

Translation of Hedges in Linguistic Academic Discourse from English into Arabic: A Contrastive Pragmatic Approach

ترجمة التحوطات في الخطاب الأكاديمي اللساني من الإنجليزية إلى العربية: مقارنة تداولية تقابلية

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Abstract

This paper attempts to unveil the way translators deal with hedges when rendering linguistic papers from English into Arabic and the extent of cultural filtering at work, if any. To answer this overarching question, this paper adopts a contrastive pragmatic approach. Three sets of articles are used: three full-length English articles, their respective translations, and three full length non translated Arabic articles in the same field by the same translators/linguists. The findings revealed that the translators retained most of the hedges, only slightly applying the cultural filter. The translated articles were found to contain more hedges than the translators' originals and are, thus, more tentative and more engaging for the reader. The translators' choices may be explained by their profile, cross-linguistic differences in hedging devices and extra-linguistic factors.

Keywords: Hedging; Academic Discourse; Epistemic Shift; Cultural Filter; Pragmatic Equivalence

ملخص:

نسعى في هذه المقالة البحثية للبحث في كيفية تعامل المترجمين العرب مع التحوطات خلال نقل المقالات البحثية في تخصص اللسانيات من الإنجليزية إلى اللغة العربية ومدى تطبيق المصفاة الثقافية. للإجابة على هذه الإشكالية، انتهجنا منهجا تداوليا تقابليا، حيث استعملنا ثلاثة مجموعات من النصوص: ثلاثة مقالات مكتوبة باللغة الإنجليزية و ترجماتها وثلاثة مقالات مكتوبة باللغة العربية من تأليف المترجمين أنفسهم. توصلت النتائج إلى أن المترجمين أبقوا على أغلب التحوطات، ولم يطبقوا المصفاة الثقافية إلا قليلا، كما وجد أن المقالات المترجمة تحتوي عددا أكبر من التحوطات مقارنة بمقالات المترجمين وبهذا فهي تتميز بحذر أكبر و درجة أعلى من التفاعلية. وقد تعزى اختيارات المترجمين إلى ملفهم التعريفي و اختلاف أدوات التحوط بين اللغتين إضافة إلى عوامل أخرى غير لغوية.

كلمات مفتاحية: التحوط، الخطاب الأكاديمي، الموقف المعرفي، المصفاة الثقافية، التكافؤ التداولي

1. INTRODUCTION

Hedging refer to words that signal uncertainty and reduce commitment to statements. Since the frequency and surface forms of hedging vary across different languages, this phenomenon can be studied from a cultural point view. Translation researchers are well-suited for this enterprise and are likely to give us more insight about how it operates in different languages. For instance, Schaffner (1998) took interest in hedges in political texts and remarked that, in speeches, they may be used in implicit argumentation with opponents and thus involve implicatures that the translator has to make explicit for the audiences that may be unaware of them. She also observed three possible translation techniques, namely, deletion, addition and change in perspective. In scientific texts, Vandepitte & Vandebussche (2011) compared two temporally different Dutch translations of a chapter from Darwin's *The Origin of species* and observed varying degrees of shifts in certainty which they attributed to translation tendencies across different time periods, language-inherent differences and genre restrictions. Similarly, Cook (2015) investigated modality in two Spanish translations of the same book and suggested that position shifts or lack thereof may be accounted for by the translator's profile; while the journalist's rendition had a journalistic feel to it as it exhibited shifts towards more certainty, the translator with a scientific background exhibited no such epistemic shifts and remained faithful to the stances expressed by Darwin. (Peterlin & Moe, 2016) Investigated students' translations of hedging from English into Slovene and noted that while some of them were retained, many were either modified or deleted; the researchers explained these modifications by the lack of equivalents, sentential position of hedges and deliberate manipulation.

In the English-Arabic language pair, Fathi (2019) investigated the translation of metadiscourse markers, including hedges, in a novel drawing upon Nida's concept of formal and dynamic equivalence and the procedures he proposed to make up for lack of TL equivalence, namely, addition, substraction and alteration. Ali (2020) looked into volunteer translators' handling of hedges in popular science from English into Arabic and found shifts towards more certainty, which she proposed were ideologically-motivated to lend more credibility to scientific claims and spread knowledge that may contradicts Arabs' religious beliefs, with the result that their interventions have taken away the engaging effects of hedges which allow readers to participate in knowledge production and communication. We have yet to come across research that investigates how hedges are dealt with when translating scholarly discourse from English into Arabic. This paper therefore attempts to fill this gap by examining the translation of hedges in three articles, one research article and two book chapters and their respective translations, along with three comparable articles in the TT by the same translators (who are researchers themselves). This paper attempts to answer the following overarching research question:

How do translators handle hedges in translating linguistic papers into Arabic?

To answer this research question, it is necessary to answer the following sub-questions:

How familiar is the concept of hedging in the Arab tradition? Is assertiveness inherent to Arabic scientific discourse? What can comparable texts tell us about the prevalence and realizations of this phenomenon? Do the translations under study present any epistemic or interpersonal shifts? What are the possible reasons behind such shifts, if any, and, what possible effects may they have on the translated texts in terms of epistemic stance and writer-reader relationship?

