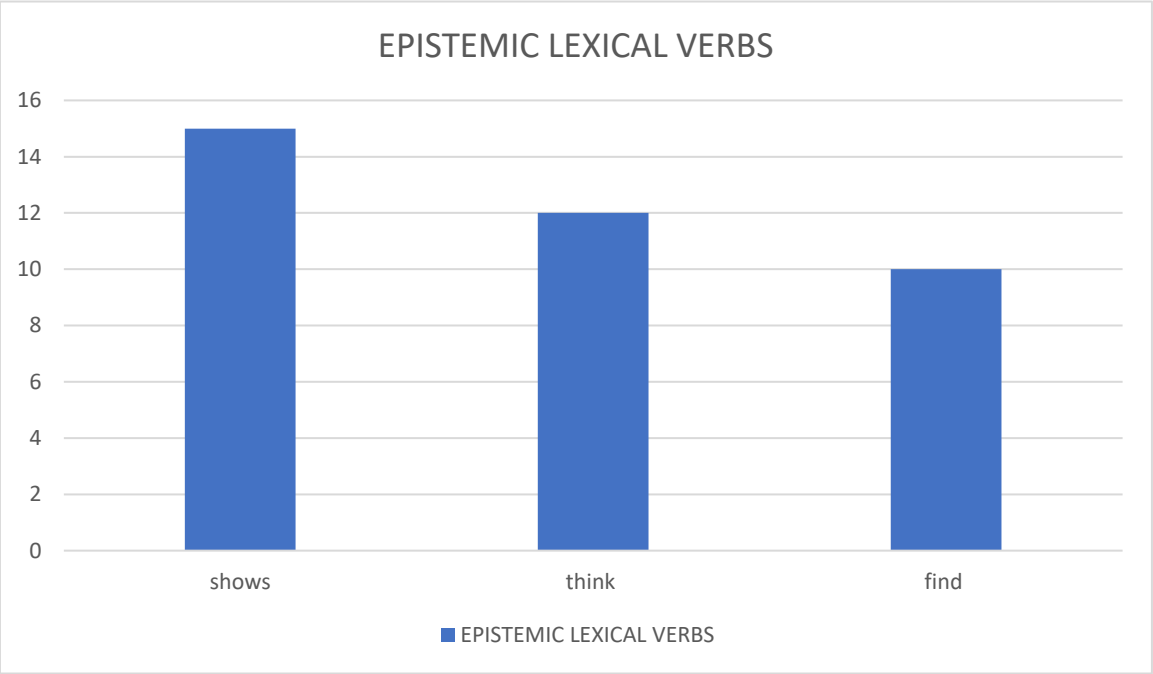



**Figure9:** frequency of epistemic lexical verbs in the corpus.

The next frequently employed subcategory of boosters by students in writing their arguments is epistemic lexical verbs which represent 25.4%. This collection of boosters contains *shows* with a rate of 15 then followed by *think* with an average of 12. At last, *find* was the least used by students with an average of 10.

