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**«Theoretical and empirical scientific
research: concept and trends»**



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PRAGMATICS OF LINGUISTIC HEDGING IN THE GENRE OF RESEARCH ABSTRACTS

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Summary. *The article identifies the essential features of linguistic hedging in the genre of abstract for research papers. In academic discourse, the hedging strategy is implemented through a range of tactics and techniques aimed at neutralising or mitigating the force of a statement and preserving scientific objectivity. Hedging helps the author to avoid the impression of absolute conviction in a statement while maintaining the opportunity for additional analysis and reflection. This strategy ensures the objectivity of academic discourse and emphasises the existence of alternative aspects of the problem under study.*

Introduction. The concept of “hedging” in linguistics involves the use of language to express uncertainty and caution and to mitigate categorization. Hedging is also associated with the phenomenon of indirect communication. The analysis of theoretical developments on the research problem shows that the structure of the hedging phenomenon is complex and multi-layered. It covers a number of significant communicative and pragmatic aspects, in particular: prototyping, downplaying, collecting, emphasizing, weakening of meaning, quantification, intensification, deintensification, gradation, equivalence, epistemic modality, evasion, etc. [3; 4; 7; 8].

In contemporary textual theory, hedging is seen as a communicative and pragmatic strategy on the basis of which the speaker denies responsibility for the reliability and validity of the judgment made, expressing a certain degree of

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uncertainty and indeterminacy in order to establish the distance between individual “I” and the information provided [3, p. 311].

Linguistics owes the concept of “hedging” to W. Weinreich, who identified so called “softeners”, metalinguistic operators. Later, in his work “Hedges: A Study in Meaning Criteria Fuzzy Concepts” J. Lakoff described phrases whose function is to distance oneself, avoid direct statements and present things ambiguously [9].

Despite the interest in this topic, there are still a number of unexplored or problematic questions. One of them is the comparative characteristics of updating the hedging strategy in research papers in English and Ukrainian, which increases the relevance of our work.

The aim of the research is to determine the peculiarities of the hedging strategy in academic discourse, especially in the genre of abstracts for research papers.

Results and Discussion. Since the end of the 20th century, scientists have been studying the ability of hedges to influence the communicative perception of a statement by reducing the categorical nature of the statement itself and having a gentle effect on the addressee, since a less categorical statement is more likely to be received by the addressee be perceived positively. Modern scholars, both domestic (O.M. Ivanchenko, M.V. Pylypiv, V.D. Bialyk) and foreign (J. Lakoff, P. Grice, J. Clement, C. Hyndend), pay great attention to the phenomenon of “hedging” and study its linguistic actualization.

Let us examine the hedge “generally speaking” in the English utterance ***Generically speaking***, *the use of metaphors enhances the reader's comprehension of the text*. The phrase “generally speaking” is used as a hedge and indicates a certain degree of uncertainty or a lack of absolute precision. This suggests that the statement is a generalization and may not apply generally or in all cases. By using this hedging, the author softens the assertiveness of the statement, making it less absolute and more susceptible to exception or variation. The use of “generally speaking” suggests a certain level of expertise or experience, but recognizes that there may be exceptions or nuances. Hedging signals that the author is considerate of the reader's perspective and recognizes that individual experiences or interpretations may vary. Using hedging encourages a more nuanced and thoughtful consideration of the statement rather than rigid acceptance. This assurance can promote discussion or further engagement with the topic. It invites readers or listeners to join in a conversation about the effectiveness of metaphors in enhancing understanding. In summary, the phrase “in general” in the given sentence acts as a hedge that dampens the certainty of the statement about the positive influence of metaphors on the reader's understanding. It adds nuance, acknowledges possible exceptions, and creates a more open and conversational tone.