2.Hedging in English

Hedging is a linguistic concept that was popularized by Lakoff (1973) who drew on the theory of fuzzy sets (Zadeh, 1965) and prototype theory (Heider, 1971). Lakoff posited that truth is a matter of degree, and hence was interested in words that are used to express the various degrees of truth out there, calling them hedges “words whose job is to make words fuzzier or less fuzzy” (471). Lakoff treated hedges such as ‘sort of’, ‘technically’, ‘strictly speaking’, ‘loosely speaking’...etc mainly from a semantic point of view, that is, he focused on their literal meaning and how they conveyed our representations of the real world. Hedging later attracted the attention of pragmaticists, discourse analysts and ESL researchers. From a pragmatic point view, it came to be seen as a strategy for reducing the illocutionary force of speech acts (Holmes, 1982), I.e, the acts intended by the speaker such as promising, telling, warning and threatening ...etc (Lyons, 1977). People are presumed to mitigate the illocutionary force of their speech mainly for purposes of linguistic politeness, which refers to “the means for expressing consideration for others” (Holmes, 2006). The concept of politeness was fully developed by Brown and Levinson (1978) who, drawing on Goffman’s (1967) anthropological concept of ‘face’, argued that many speech acts contained in utterances are inherently threatening either to speakers or hearers’ positive face (their desire to be approved of) or negative face (their desire to be free from imposition). Speech acts threatening positive face may include mocking, criticizing, accusing, disagreeing with someone, etc, as they bespeak a certain unfavorable evaluation of the addressee, while acts threatening negative face include, among others, ordering, requesting, reminding, suggesting, warning, giving advice, etc, because they limit the hearer’s freedom of action (Brown & Levinson, 1978, pp. 65-66). Thus, hedging according to Brown and Levinson mainly serves as a negative politeness strategy (Brown & Levinson, 1978), an unhedged sentence like:

“You should spend less time before the tv”

is inherently face-threatening to the hearer as it dictates to him/her the proper way to behave, if the speaker chooses to reduce the illocutionary force of this piece of advice, he/she may couch it in a mitigated tone to express care for the hearer’s face wants of non-imposition by including hedges, a hedged version of the sentence above may read like:

“I think you should **maybe** spend less time before the tv”.

Discourse analysts classified hedges as metadiscoursal markers. Metadiscourse is the "linguistic material in texts, written or spoken, which does not add anything to the propositional content but that is intended to help the listener or reader organize, interpret and evaluate the information given"(Crismore et al, 1993, p.40). Metadiscourse is thus concerned not with Halliday's (1994) ideational function of language, but with the interpersonal and textual ones, hence the classification of metadiscourse into textual and interpersonal (Kopple, 1985). While textual metadiscourse markers have to do with those markers that connect text segments into a cohesive and coherent whole to help the reader make sense of it (transitions, frame markers...etc), interpersonal or interactional metadiscourse has to do with how writers react to their discourse and interact with readers. Hedges are interactional metadiscourse markers that allow writers to project certain subjectivity into their texts by presenting information as opinions rather than facts, thus engaging readers in the discourse and allowing them to have their say as regards the information presented. (Hyland, 2005, p. 52). Martin & White (2001) regard hedging as a dialogic resource that opens up a discursive space for other viewpoints and interpretations. The two scholars relied on the Bakhtinian concept of dialogism which views any verbal communication—in writing or speaking—as ‘dialogic’ given that every act of speaking or writing entails some sort of response to what has been said or written and anticipation for responses from potential or even hypothetical readers/ listeners. They divided utterances into monoglossic, where alternative positions are not acknowledged as in bare assertions, and heteroglossic where alternative viewpoints are entertained. They consider hedges such as ‘I think’, ‘it has been argued’ as ‘dialogically expansive’ resources since the writer/speaker (or textual voice) uses them to open up dialogic space for other voices and viewpoints, as opposed to ‘dialogically contractive’ resources which narrow the scope of alternative positions such as boosters ‘certainly’, ‘obviously’...etc.

Thus, hedging is “generally taken to mean those expressions in language which make messages indeterminate, that is, they convey inexactitude, or in one way or another mitigate or reduce the strength of the assertions that speakers or writers make” (Mauranen, 1997, p. 115). It is used “to indicate that propositions are uncertain (may, seem, tend , perhaps) vague (around, about some kind of) or of limited applicability (in some respects, at least) or non-commitment (one could say, it may be true)” (p. 119). Hedging intersects with other concepts such as mitigation, epistemic modality, vagueness and evidentiality, though the line between these terms depends largely on how broadly or narrowly hedging is understood (Makkanen & Schröder, 1997) .

2.1. Functions of hedges in Academic Discourse

Hedging is an intrinsic part of the English scientific language just as it is intrinsic to non-scientific English. It is believed to reflect English academic culture which has

cognitive as well as social dimensions (Hyland, 1997). Particularly, it reflects approved methodology, I.e., scientific empiricism which rests on experimentability, replicability and falsifiability of results, but also approved ways of communicating science and preferred linguistic practices (21). These include hedging one's claims so that they can be negotiated with peers and subsequently accepted into established scientific facts. For Salager-Meyer (1994), hedges reflect the probabilistic nature science has acquired starting from the second half of 19th century, as they help project the right amount of precision in describing states of knowledge and in reporting results. Drawing on Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness, Myers (1989) views hedging as a negative politeness strategy. He argues that it is not used to show probability or personal doubt, but to signal that the researcher's claim is temporary, waiting consensus by the scientific community he/she belongs to. For him, academic writing involves presenting claims, and debunking or criticizing the claims of others, which are face threatening acts which can be redressed or mitigated through hedges. It is observed that while some view hedging as a phenomenon with an epistemic function, that is, as a strategy for accurately describing the world with the right amount of inaccuracies and uncertainties, others prefer to view it as interpersonal strategy whereby the researcher displays modesty and politeness towards the scientific community (readers, proofreaders and fellow researchers) and acknowledges their role in the negotiation and ratification of claims. The two functions though are not necessarily mutually-exclusive. This is reflected in Hyland's (1996) polypragmatic model which gives equal weight to the ideational and interpersonal dimensions of hedging by introducing content-oriented and reader-oriented hedges

1-Content-oriented hedges: They reflect the writer's concern with how his/her statements represent the true state of affairs in the external world, and constitute a proactive measure to counter any possible criticisms or counter-claims. Content-oriented hedges are sub-categorized into:

(a)Accuracy-based hedges: They serve to articulate statements with caution and precision, either by specifying how they should be understood or by accurately displaying the degree of certainty the writer confers on his/her statements. Accuracy-based hedges include: (Hyland, 1997, pp. 163-168).