**Modal Auxiliaries**

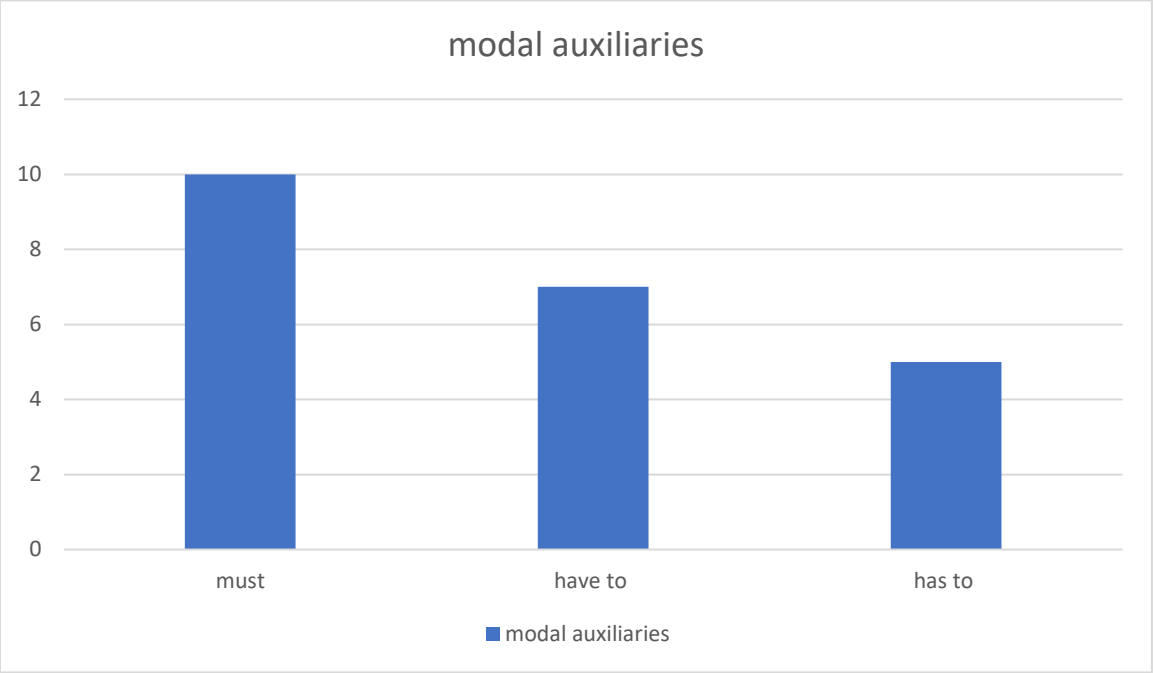



**Figure10:** Frequency of modal auxiliaries in the corpus.

Modal auxiliaries were the third most frequent subcategory of boosting devices used by both female and male students. In this group students used *must* more in comparison to others with a rate of 10 Hence, *have to* and *has to were* less frequently used by students with an average of 7 and 4.

**Epistemic Adjectives**

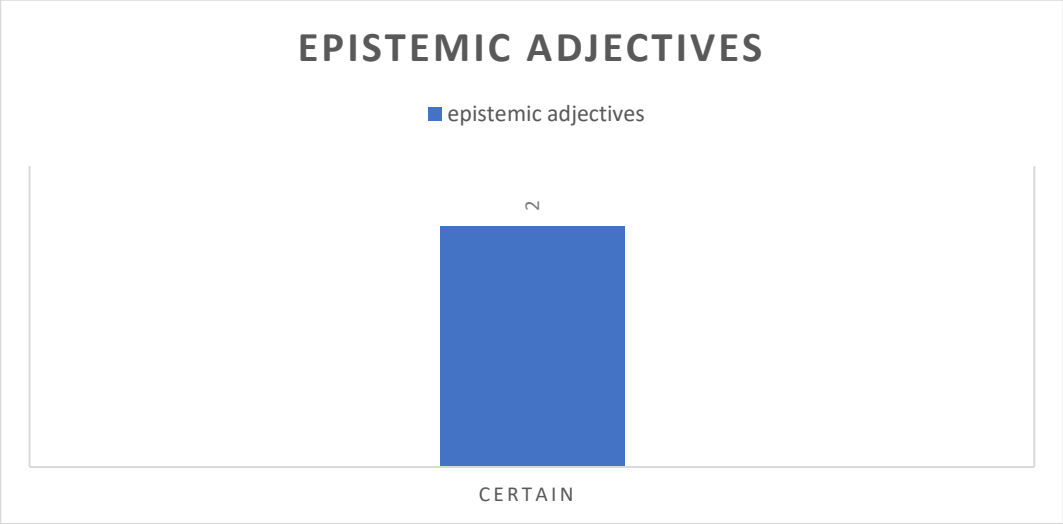



**Figure11:** Frequency of epistemic adverbs in the corpus.

Finally, the least used type of boosters in the argumentative essays of EFL students is epistemic adverbs (certain) with a rate of 2.

Based on tables (2) and (3), a concise summary and a clear image of how hedges and boosters were used differently by female and male EFL third-year students in writing their argumentative essays are in Figures 13 and 14. In general, hedges were more used than boosting devices by both female and male students, more specifically, the percentage of hedges used by female students was 60.57% while male students were 39.43%. on the other hand, the percentage of boosters used by male students was 91%meanwhile, female students were 9%.