In the Ukrainian sentence ***Загалом*** *мова має важливе значення для формування іммігрантської ідентичності* the word “Загалом” acts as a hedge,



indicating a degree of generality rather than absolute certainty. This suggests that the statement about the importance of language in the formation of immigrant identity is a broad observation, applicable in a general sense, but not necessarily universal or without exceptions. “Загалом” signals that the statement is a generalization and recognizes that there may be variations or specific cases in which the role of language in immigrant identity formation may differ. It allows for a more nuanced understanding and encourages readers to consider the broader perspective without excluding possible exceptions. In conclusion, the word “Загалом” in the given sentence acts as a hedge and dampens the certainty of the statement about the role of language in the formation of the identity of immigrants.

The phenomenon of hedging is an integral part of English-language scientific communication. O.M. Ilchenko calls hedging a universal marker that characterizes the semantic and pragmatic load of English-language academic texts [3, p.147]. With the help of hedging, scientists are able to hide negative assessments and soften the presentation of statements. It is noteworthy that the term “hedging” almost completely retains its meaning in the transition from the economic to the linguistic area and means “linguistic insurance”, i.e. protection against radical opinions, aggression and offensive statements towards opponents [6, p. 233].

Hedging in academic discourse, avoidance of categorization and politeness allow us to distinguish between facts and judgments through the techniques of doubt or uncertainty, evasion, etc. In other words, hedging helps to express an opinion more precisely and to present information with the highest possible quality. Level of reliability that characterizes the current level of knowledge certainty. In addition, the protection aims to reduce possible negative consequences of a critical perception of one’s work and to protect one’s scientific reputation. The use of hedges builds a cooperative communication strategy between addressee and addressee.

It is worth noting that the English-speaking and Ukrainian-speaking traditions have their own hedging traditions. For the academic discourse in its Anglo-Saxon version, hedging is therefore one of the defining features. This feature is emphasized by modern researchers and authors of manuals for writing scientific articles in English. As A. Walwork notes: “Modern day scientific writing had its origins in England and many stylistic rules were devised by British scientists. One “rule” is that when you present subjective or unproven propositions, you should avoid sounding arrogant or 100% certain of what you state. This approach, known as “hedging”, also spread to other scientists in other Anglo societies” [10, p. 170].

English-speaking traditions generally advocate restraint in judgments, qualifying them as a sign of respect for the interlocutor who has the right to express a different opinion. The English tend to avoid categorical statements or negatives

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and treat the words “yes” and “no” as if they were obscene concepts that would be better expressed allegorically. Therefore, there is a tendency to use introductory phrases such as “it seems to me”, “I think”, “I may be wrong, but...”, which are intended to dilute certainty and straightforwardness, which can lead to a conflict of opinions [1; 4; 5].

Other researchers have also pointed out that hedging is an integral part of English-language academic communication. For example, the Ukrainian linguist O.M. Ilchenko calls hedging a universal marker that characterizes the semantic and pragmatic load of English-language scientific texts [3, p.147]. With the help of hedging, scientists are able to hide negative assessments and soften the presentation of statements. It is noteworthy that the term “hedging” almost completely retains its meaning in the transition from the economic to the linguistic sphere, namely “linguistic insurance”, i.e. protection against radical opinions, aggression and offensive statements towards opponents [3].

Reducing the categorization of a statement is also carried out with the help of modal words with the meaning of assumption, uncertainty, doubt, etc. Modal words like *might*, *may* play an important role in the formation of the content plan of hypothetical modality statements [3, p.152]. O.M. Ilchenko points out that indirect statements with modal words usually have their own pragmatic task, which is expressed in the urge to act [3, p.153]. In the appropriate contextual environment, these units can express a subjective assessment of the statement, weakening its categorical character by limiting the universality of the proposed opinion or information and limiting it to the personal experience of the speaker. The reduction of the negativity effect is also achieved by gradually reducing confidence in the truth of the statement (*on the one hand; (on) the flip side (of the coin); for one thing; although; though; albeit; however; (but) along the way; despite; in spite of; nonetheless; nevertheless; still; yet; while* etc.). At the same time, the mitigation of a negative assessment is achieved by expressing a reservation, in particular to restrict the conditions for the implementation of a measure in the future (*to be fair; to put it squarely; bluntly; frankly (speaking); at any rate; in any case; caveat; unfortunately*).