Attribute hedges: these resemble Lakoff's original concept of hedges as they describe accurately the attributes of phenomena against scientists' idealized expectations of what the world is like. Attribute hedges include disjuncts such as 'essentially, more or less, almost'...etc and adverbs or expressions used to indicate the precise way in which the truth of a claim may be evaluated such as 'theoretically, broadly speaking, from an economic point of view'.

Reliability hedges: they signal subjective uncertainty .such as perhaps, presumably, I guess...etc.

(b)Writer-based hedges: involve deflecting responsibility for one's claims through minimizing authorial presence with the use of passives, abstract rhetors where

the subject (the researcher) is replaced by inanimate subjects such as (the date indicates/the evidence suggest) and anticipatory it as in (it seems that...).

2) Reader-oriented hedges: these are used to build a writer-reader relationship, show deference towards the readers and acknowledge their role in negotiating claims. Unlike writer-based hedges, reader-oriented hedges involve the use of 1st singular pronouns (I, we, my..) to signal the subjective character of the statements and present them as opinions or inferences rather than established facts.

2.2. Hedging Devices

Given the importance of such devices in expert-to-expert discourse within academia, many researchers proposed taxonomies for a rigid analysis of the phenomenon, but also to help EFL learners enhance their hedging skills. Some of these taxonomies were functional (Salager-Meyer, 1994) (Martin-Martin, 2008), others were based on grammatical class (Hyland, 1996).

Hyland's (1996) taxonomy has been widely used by researchers; he classifies hedges into lexical and strategic. English Lexical hedges include:

- Modal verbs (may, might, could, would, should, will, must)
- Epistemic lexical verbs (eg. Suggest, believe, speculate, implies, seem...etc).
- Epistemic adjectives: (un)likely, possible, probable, ..etc)
- Epistemic adverbs: possibly, probably, almost, partially, virtually, generally, quite, ... etc.
- Strategic hedges are used by the writer to signal lack of knowledge and express consideration and modesty towards the research community. They may be realized either through signaling experimental weaknesses, acknowledging limitations of the model, theory or method used, or lack of knowledge.
- Abstract rhetors.
- passives.
- explicit self-reference

2.3. Hedging in the Arabic Tradition

Organized skepticism, one of the principles of modern scientific thought underlying the use of hedging devices is not unknown to Arab medieval scientists. According to (2018، إكيدر)، It was clearly spelt out by Al-Jahiz in his famous book 'Al Hayawan', where he stated, inter alia, that certainty is always preceded by doubt, and that doubt may come in degrees, unlike certainty, and suggested that layman don't tend to entertain doubt, unlike scientists. Ibn al-Haitham, introduced his landmark book 'the Optics' with a word of caution suggesting that he internalized this principle in his scientific method, and that he deemed it to be necessary to attain certainty:

"After which we should ascend in our inquiry and reasonings, gradually and orderly, criticizing premises and exercising caution in regard to conclusions[...]We may in this

way eventually come to the truth that gratifies the heart and gradually and carefully reach the end at which certainty appears”

(Ibn Al-Haytham, 1989)

Arab grammarians dealt with the so called ‘verbs of heart’, which include أفعال اليقين (verbs of certainty) ‘verbs of doubt’ which express a 50/50 possibility, أفعال الرجحان (verbs of probability) which express a higher degree of certainty than verbs of doubt and verbs of certainty which express assertion resulting from necessary (sensory evidence) or compelling unchallengeable mental evidence. These verbs were approached from a purely grammatical point, pointing out their grammatical form and sentential position to draw the line between their hedging and non-hedging functions, especially considering that some of them may have either an assertive or hedging functions, which points to the polysemous and context-based nature of hedges discussed by many modern researchers. Still, we can gather from the above that they are believed to emanate from the heart, that is, they relay beliefs that are internally entertained and vary in degrees by weighing evidence against counter-evidence. Ben Yaiche, in his explanation of Al Zamakhshari’s Al Mufasssal made a distinction between the degrees of epistemic uncertainty attributed to propositions over which there is no uncontested evidence

فإن وُجد معارضٌ من دليل آخر، وتُردد النظرُ بينهما على سَوَاءٍ، فهو شك. وإن رجح أحدُهما، فالراجح ظن، والمرجوح وهم (بن يعيش، 2001، صفحة 318)

« Where there is a challenger with another piece of evidence and equal consideration is given to both, then this is doubt. Where one outweighs the other, then it is a probability, while the one outweighed is a fancy”.

Verbs of doubt and probability are far from being the only resources used to express epistemic doubt. Arab speakers have a plethora of syntactic and lexical devices to draw from, including verbs, adjectives, nouns and preposition (qad, la’alla). Apart from these, medieval scientists used to employ religious expressions carrying hedging overtones such as Allahu A’alam (God Knows best), which can be used to either reduce commitment to a certain proposition, or be placed at the beginning or end of an entire text or book, hedging the entire book and making up for any un-hedged or under-hedged claims. This and similar religious expressions seem to be very culture-specific types of hedges, somewhat falling into Hyland’s category of strategic hedges, since the writer admits that his/her knowledge is never complete.