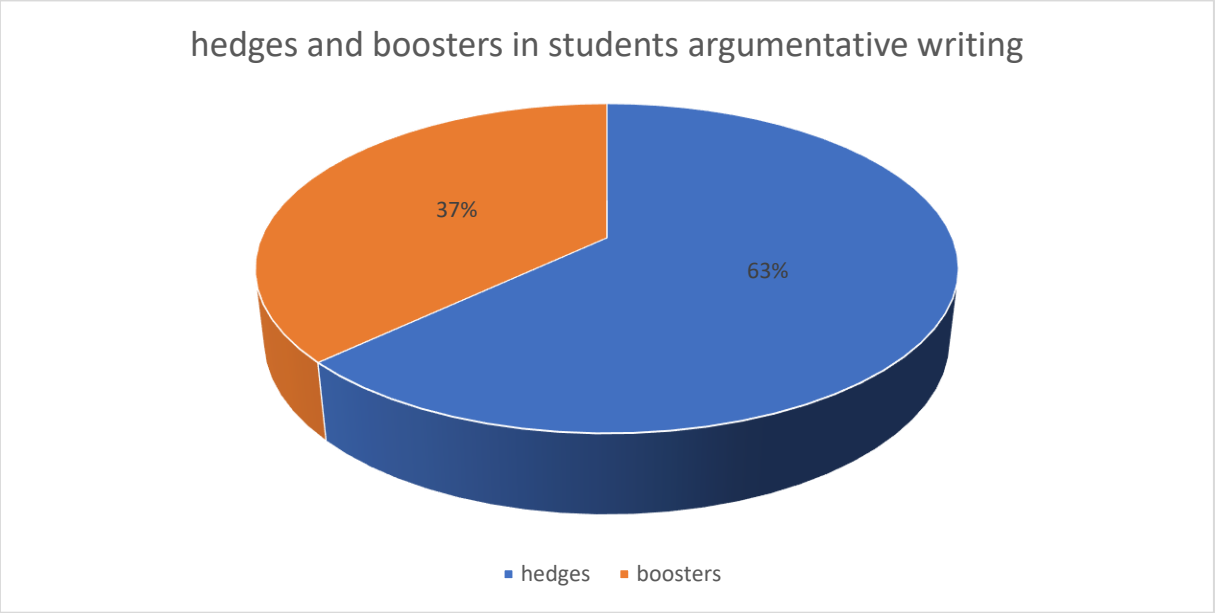



**Figure12:** percentual usage of hedges and boosters by EFL students.

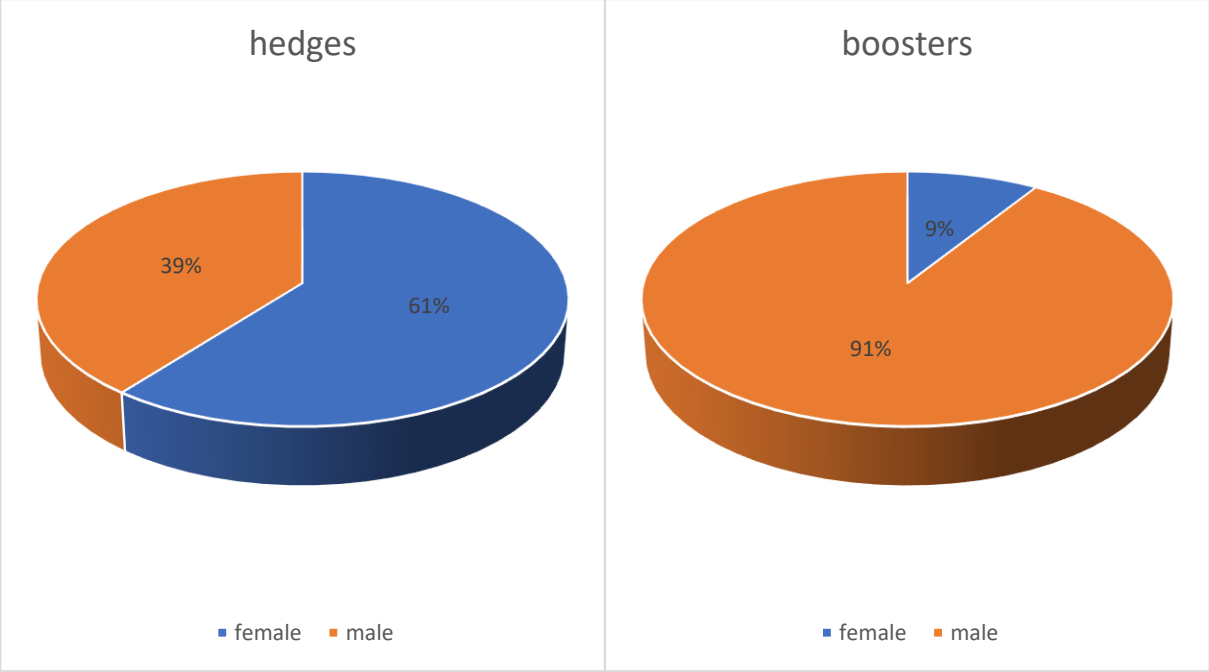



**Figure13**: Gender and the percentual usage of MD hedges and boosters.

### 3.2.2 Questionnaire Results

To obtain more details about students' perception of the use of metadiscourse markers hedges and boosters in academic writing for both genders, a questionnaire was conducted with 13 EFL third-year males and females learners of the university of Yahia fares Medea in the English Department aged between 19and 29 years old. As was mentioned in the second chapter, the first section was for gathering data about the students' background information.

### 3.2.2.1 Student's Perception of Metadiscourse Markers

The second section of the questionnaire is regarding the way students apprehend the use of metadiscourse markers in their argumentative writings and who of the gender uses it more. Interestingly, the result that we obtained was aligned with our expectations.

***Question 1:*** *Are you familiar with the notion of metadiscourse markers?*

Only four males were acquainted with the metadiscourse markers while the rest of the five male students answered as follows: *"no we are not familiar with the notion MD",* on the other hand, four female students answered yes to knowing the metadiscourse markers while only one female student

answered with a no. As a result, the majority of the students of both genders were familiar with the notion of metadiscourse markers and most of the participants showed their awareness of the subject.

***Question2:*** *according to you what are hedges?*

Concerning the second question (what are hedges?) six male students in addition to four female students answered with the right answer which is hedges are means of expressing uncertainty, however, only one female got the wrong answer while two male students answered with hedges are means of expressing certainty.

***Question3:*** *According to you what are boosters?*

Moving to the third question (what are boosters?) interestingly all the five females while four males answered with the correct answer boosters are means of expressing certainty however, the rest of the males answered with the wrong answer.

***Question 4:*** *Do you use hedges and boosters in your argumentative writing?*

Responding to the fourth question (do you use hedges and boosters in your argumentative writings?) answers varied between the first answers which are yes, I do and yes, I strongly do, though only two male students answered no they do not use markers in their argumentative writings.