Academic discourse encompasses a number of different genres, each of which has certain peculiarities in the way it functions. In this article we will focus on the genre of abstract for a research paper. It is likely that the specifics of the abstracts and the requirements for their writing determine to some extent the stock of discursive markers for the realization of the hedging strategy.

As a reminder: an abstract is a short summary of the core of an article, its conclusion. When reading an abstract, the reader should receive a comprehensive answer as to what the article is about and the value of the information provided. The essence of abstract is to reduce the scope of the information source as much

as possible while maintaining its main content. Accordingly, the form and content of the note limits the protection to some extent, but does not negate it. It should also be added that in modern linguistics a sufficient number of works are devoted to the study of abstracts [1; 2; 5]. It is significant that abstract is usually viewed as a secondary genre of academic discourse [1]. Academic discourse, in turn, is a speech act between scientists, the components of which are “knowledge, truth and research” [7]. Although abstracts play an important role in academic discourse, they are often neglected and not given sufficient attention by researchers.

O.V. Yerchenko points out that an abstract should be viewed as a separate textual unit with its own pragmatic functions [2]. Regarding the reference literature, it should be noted that dictionaries only reflect the general meaning, without detailing the functional features. For example, the Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language offers the following definition of an abstract: “... a short bibliographic reference, a description of the contents of a book, article, etc.” Similar definitions can be found in other reference books. For example, the Cambridge Dictionary states: “...summary is a shortened form of a speech, article, book, etc., stating only the most important facts or ideas”.

Given the peculiarities of the functioning and linguistic features of the genre, an abstract can be considered as a secondary informative and abstract genre of academic style, which provides a concise description of the primary commented source and may contain additional information about the specifics of the presentation of the material, methods, the techniques used in the work, the author, the addressee, references to the literature used and advertising for a scientific product to make scientific findings known [1, p. 43].

Using a practical analysis of several dozen research papers written in English and Ukrainian, along with their abstracts that summarize the actual scientific articles, we can highlight this section of the text's secondary nature, which consists merely of a list of questions without a clear response. Guided by this position, the author encourages readers to study the text of the research. Therefore, it is advisable to talk about the pragmatism and genre variability of the discourse. Based on the latter feature, three main types of abstracts are traditionally distinguished in English-language scientific discourse: descriptive, informational and critical. The fundamental difference lies not only in scope (the types are listed in ascending order), but also in their structure and content. As a rule, works in the humanities contain descriptive notes; those in the technical and natural sciences contain informative ones [6].

Conclusions. Hedging in abstracts for research papers fulfills several pragmatic roles and contributes to the clarity, precision, and scientific tone of the text. Validation allows researchers to identify the limitations of their study or possible uncertainties in the results. This demonstrates intellectual honesty and

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transparency and signals to readers that the researchers are aware of the shortcomings of the study and potential areas for further investigation. Researchers often make general statements about their findings in abstracts, and hedging helps control the degree of generalization. By using hedges, researchers can convey that their results are not absolute and may be applicable in a particular context or under certain conditions.

Hedging allows researchers to exercise caution when drawing conclusions or making interpretations. This contributes to a more nuanced and careful presentation of the research, avoids exaggeration and highlights the need for further examination. Hedging invites readers to critically evaluate the research and its implications. Hedging helps maintain an objective and impartial tone in academic writing. It aids researchers to avoid absolute claims, thereby strengthening the scientific and unbiased nature of the research. In summary, the pragmatic role of hedging in research abstracts is to improve precision, maintain scientific integrity, and promote a nuanced understanding of the scope and implications of the study. It contributes to the overall effectiveness of communication in academic writing.

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