Although present in the scientific thought of early Islamic scholars, Arab rhetoricians and linguists did not give equal weight to hedging and uncertainty when compared with tawkid (certainty). In fact, certainty markers are crucial tools of persuasion in Arabic. Arab rhetoricians such as Al Sakkaki divided addressees into three types in terms of how ready they are to believe declarative statements, namely the ‘free-minded’ (خالي الذهن) ‘the hesitant’ (المتحير) and the denier (المنكر). While the free-

minded can be addressed without any need for adding certainty markers such as ‘inna’, Al Sakkaki recommends adding a certainty marker when the addressee is hesitant, and two or more certainty markers when addressing a denier. (الهاشمي، 2017، صفحة 62). This indicates that the more skeptical an addressee is, the more need there is to introduce certainty markers as strategic tools for persuasion in Arabic. English writers generally go about their persuasion work in the opposite way since they use hedges, and not boosters, to strengthen their arguments, especially within academia. Particularly, claims that are too upfront are easier to be challenged than softened ones which are less negatable (Hubler, 1983). Therefore, by weakening the claim through hedging, the argument is made stronger and more convincing. (Meyer, 1997)

2.4. Hedging in modern day Arabic academic discourse

Most research that addressed hedging in Arabic was done in the context of contrastive metadiscourse studies between Arabic in English. Such research generally agree that Arab researchers make more use of interactive than interactional metadiscourse markers. This suggests, that “Arabic puts rather a premium on textuality at the expense of reader involvement, hence, being comparatively less reader responsible than English” (Sultan, 2011). It was also found that hedges are the least used interactional metadiscourse markers in the Arabic texts (Zaki, 2022) (Alotaibi, 2015). Similarly, Alramadan (2016) found that Arabic texts in the field of applied linguistics project an authoritative voice due the prevalence of bare assertions, making them rather monoglossic compared to texts written by Anglo-Americans, which tended to be interactive and heteroglossic. Interestingly, Sultan’s study (2011) stands in contrast with the aforementioned studies, suggesting that Arab writers used more hedges than boosters in the discussion section of linguistic papers. These apparently conflicting findings may be accounted by the fact that hedging frequency varies across rhetorical sections (abstract, introduction, discussion...etc, with the discussion section understandably containing more hedges), across disciplines, and perhaps even across Arab countries. Benett (2011) argued that discourse features of the English academic discourse may well be calqued through unconscious or conscious imitation. This might mean that Arab students or researchers who are proficient in English, particularly in Middle-eastern countries may be more likely to cultivate the habit of hedging compared to their North African counterparts when writing in Arabic as a result of their constant exposure to research written in English.

3. Academic Discourse in Translation

The approach underlying the translation of sci-tech texts is generally pragmatic equivalence. That is, ensuring that the target text is effective and efficient for the target readers and appropriate for the intended purpose in its new communicative situation (Scarpa, 2019, p. 178). This entails that academic texts fall within those types of texts that get substantially transformed to align with the target reader expectations, applying

the ‘cultural filter’ to navigate stylistic conventions between the source and target texts (Almanaa, 2024, p. 161)). The cultural filter should be based on empirical contrastive pragmatic research that establishes cross-cultural differences and preferences (House, 1998). House proposed 5 dimensions of cross-cultural difference, namely: directness Vs indirectness, orientation towards self Vs orientation towards others, orientation towards content Vs orientation towards addressees, explicitness Vs implicitness and ad-hoc formulation Vs verbal routines (62).

The high tendency to hedge has been associated with preference for indirectness and subjectivity/addressee orientation, as observed in English, while less hedged writing is thought to reflect a preference for directness and content orientation, as observed in German for example. The translator may thus either apply the cultural filter to produce translations adapted to the target language conventions or choose not to make such adaptations, resulting in source-language interference or ‘shining through effects’ (Kranich, 2011, pp. 78-79). Academic translators’ strategy choice is influenced by many factors including text type, readers’ needs, translator proficiency, legitimacy status of the source text and political power dynamics (Li, 2024).

4. Methods and Materials

This research adopts a contrastive pragmatic approach. “Contrastive approaches to pragmatics and translation take as starting point the study of pragmatic contrasts between the source language and the target language conventions, and on this basis, they identify the way translators handle these contrasts”. (Kranich, 2019, p.115). For this purpose, this research will manually extract hedges in three source texts and their respective translations and three non-translated Arabic texts to get an overview about the frequency of hedges in the three corpora and see whether the translators opted for a source-oriented or target-oriented approach and to what extent they introduce pragmatic adaptations or what House calls the ‘cultural filter’ (Almanaa & House, 2024).

The texts selected for analysis include 3 research articles, one published in a journal and two published as book chapters in the fields of linguistics pragmatics and rhetoric respectively. The book chapter is entitled “Teaching and Testing Pragmatics” by Carsten Roever (2009), translated by Waleed Anati (2022), a Jordanian scholar in linguistics and second language acquisition. The second is a research article entitled “Varieties of Persuasion in Modern Forms of Islamic Proselytizing in Egypt” by Jacob Højgilt (2008), translated by Imad Abdullatif, an Egyptian scholar in rhetoric and discourse analysis (2008), the third is entitled *The Armchair and the Machine* by Allan Partington (2008), translated by Muhammad Yattaoui (2021), a Moroccan scholar in discourse analysis. The non-translated texts are 3 articles by those same translators/researchers, with similar topic orientation as the English source texts. The articles are titled as follows:

تحليل الخطاب و تعليم الإنشاء للناطقين بغير العربية (discourse analysis and teaching writing to ASL learners)

حروب بلاغية: مناورات خطاب السلطة في ساحة الثورة (Rhetorical wars, manoeuvres of the discourse of power in the revolution square)

لسانيات المدونات مدخلا بينيا لتحليل الخطاب (corpus linguistics as an interdisciplinary approach to discourse analysis)

These texts were chosen for two reasons; first; linguistics lies at the crossroads of the humanities and social sciences, that is, it is one of the soft-knowledge areas that Hyland (1998) describes as typically interpretive since research is often “influenced by contextual vagaries, there is less control of variables and more diversity of research outcomes” and thus, according to Hyland are expected to abound with hedging devices. Second; the translators themselves are researchers in linguistics with many research studies published in Arabic, this entails that they are well aware of the pragmatic aspect of language and may well have come across research on hedging and politeness. This spurred our interest in investigating how they go about rendering hedges as linguists who are well-versed in Arabic rhetoric and as scientists who aspire to faithfully relay the work of their fellow English-speaking linguists.