***Question 5:*** *which one do you use frequently (hedges or boosters)?*

As mentioned above, students revealed in their answers that they use hedges and boosters in their argumentative writing. accordingly, their responses to the fifth question (which one do you use frequently?) were not expected, only two female students while six male students use boosters frequently, on the other hand, there are three male students and only two female students who use hedges in their argumentative writings.

***Question 6:*** *In your writing style do you support your ideas with facts or social experience?*

As for the sixth question (in your writing style do you support your ideas with facts or social experience?) two of the female students use boosters for expressing facts and two others use hedges to talk about social experiences however, only one student uses boosters to talk about social experiences. in the meanwhile, three male students use boosters to express social experiences and three others use boosters to talk about facts. Nonetheless, there was only one male student who uses both metadiscourse markers hedges and boosters to express both social experiences and Facts.

***Question 7:*** *Do you think using hedges and boosters devices increases the credibility of your writing?*

For the seventh question (do you think using hedges and boosters devices increase the credibility of your writing ?) most of the students were very positive in their responses to this question since they all answered with yes, one of the female students stated: « yes of course, because according to them the listener can know if the speaker is a source of credibility or not » another male student stated: « yes, boosters may increase my credibility in writing », but two male students who responded with a no .as a result from their answers, metadiscourse markers hedges and boosters are very helpful for students to make their argumentative writings more credible.

***Question 8:*** *Did your teachers raise your awareness towards such kinds of devices?*

The last question is (did your teachers raise your awareness towards such kinds of devices?) only one female student answered: "no, our teachers did not raise our awareness toward such kind of devices and their importance in writing". also, three male students answered with a negation while the rest put forward: "unfortunately, our teachers did not make us aware of how to use these devices or how to use them appropriately". while only one male student answered positively to these questions "yes teachers raised our awareness toward MD but, in general, and briefly not in deep details".in addition to four female students who answered: "yes, our teacher of writing briefly once explained this kind of language function and its importance".

