HEDGING IN ACADEMIC WRITING: THE USE OF "CAN" IN UNIVERSITY

STUDENTS' ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAYS AT AN ENGLISH MEDIUM

UNIVERSITY IN TURKEY

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Thesis Abstract

Saadet Tıkaç, "Hedging in Academic Writing: The Use of "can" in University

Students' Argumentative Essays at an English Medium University in Turkey"

This study aims to shed light on the ways of using hedging devices in academic writing by a group of first year university students studying in the department of English language education at a Turkish state university. The main objective of this study is to explore the nature of hedges and modal auxiliaries with a specific focus on the use of "can" as a hedging device in students' argumentative essays. The secondary focus of the study is to investigate how student writers build their authorial stance in regard to the argument they develop in their texts. The first data set of the study comprises 22 argumentative essays. The data are collected in the English Composition class. The second data set comprises interviews with the aforementioned student writers who participated in the study. The first data set was analyzed both manually and with the "Simple Concordancing Program". The second data set was transcribed and analyzed with the qualitative research analysis software, "NVivo". The results of the study revealed that Turkish students had a tendency to hide their authorial stance with regard to the argument they developed in their essays through use of various hedging devices. When the functions of the modal verb "can" were analyzed, it was observed that the frequency of use of "can" as an ability marker was higher than the use of "can" as a possibility marker. In addition, in the interviews, the students stated that they did not receive explicit instruction on different functions of "can" except its use as an ability marker in their earlier English language learning experience.

Tez Özeti

Saadet Tıkaç, "Akademik Yazımda Kaçınma Sözcükleri (Hedges): Türkiye'deki

Öğretim Dili İngilizce Olan Bir Üniversitenin Öğrencileri Tarafından Yazılan

Tartışmacı Denemelerde 'can' {-(y)Ebil} Kullanımı"

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Türkiye'deki bir devlet üniversitesinde İngilizce öğretmenliği bölümünde okuyan 1. sınıf öğrencilerinin, akademik metinlerde kaçınma ifadelerini nasıl kullandıklarını araştırmaktır. Bu çalışmada öncelikli olarak öğrencilerin yazdıkları tartışmacı denemelerde, kaçınma ifadeleri ve yeterlik kipi "can"in metindeki kullanım ve işlevlerine bakılmaktadır. Buna ek olarak; çalışmada, öğrencilerin yazar kimlik ve duruşlarını metinde nasıl ortaya çıkarttıkları incelenmektedir. Bu tez için iki grup veri toplanmıştır. Birinci grup veriyi, öğrencilerin İngilizce Kompozisyon dersinde yazdıkları 22 tartışmacı deneme oluşturmaktadır. İkinci veri grubu ise, aynı öğrencilerle yapılan görüşmelerden oluşmaktadır. Metinsel veri çözümlemesi için "Simple Concordancing Program", öğrencilerle yapılan görüşme verileri incelenmesi için de NVivo adlı nitel yazılım programı kullanılmıştır. Çalışmanın sonuçları, Türk öğrencilerin yazdıkları metinlerde düşüncelerini ifade ederken kaçınma sözcükleri kullanarak yazar kimliklerini saklama eğiliminde olduklarını göstermiştir. Öğrencilerin yazdıkları metinlerdeki "can" kullanımına bakıldığında, "can"in kaçınma ifadesinden ziyade, yeterlik ifadesi olarak kullanıldığı gözlemlenmiştir. Öğrencilerle bunun sebebini anlamak için yapılan görüşmelerde, öğrencilerin üniversiteye gelmeden önceki İngilizce öğrenimleri sırasında "can"in yalnızca yeterlik ifadesi olarak kullanımını öğrendikleri ortaya çıkmıştır.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study aims to shed light on the academic writing practice of first year English language teaching students at a Turkish state university. Argumentative essays written by the participating students comprise a part of the Boğaziçi University Second Language Learner/User Corpus (BUELC) compiled and managed by the Department of Foreign Language Education under the supervision of Boğaziçi University Scientific Research Projects Unit (Project Number: 5691). Data were analyzed to explore the amount of hedges, and how the modal auxiliary "can" is used as a hedging device in expressing possibility (Halliday, 1985; He & Tsoneva, 1998; Hinkel, 2009). In this study, the use of metadiscourse markers in building and holding an authorial stance in an academic text is another issue that is under investigation.

Metadiscourse is an area of study that has been widely investigated. Both descriptive and contrastive studies are conducted to explain the written and spoken practice of different groups in English (Crismore, Markkanen & Steffensen, 1993; Bunton, 1999; Krause & O'Brien, 1999; Abdi, 2002; Camiciottoli, 2003; Blagojevic, 2004). Several studies on second language writing and/or metadiscourse have also been conducted in the Turkish context (Enginarlar, 1990; Oktar, 1991; Erduyan, 2004; Can, 2006; Ünsal, 2008; Taş, 2008). Many of these studies were contrastive in nature; either comparing Turkish student groups among themselves, or comparing

them with native English speakers. However, this study approaches the issue from a different point of view, and aims to present an extensive-thick description of a homogenous group of Turkish students. The number of hedges used in the academic texts will give information concerning how much the participating students project their position as an author in academic writing. It is assumed that the more a student uses hedging devices, the more s/he hides herself/himself in the text. Another focus of the study was modality markers and the frequency of the use of "can" as a possibility marker.