5. Results

Table 1 Frequency of hedges and boosters in English source and Arabic, non-translated Texts

English article	Number of Hedges	Number of boosters	Arabic article	Number of hedges	Number of boosters
Article 1	89	44	Article 1	76	62
Article 2	89	51	Article 2	43	42
Article 3	96	32	Article 3	30	26
total	274	127		149	130

Source: Prepared by the researcher

The table above shows interesting results as regards the frequency of hedges and boosters in each language and cross-linguistically. The number of hedges in the English original articles is pretty close through the three articles, ranging from 89 to 96. In contrast, the Arabic articles display stark differences in the number of hedges among the three authors, with Yattawi and Innati using almost half as many hedges as Abdullatif. Although this is due in part to the nature of the articles and whether they are argumentation-based (and thus hedgy) or information based (less hedgy), the disparities point to certain heterogeneity in terms of rhetorical practices within the Arabic academic community compared to the English academic community. This might be due to the fact that while English academic discourse is systematically taught and highly codified in writing manuals and writing courses, Arabic academic discourse is less codified and rarely taught in a systematic way. Even academic writing manuals and instructions found online tend to be translated from English originals. This

suggests that rhetorical features found in Arabic texts are not constrained by community-conditioned norms, but are rather manifestations of authors' idiosyncrasies.

It is also observed that the number of hedges in the English articles is twice the number of boosters, while the number of hedges in the Arabic articles is only slightly higher than boosters. The Arabic originals contain only half the number of hedges found in the English originals. While one may infer that Arab academics use hedges and boosters in a balanced way, the fact that they use half the hedges used by English-speaking academic point to the existence of a high number of bare assertions (utterances containing neither hedges nor boosters). These create an authoritative voice characteristic of Arabic academic discourse as suggested by Alramdan (2016).

Based on the above, it can be said that Arabic academic writing is more objective and content-oriented compared to English academic writing which is more subjective and address-oriented. Arab academics are more interested in presenting ideational content then displaying their doubts and uncertainties or building a relationship with the reader.

5.1. Content-based hedges in the Arabic texts

The three articles display a large number of content-based hedges. The most frequent ones are the particles *qad*, *rubbama* and the verb *yumkinu* which help writers show their subjective uncertainties as regards the reliability of the information presented. It is also observed that the Arab writers of the articles under study use a limited range of attribute hedges with items that mainly increase group membership such as *بالأساس* (mainly), *عموما* (generally), *عادة* (usually), *إلى حد كبير* (to a large extent), etc, contrary to the English writers who use a large repertoire of attribute hedges that reflect varying degrees of group membership such as 'more or less, rather, somehow, etc'. These latter may suggest that English-speaking writers are more precise and careful in describing phenomena than their Arab counterparts.

5.2. Reader-oriented Hedges in the Arabic non-translated Texts

Reader-oriented hedges in the Arabic texts analyzed mainly include plural, first-person pronoun:

"ونجادل من وجهة نظر شخصية أن بأن الخطاب ليس مجرد بنية"

"We argue, from a personal perspective, that discourse is not merely a structure"

Although the singular first-person pronoun is rarely used in Arabic academic discourse given its subjective overtones, it is exceptionally prevalent in the articles of Imad Abdullatif and Waleed Enati. This may imply that Arab scholars who are recognized in their respective fields of research do not shy away from taking responsibility for their claims compared to students and early career researchers, though this needs to be established through more contrastive studies.

"وقد بدا لي أن منجزات تحليل الخطاب و علوم النص على اختلاف تقنياتها و آلياتها التحليلية يمكن أن تنقل تعليم العربية للناطقين بغيرها نقلات نوعية و متميزة".

TT: "it seems to me that achievements in discourse analysis and text linguistics with their different analytical techniques can take ASL teaching to new heights"

"أرى أيضا أن مدح الذات في الخطب السياسية- بحسب ما يتجلى في خطب مبارك- ينطوي على نوع من الحوار" (p.290)

TT : "I also think that self-praise in political discourses- as is evident in Mubarak's speeches- involves a certain kind of dialogicity".

5.3. Writer-based Hedges in the Arabic non-translated Texts

Arab academics have several syntactic choices to draw from if they want to reduce responsibility for their statements. These include,

- **The Passive Voice:**

"و يُنصح بأن يركز على كيفية انعقاد أسلوب التفضيل"

TT: "It is recommended that emphasis is laid upon how to express comparative forms"

- **Nominalization**

Nominalization, too, allows Arab writers to introduce speech acts without attributing them to oneself as a self-protective strategy. It is also considered to be a face-saving strategy according to Brown & Levinson (1987, p207), eg:

"و يمكن اعتبار هذه المقاربة الأكثر تعبيرا عن الدراسات البينية"

TT: "this approach can be considered as the one that best reflects interdisciplinary studies"

"و يمكن الحاجة بأن فعل الثورة نفسه هو محاولة لسلب سلطة التفويض من الحاكم"

TT: "It can be argued that that the very act of revolting is an attempt to strip the ruler of his delegating authority"

Although the researchers quoted in the two examples above had the possibility of attributing the verbs 'consider' and 'argue' to themselves either through singular or plural first- person pronouns, they opted for the use of the masdar I'tibar/muhajaja. This is an impersonalizing strategy that Arab writers seem to routinely employ when presenting their claims, personal interpretations and criticisms of others' claims.

- **The agentive Noun**

Ism al fa'il or agentive noun is particularly interesting in that it can be described as a writer-oriented or reader-oriented hedge simultaneously. On the one hand, it allows writers to diminish their presence in the text, substituting themselves with adjectives that describe them or the mental processes that led them to advance given claims such as الناظر (the one who observes)، المتتبع (the one who traces)، المتمعن (the one who pays close attention).

"و المتمعن في أصول هذه الخلفية اللغوية النقدية لهذه المقاربة يكشف أنها مستمدة من اللسانيات النقدية"

“The one who carefully studies the origins of the critical linguistic background of this approach will discover that it is derived from critical linguistics”.