## 3.3 Discussion of Results

### *3.3.1 Discussion of the Questionnaire and writing essay tests*

The goal of this study is to explore the difference between the two genders in the use of metadiscourse markers hedges and boosters in academic writing, for that, we designed a questionnaire that is composed of two sections for EFL third-year male and female students who were handpicked randomly during their writing session. The first section, contained general questions to know the background of students such as age, gender, and how long have they been learning English, and that to get to know better the students' background for a better analysis. The second section contained more specific questions that could be helpful for our study, and for that reason, an introductory paper was presented to students to have an overall idea about the topic of our research so that their answers would be more accurate. The hypothesis that was mentioned previously is confirmed through the analysis of questions that were answered by students of both genders. On one hand, male students tend to use more boosters in their argumentative writing in

order to strengthen their positions to impose their power, which we can consider it a commitment to their statements. On the other hand, female students opt to use hedges in their argumentative writing so that they can manage or acknowledge taking risks while writing, a way to soften and make their statements less direct since.

females are known of being gentle and using prestigious language. Metadiscourse markers Hedges and boosters are communicative strategies for increasing or reducing the force of statements. They convey both epistemic and affective meaning in academic writing. That is, they not only carry the writer's degree of confidence in the truth of a proposition, but also an attitude to the audience.

The present study aims at exploring third-year EFL students' gender differences in the use of metadiscourse markers hedges and boosters at Yahia Fares University, Medea. Specifically, it attempts to discover whether female students tend to use more hedges in their argumentative writing and whether more students tend to use more boosters in their argumentative writing. In this section, the results will be discussed by answering the following research questions:

1. Are female EFL third-year students more inclined to use metadiscourse markers, hedges, in writing argumentative essays in the English Department at Yahia Fares University, Medea?
2. Are male EFL third-year students more inclined to use metadiscourse markers boosters in writing argumentative essays.

## The Influence of Gender on using Hedges:

This question aims at investigating gender differences between female and male students in using interactional MD hedges and boosters in writing their argumentative essays, students' written tests in addition to the second part of the questionnaire attempted to provide answers to the first research question through applying Tannen's Difference Theory. In general, findings imply that both female and male students used more hedges such as "should, will, may, claim, around, and about" in comparison to boosters, however, boosters like "always, surely, shows, think, must, and have to" were more used by male students in comparison to female. The results reveal expected and compatible results. They indicate that gender has a positive impact on students' argumentative essays. Female students used more metadiscourse markers hedges in writing their argumentative essays in comparison to males. However, male students were more likely to use metadiscourse markers boosters in writing their argumentative essays and preferred supporting their claims with

boosters more. This differentiation seems to be logical and related to the theory adopted (Difference Theory) and the characteristics of female and male speech. Tannen (1990) claimed that females have the inclination to use more hedges in their academic writing more than males. In this type of academic writing, it is found that female students supported their arguments with social experience and they were more concerned with emotional issues rather than boys who support their claims and information with facts. Second, female students showed an intermediate position in their argumentative writing but, males were argumentative and confident. Female students were more inclined to hedge their statements, they preferred stating their claims with hedges to decrease the intensity of their utterances by mitigating their certainty about their commitment to the prepositions. An important remark on females' usage of hedging devices in their formal writing was not a means of showing hesitancy rather it was used as a means to soften their arguments and claims.

## The Impact of Gender on Using Boosters

This research question examines whether male students are more likely to use metadiscourse markers boosters in their argumentative essays, according to the questionnaire the students answered and the written essays tests, it was found that male students used more boosting devices in writing their argumentative essays, which are clearly matched with the theory adopted and mentioned in the general introduction "male students might use boosters more than hedges in their argumentative essays". The analysis revealed that both female and male writers used boosters to draw attention to their writing like "always, surely, find, have to, has to and must", in a report of our findings, we have found that both males and females use MD boosters in their argumentative writing while the use of boosters was more evident among the males, mainly when it comes to expressing social experiences and facts. Even though some of them use both metadiscourse markers in expressing both social experiences and facts, however, boosters are more used. Boosters as an interactional type of MD helped students in emphasizing and forcing their certainty in the preposition and stating their claims, which means the male writing style is more confident, but that does not mean that the female writing style lacks confidence. The influence of gender differences in the use of specific boosters will also be looked at in various and different topics.

## Conclusion

This chapter has covered the results obtained through students' written essay tests and questionnaire, and the results of the data analysis. gender difference theory in the use of MD hedges and boosters in EFL's argumentative writing at Yahia fares university was explored. To conclude, the investigations have provided that female EFL students used hedging devices more than boosters in their argumentative writing, while male students used boosting devices more than hedges in their argumentative writing.

# GENERAL CONCLUSION

# GENERAL CONCLUSION

This research aims at investigating gender differences in the use of metadiscourse markers hedges and boosters among third-year English students at the university of Yahia Fares of MEDEA. for answering the two main questions of the study, this latter is divided into three chapters. Chapter one presents a literature review that begins with a general introduction of metadiscourse markers in academic writing followed by previous studies on gender and MD then tackling the main approaches to gender and language, metadiscourse and persuasive writing.

The methodology employed in this study is covered in the second chapter. A full explanation of data collection instruments which are: students' quantitative essay tests and a qualitative questionnaire for students and data collection instruments in addition to data analysis procedures.

As a consequence, in addition to what has been reported in the literature review, the analysis supplied valuable answers to our research questions. the third chapter tackles the findings and discussions the research questions. The findings of this study show that gender has a positive impact on students' argumentative writing. regarding the first main question, the findings indicate that third-year EFL female students in the English department are more inclined to use hedges in their argumentative writing compared to boosters. the second question's findings show that male EFL students were less inclined to use hedges they were more likely to use boosters in their argumentative essays compared to females. Nevertheless, female learners are more inclined to reveal their emotions and feelings to attain solidarity with their audience., in addition, female students employ more hedging in their argumentative writing than male students. However, the fact that female students in this study wrote significantly longer essays than their male counterparts. This lends credence to the assumption that feminine speech is related to prestige. The outcome of the questionnaire questions illustrates some suggestions for the sake of promoting different types of metadiscourse markers. The relevance of hedges and boosters in argumentative writing stems from the fact that readers want assertions to be justified in terms of the reliability ratings they convey, as well as appropriate in terms of the social interactions they appeal to and enabling authors to convey more specific degrees of accuracy in their truth assessments.

The current case study research questions have been satisfactorily answered. Several pedagogical recommendations and implications for teachers were offered for a better understanding

of metadiscourse markers, such as including other types of writing or oven studying it from other contexts and perspectives based on the outcomes of those research questions among EFL students in the English department at the University of Yahia Fares.

Finally, we hope that our research will be valuable and serve as a springboard for other researchers to conduct research under the same subject and cover additional areas that may have been overlooked in our study.

## Limitations of the Study:

There seems to exist different major limitations in the present study that could be addressed in future research. For examples, the study focused on only one social factor, which is gender. However, other factors, such as culture, genre, and politics can also affect the use of metadiscourse markers, hedges and boosters.

## Pedagogical Implications

Several recommendations can be made based on the findings of this study that are of great importance and might even interest many members of the academic discourse community.

1 Teacher should enhance students' awareness of the communicative-based force of language with its four fundamental facets citing, the linguistic (formal), sociolinguistic, metadiscoursal and the strategical aspect.

2-the fundamental implication is that teachers should raise the awareness of EFL students towards metadiscourse markers and their various categories and functions to help them write academic articles and books that match the principles of any discourse community.

3- A pedagogy that addresses the phenomenon of hedges and boosters in oral classes is to be designed so as to develop students' metadiscoursal speaking competence.

4-students should develop and be fully aware of the academic writing skills and discover the various use of hedges and boosters and learn how to use them appropriately.

This work contributes to the study of hedges and boosters, notably in Medea where no previous research has been conducted before.

## Suggestions for Further Research

This study can be a reference for future researchers who have the same interests in conducting and carrying out research under the same title. The following suggestions can be helpful for them.

1-the findings of the study are based on the responses of 33 participants of third-year English students. future research may attempt to take a larger sample size of participants. They can cover all groups of third-year English students at the university of Yahia fares of Medea and include even teachers that teach academic writing. and why not incorporate other Algerian universities into the study.