Interestingly, these agentive nouns may also be considered reader-oriented hedges. They are apparently used to create a common ground with the reader, since they suggest that any observer would reach the same conclusion.

- **Abstract Rhetors**

Abstract rhetors where inanimate subjects replace the writer are not uncommon in the Arabic academic discourse, especially in empirical research where verbs are attributed to such subjects:

(the table, the results of our study indicate). يشير الجدول، تشير نتائج دراستنا.

5.4. Hedges in the Translated Texts

Table 2: hedging translation strategies in the texts

Total hedges in the 3 ST's	Retained hedges in the TT's	Modified hedges in the TT's	Deleted hedges in the TT's
274	210	47	28
Percentage	76.64%	17.15%	10.21%

Source: prepared by the researcher

The table shows that most hedges (76.64%) were retained in the TT's, while 17.15% were modified and 10.21 % were deleted. This indicates that the three translators/academics sought to preserve the nuanced statements made by their English counterparts, producing translations that drift more towards the ST's and reproducing their rhetorical practices. The remaining percentage suggests that there were some adaptations or cultural filtering whereby hedges are either modified or deleted to align with Arabic communicative preferences.

5.5. Translation Samples

Some translation samples are displayed below. For the sake of convenience, these will be divided into Hyland's content-oriented hedges, reader-oriented hedges and writer-oriented hedges. This will allow us to trace any epistemic shifts in content-focused hedges along certainty and specificity levels, and interpersonal shifts in writer and reader-focused hedges along the dimension of personal involvement or investment.

5.5.1. Content-oriented Hedges

5.5.1.1. Retained Hedges

Example 1

ST	TT
In some sense , all work with corpora – just as all work with discourse - is properly comparative	بمعنى ما، كل اشتغال بالمدونات – تماماً ككل اشتغال على الخطاب – هو بالضبط اشتغال مقارن.

Each of these in turn determines to a certain degree what kind of participants will appear together with them	وكل منها يحدد بدرجة ما طبيعة المشاركين الذين سوف يظهرون معها
In most more or less communicatively oriented language-teaching settings, pragmatic content be addressed incidentally	وقد يعالج المحتوى التداولي عرضاً في مواقف تعليم اللغة الموجهة تواصلياً، كثرت أو قلت،

The attribute hedges ‘in some sense, ‘to a certain degree’ and ‘more or less’ in the English statements above suggest that the statements and descriptions are partially true. They signal that the writers are not completely confident in the accuracy of their claims, preferring to present them as limited observations and thus acknowledging potential exceptions. The translators rendered the three hedges literally into Arabic although some of the equivalents are not commonly used (بمعنى ما) and come across as obvious ‘calqued hedges’.

5.5.1.2. Modified Hedges

Example 1

ST	TT
... would ensure a close link between development of the learners’ general L2 competence and pragmatic competence	اعتماداً على جاهزية المتعلم واستعداده بما س يضمن ربطاً وثيقاً بين نمو كفاية متعلم اللغة الثانية اللغوية العامة وكفايته التداولية

Would, in the ST is a modal that is used, according to Hyland (1996) as a marker of hypotheticality and is used pragmatically to attenuate the proposition and express caution. Along the certainty scale, it expresses possibility. The sentence is heteroglossic in that it suggests that the hypothesis is not necessarily correct, at least not always and in all settings, thus allowing for difference of opinion. In the translation, there is an epistemic shift since the verb ‘ensure’ is preceded by س (will) which is used to mark an event that will happen in the near future and thus expresses certainty as opposed to the original sentence. Dialogically, there is a shift from a heteroglossic to monoglossic positioning.

Example 2:

ST	TT
studies on pragmalinguistic development indicate a move from reliance on unanalyzed routine formulae to a greater range of features, more complexity, and more target-like constructions.	فإن دراسات تطور التداولية اللسانية تؤكد انتقالاً من الاعتماد على العبارات النمطية غير المحللة إلى مدى أكبر وأعمق من الملامح التداولية.

The English original sentence contains the epistemic lexical verb ‘indicate’. According to Hyland (1996), this and similar verbs hedge personal responsibility since they obscure mental processes and present conclusions as ‘this leads us to a such conclusion’ instead of ‘my conclusion is. The verb also presents the statement in a detached way since the writer is neither aligned nor disaligned with what is said. The

translation, however, conveys a heightened commitment since ‘indicate’ was translated into the verb تؤكد (confirm), which presents the proposition as a plain fact, thus ruling out alternative positions. Academic discourse in a discipline like linguistics rarely projects this kind of assertion when talking about research trends because there are always exceptions and even old research trends may resurge anew with new insights. The translation therefore presents a shift from neutral to certain and from a dialogic positioning lying somewhere between the two extremes of contraction and expansion to outright dialogic contraction.

5.5.1.3. Deleted Hedges

Example 1/2/3

Amr Khâlid very often employs the second person singular in this case.	وقد رأينا أن عمرو خالد يوظف ضمير المفرد المخاطب في نفس الموقف
Yûsuf al-Qaradâwî 's books are often devoted to defining what is correct and incorrect in Islamic thought and practice	حقيقة أن كتب يوسف القرضاوي تكرر نفسها لتعريف ماهية الفكر و الممارسة الإسلامية الصحيحة و غير الصحيحة
The situation is roughly analogous when journalists employ we	يشبه هذا الوضع توظيف الصحفيين للضمير نحن

In the three passages, the ST writers employ epistemic adverbs ‘often’ and ‘roughly’ to avoid sweeping generalizations. In examples 1 and 2, the adverb ‘often’ signals general observed patterns while pointing to exceptions. Likewise, ‘roughly’ allows the writer to present his statement with caution. Such attribute hedges or approximators express heed and coyness (Meyers, 1994, p.7) and allow writers to textually reflect unspoken conventions of imprecision in academic writing (Hyland, 1998, p. 363). The translations provided in the three tables above provide zero equivalents for these approximators, making the statements less specific and more categorical.