2-moreover, further research can focus on analyzing hedges and boosters not only in the academic writing field but also includes other fields of writing such as linguistics, literature, and civilization.

3-Future research might also seek to analyze hedges and boosters in oral discourse rather than the written one

4-in our study, we investigated MD hedges and boosters in relation to gender, different research from various disciplines can be conducted at the Algerian context level, such as evaluating the possible link that could relate hedges and boosters with other disciplines like genre and culture.

5- In our research, the study was conducted within the context of EFL learners, but it might be possible to conduct a study comparing ESL with EFL learners' different writing styles (in terms of using hedges and boosters).

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# APPENDICES

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

**Section1: Background Information**

Please answer the following questions

1. Your AGE

2. Your Gender: Male ☐ female ☐

3. Your Nationality: Algerian ☐ Other ☐

4. For How long have you been learning English

**Section 2: Student's Perception Toward Metadiscourse-Markers**

Read carefully and answer the following question

1. Are you familiar with the notion of metadiscourse markers?

   Yes ☐ no ☐

2. What are hedges?

☐ Means of expressing certainty

☐ Means of expressing uncertainty

3. What are boosters?

☐ Means of expressing uncertainty

☐ Means of expressing certainty

5. Do use hedges and boosters in your argumentative writing?

a. Yes, I do

b. Yes, I strongly do

c. No, I do not

6. If yes, which one do use frequently?

   Hedges ☐ Boosters ☐

7. In your writing style do you support your ideas with facts or social experience?

   Fact ☐ Social experience ☐

8. Do you think using hedges and boosters devices increases the credibility of your writing?

9. Did your teachers raise your awareness toward such kinds of devices?

## Appendix B

- Benchidi
- Nour-el-houda
- Group:03.

- Essay about : Drunk driving.

- Our society suffers from a lot of problems and drunk driving is one of them that is considered as a very serious crime. Drunk driving also known as driving while intoxicated is a dangerous habit that needs to be adressed in our society because it caused many bad consequences. That's why, Driving under the influence of alcohol should be banned.

- First of all, people who can drive under the influence of alcohol, go out on road because they don't know that they are endangering themselves as well as other drivers. Thus, These people cannot control themselves in this situation, so, it is never ok to drive while they drunk because they can mistakenly drive off the road aswell as cause a fatal accident. In addition, The alcohol decreases the ability to judge car position, affecting night vision and color perception. That's why, it increases the drivers' chance in car accident. For this reason, government should banned driving under the influence of alcohol, because it seriously hurts people and causes many die, aswell as they should consider it as a serious crime and impose severe sanctions and penalties.

Benchidi
Nour-el-houda
Group: 03

- Essay about: Volunteerism.

- "Volunteering creates stronger bonds between friends, family and coworkers." Volunteering is a way of helping others. It is giving a person's time and ability to help someone who may be in need of help. Not only does volunteering help others, but also it can be helpful for themselves. Thus, Volunteerism must be shared between societies' members in order to rise their brotherhood.

- First of all, Volunteerism is a great way for people to interact with others in their community. It gives them that time even while creating bonds where they are doing this greater job. Second, the effect of volunteering can range from many helpful characteristics such as: helping those in need, giving back to the community, working for worthwhile causes, and overall helping someone with their health, mentally and physically. Third, Volunteerism is very helpful and beneficial to our society at large. Since, these volunteers are going to help weak people who are may be poor, sick or loose their works, houses or money because of an accident, So, volunteering is going to strength people's relationships, as well as it makes our society more beautiful and merciful.

Benaicha SIRINE gr3

## Distance education

distance education should be well programmed. I think that this learning process is as good as face to face learning because students and teachers are able to do almost all the things they did in campus learning, and even more than that

Firstly, I think that Distance education and online courses are very flexible and since learning programs don't require people to be physically present in a classroom both teachers and students are free to set their own schedule or to develop and improve new skilles. Also distance learning allows students to learn and work at the same time, at least to have a part time job. of course, this was also possible in campus learning, but it was very hard for students to set their schedule so that they had enough time for both classes and job

Secondly, long distance learning helps students to learn to be responsible for themselves, to schedule their time, to learn independently, to look forward for more information.

In conclusion, I think that Distance education is as good as in campus learning or even better because people have a lot of opportunities to develop their personalities, their knowledge, to do what they really want, to learn more things and to learn responsibility as well.