Example 4

ST	TT
his cooperation is intensely personal and is in contrast and perhaps even opposition to the framework of traditional religious rhetoric, to which Amr Khâlid is a stranger.	هذا التعاون هو شخصي بعمق، و هو يقابل - بل حتى يضاد - إطار البلاغة الدينية التقليدية التي يبدو عمرو خالد غريبا عنها

The English ST contains the epistemic adverb ‘perhaps’ which expresses possibility. From a dialogic point of view, the utterance is heteroglossic in that it opens a discursive space for other voices that may disagree about the fact that Amr Khalid’s rhetoric is at odds with traditional religious rhetoric. The Arabic translation provides zero equivalent for ‘perhaps’, yielding a somewhat categorical statement that is further

strengthened by the added *بل حتى* (and even). Interestingly, the second clause (to which Amr Khalid is a stranger) which is a bare assertion is preceded, in the Arabic TT, by the epistemic verb *'يبدو'* (seem), thus projecting a lower commitment to the truth value of the clause than the original. Considered together, the added epistemic verb somehow made up for the deleted 'perhaps', thus maintaining the overall heteroglossic nature of the sentence.

Example 5

ST	TT
If a language user has the sociopragmatic knowledge to understand that a polite request is necessary in a given situation but lacks the pragmalinguistic knowledge of modals, interrogatives, and conventionalized formulae to utter it, pragmatic failure will likely result	فإذا كان مستخدم اللغة يمتلك المعرفة التداولية الاجتماعية ليفهم أن الطلب المتأدب ضروري في موقف ما، ولكنه يفتقر إلى المعرفة التداولية اللسانية بأفعال الشرط (modals) وأدوات الاستفهام والعبارات التَّمطِيَّة فإنه سَيُفْشَلُ تداوليًا

The main clause in the conditional sentence above is preceded by the epistemic adverb 'likely' which reduces its truth value and gives space for other opinions that might disagree with this assumption. In the translation, this hedge is deleted, resulting in a more committed stance and a more categorical statement.

Example 6/7

ST	TT
A multiple comparison would involve comparing the article set from Newspaper a against a corpus	تتضمن المقارنة المتعددة مقارنة مجموعة مقالات من الصحيفة (أ) بمدونة تحتوي على مجموعات
such an analysis would require several non-linguistic parameters to be considered	أن تحليل أدائهما التلفزيوني سوف يتطلب وضع بعض المعايير غير اللغوية بعين الاعتبار

Here, the STs introduce suggested research approaches to fellow researchers, and may thus be threatening to their negative face. This might explain why the writer opted for a mitigated statement using the modal 'would' which does not signal any degree of uncertainty, but rather opens space for other dialogic voices. It presents the claim as a hedged suggestion and allows for alternative suggestions by peers within the discipline. The modal is left out in the TTs, yet, the verb *تتضمن* (involves/includes) in the first example inherently conveys certain breadth since it may include other elements and thus signals the existence of alternatives.

Example 8

ST	TT
The only stage sequence identified in pragmatics so far is Kasper and Rose's (2002) five-stage sequence for the development of requests.	وتُعَدُّ سِلْسِلَةُ المراحل الخمس لتطویر الطلبات... التي أنجزها (كاسبر وروز) هي السلسلة الوحيدة الناجزة في تدريس الأعراف اللغوية.

The hedge 'so far' in the statement seems to fall into those approximators that "specify the extent to which assertions may be true by restricting the range of the claim" (Hyland, 1998, p.71). Particularly, 'so far' here indicates that the writer's claim is true only at the time of writing the paper and may not apply to subsequent years where new research may investigate the aspect reported to be looked into only by Kasper and Rose. It not only gives a precise account of research regarding the area in question, but also spares the writer any peer criticism for misreporting previous research. The hedge was not translated in the Arabic text, making the claim less tentative and more confident, and more prone to counterclaims.

5.5.2 Added Boosters in the TTs

ST	TT
Detecting instructional effects is also complicated by the insufficiency of many testing instruments that have been designed ad hoc	إنَّ تحريّ التأثيراتِ التدريسية معقّدٌ أيضًا بالنظر إلى عدم فاعلية عدد من أدوات القياس التي صممت لذلك الغرض
My theoretical approach is an interpretive one	غني عن القول إن مقاربي النظرية هي مقارنة تأويلية

The two STs above are bare assertions since they do not contain any qualification to the truth of the statement (either through boosters or hedges). The TT's, however, have increased certainty with the added assertion particle 'inna' and the phrase phrase غني عن القول (needless to say). It is unlikely that the translator intended to increase the truth value of the sentences. Instead, the two boosters seem to be routinely added by modern Arab writers to better connect sentences into a compact whole and make the text read more smoothly. Still, they do contribute to making the translated versions sound more certain and dialogically contractive.

5.5.3. Writer- oriented Hedges

5.5.3.1. Retained Hedges

Example 1

ST	TT
Yûsuf al-Qaraḏâwî's plain statements about what Islam is and what Muslims do can be interpreted to communicate even more authority than the overtly imperative sentences	يمكن تفسير عبارات يوسف القرضاوي القاطعة حول ماهية الإسلام و ماهية المسلمين على أنها تحمل سلطة أكبر من الجمل الأمرية الواضحة

The passive voice allows the writer to hedge responsibility for statements and project more objectivity and detachment (Hyland, 1998, p. 122). Thus, in the ST above, the writer avoided using the first personal pronoun to express his inferential reasoning. The translated version uses nominalization which, as detailed above, is an important resource that Arab academics draw upon to hedge their responsibility for their claims. Thus, both texts (ST and TT) suppress human agency and present claims in a detached way, expressing the same degree of non- involvement in the proposition.

5.5.3.2. Modified Hedges

Example 1

ST	TT
As argued above, the teaching of pragmatics has yet to be integrated well in curricula.	وكما ناقشنا أعلاه فإن تدريس الأعراف اللغوية ما يزال بحاجة إلى دمجها جيدًا في المناهج

Apart from translating the hedging verb ‘argue’ into the neutral verb ‘discuss’, the passive is rendered into an active voice using the first-person plural pronoun ‘we’ in the Arabic translation. Interestingly, there is a pragmatic shift from a writer-oriented hedge (passive) to a reader-oriented hedge (personal attribution). In this way, what was a claim expressed in an impersonal construction in the source text is personalized in the translation, making the ST author sound more involved and more personally invested in his claim in the translated version. The translator seems to have opted for inclusive ‘we’ because it is probably the most prominent reader-oriented hedge in the Arabic academic discourse, although it is recently giving way to the passive voice as a result of the imitation of the rhetorical practices of English academic discourse.

Example 2

ST	TT
(I agree with Henry G. Widdowson that such an analysis is necessarily a subjective interpretation to a large extent) it just should not claim to be definite	يجب فقط أن لا ندعي القطعية

Here, the implied human agent (our analysis) is replaced by an abstract rhetor ‘it’, referring to the analysis itself. The verb ‘to claim’ is thus attributed to an impersonal entity (it) as a way of avoiding responsibility for the statement. The translation, however, gives the statement a personal attribution through the use of inclusive (we should not claim). This is an expected shift since Arab writers rarely attribute verbs such as ‘claim’ or ‘argue’ to impersonal entities. As a result, the translation has a more of a subjective and involved feel to it compared to the more objective and detached original.

5.5.4. Reader –oriented Hedges

Example 1

ST	TT
we may say that Amr Khâlid casts himself as a coach who wants to have a dialogue and cooperate with his readers	من الممكن القول أن عمرو خالد يتخذ لنفسه دور الموجه الذي يسعى إلى التفاعل و التعاون مع قرائه

The writer uses inclusive ‘we’ apparently to soften his claim. He draws on this pronoun because it serves to draw the reader into the claim negotiation process since according to Myer (1989), personal attribution builds writer-reader solidarity and is thus a politeness marker towards the scientific community. The translation uses nominalization which is an impersonalizing strategy that shields the writer from possible refutation and criticism. The translation thus presents an interpersonal shift from a reader focused to a writer focused hedge, and from a subjective, committed statement to an objective and detached one.

6. Discussion

This paper sought to look into the ways Arab translators handle hedging devices in linguistic research articles. I have proposed that the concept of hedging was internalized and textualized by Muslim medieval scholars, yet, it did not receive much attention from Arab rhetoricians and linguists. Review of the literature as well as the comparison of hedging frequency between English original and Arabic original texts have revealed that modern Arabic discourse in the field of linguistics uses from half to one third the number of hedges found in the English texts, making them more assertive and authoritative. Arabic comparable texts have shown that hedges are much less employed in Arabic academic discourse compared to the English one, and that the two use them differently. For instance, Arab writers use a narrower range of attribute hedges than English writers. Moreover, Arabic discourse offers several writer-oriented and reader-oriented hedges; some of which common to both languages (inclusive ‘we, the passive voice, while others Arabic-specific such as the agentive noun and nominalizing the subject). Findings have revealed that the three translators reproduced most of the hedges, and that the 3 translated texts contain more hedges than the translators’ own research articles. This might suggest that the translators gave precedence to faithfulness towards the ST’s intended meanings and stylistic preferences over adherence to TL norms as regards hedging. This may be accounted for by the fact that the three translators are not trained translators and may thus be unfamiliar with research on academic translation and the centrality of pragmatic equivalence in this type of texts. Even if the texts were translated by professional translators, it would still be unlikely that they would perform substantial cultural filtering due to the lack of research on the distinctive features of Arabic academic discourse and its communicative preferences, add to it the fact that it exhibits features

from the English academic discourse as a result of the globalization of the English academic discourse model.

The TTs exhibited a number of shifts in content-oriented hedges, mostly from tentative to certain, especially in the translation of modals and attribute hedges. This is due to the fact that the two languages have different syntactic and lexical hedging resources, and thus shifts are bound to occur, either consciously, that is, for adaptation purposes, or unconsciously for lack of knowledge of the hedging function of certain words such as the modal ‘would’ whose hedging function has been lost in many cases. The syndetic nature of Arabic has also contributed to increased certainty in the translations. Since Arab writers and translators tend to overuse connectors for the sake of cohesion and for stylistic reasons, they sometimes add boosters such as *inna* and idioms such as *من نافلة القول* which unconsciously contribute to making texts sound overassertive. Unsurprisingly, writer and reader-oriented hedges had their fair share of cultural filtering, especially the passive voice and abstract rhetors with human-like verbs which were in some instances translated by personal attributions, yielding interpersonal shifts, and sometimes by nominalizations, yielding interpersonal equivalence.

All in all, most hedges were retained in the three TTs. As a result, the translated texts, unlike comparable Arabic texts, have noticeable shining through effects with features from Arabic and English writing norms to be found. Literal translation sometimes superimposed English-sounding or ‘calqued hedges’ that we may not come across in Arabic original texts.

At a macro level, the translated texts were more careful and tentative and exhibited a more subjective and addressee orientation compared with Arabic non translated texts. This implies that the Arab reader is drawn into the text and made to participate in the negotiation of claims, which is not the case in all Arabic original texts. The translation strategy choice may also be explained by power dynamics since it has suggested before (Li, 2024) that science importing countries are more likely to adhere to the rhetorical norms of science-exporting countries in translation.

7. Conclusion

This paper sought to investigate how Arab translators handle hedges when translating linguistic research from English in light of the cross-cultural differences in communicative preferences in the Arabic and English discourse worlds. It has been found that the translators in this study leant more towards the SL norms, which implies that they tried to keep the hedges and reproduce the nuanced statements made by the English-speaking authors as much as possible. Yet, they did manipulate certain hedges, which gave rise to some epistemic shifts from uncertain to certain and some interpersonal shifts from involved to detached and vice versa.

8. References

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