In this study "can" is the most frequently used modal auxiliary in participating students' academic essays. The results are expected to give clues on how to teach modal auxiliaries in "English as a Foreign Language (EFL)" and "English as a Second Language (ESL)" classrooms.

The data set comprises 22 argumentative essays (10, 116 words) written in the English Composition class offered as one of the compulsory courses of the first year fall semester curriculum of a leading state university in Istanbul, Turkey. Each student who participated in the study was asked to write 2 essays. Hedges and modal auxiliaries were first manually counted, and then the numbers and percentages acquired were double-checked using the corpus analysis tool, "Simple Concordancing Program (SCP, version 4.09)". The program provided the sentential instances of each marker. After the quantitative analysis was completed, each participant was interviewed to learn more about their linguistic background and foreign language learning history, with a special focus given to the case of "modals" and specifically, "modal auxiliary 'can' ". The interviews were transcribed and

analyzed with the help of qualitative research analysis tool, "NVivo 8", which helped the researcher to develop categories related to the various uses of "can". Results created the chance to compare the performance of the students, and their expressed preferences and perceptions in using these hedging devices.

The organization of the thesis is as follows: In Chapter 2, a literature review on metadiscourse markers, hedging devices, authorial stance and modal auxiliaries are presented. Chapter 3 gives the methodological procedures and the data analysis of the study, and the results and the discussion of the findings are reported in Chapter 4. Finally, Chapter 5 presents the conclusion.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter mainly presents the background of the study and previous research

concerning hedges and metadiscourse markers in general.

Argumentative Writing

Argumentation in writing is the art of convincing the reader by presenting persuasive

enough support and examples to claims of the author which are subject to her/his

written discussion (Can, 2006). Among the various types of academic writing,

argumentation should be one of the most complex proposals to carry out due its

entailment of combining high cognitive skills with the ability of using and formatting

the language. The nature of argumentative writing necessitates presenting and

sharing opinions on different sides of the argument. Finally, the author's expression

of his own standpoint concludes the discussion. Besides a good strategic plan for

such organization of the text, the author should also be able to find the fitting tone

and linguistic style for her/his argumentative essays (Krause & O'Brien, 1999). This

task is challenging for the language user; and in relation, teaching how to write an

argumentative essay also becomes a difficult task. Argumentative essay writers

should know how to communicate with their audience, the teaching of "how to" adds

to the adversity of the process. Although all acts of writing are communicative in

nature, this aspect becomes more clearly visible in the argument and persuasion,

because there is a special way of understanding and discussing for or against one another's possible stances on an issue and the effort of changing them.

This communicative nature of argumentative writing makes the "accomplishing a sense of audience" and the "winning potential readers" by the author quite critical. Apparently, the discussion the writer conducts is expected to address certain people and receive their appeal. In this respect, metadiscourse markers become useful. They bear the power of organizing the text into a coherent piece of writing, as well as giving the author the chance of expressing their own personal beliefs and claims (Hyland, 1998). It should be noted here that the role of the audience in this relationship is not passive either (Hyland, 1999). Readers are engaged in cognitive communication with what is presented to them as they discuss the propositional content in their minds to decide if they should "be convinced" or not. The key point here is that the author should be aware of the mental, cultural and linguistic facilities and background the reader has in order to be able to shape her/his arguments accordingly.

The nature of metadiscourse markers, types and roles in text are discussed in further detail in the below sections.

Metadiscourse

<u>What is Metadiscourse?</u>

"Metadiscourse markers" refer to the linguistic elements, i.e. words, phrases and other connective tools that an author uses to develop and organize the discourse s/he creates. They ease the process of the interpretation for the readers (Vande Kopple, 1985); making the text a meaningful and easy-to-go-through material (Hyland, 2004). Hyland & Tse (2004) view these markers as "text evolvers" which transform the entire linguistic production into a relevant piece of reading for the audience. They also view them as tools that help both parties of the writing process. The author is able to express herself/himself without having to be rid of her/his cultural and moral values, as well as feelings, and the readers are guided for the meaning with textual devices that organize the text into a cohesive one.

Although the above explanation tries to summarize what is accepted about the meaning and use of metadiscourse markers today, the issue of defining this concept properly has not been without conflicting propositions. Beauvais (1989), for example, presents an account concerning the problems in explaining and classifying metadiscourse markers. He points out that Crismore's (1983) definition of metadiscourse markers as "tools of direction for the audience" is blurry for "directing the audience" is a term that has not been clarified adequately. In other words, it is not easy to understand if it is implied by "direction" that authors want to lead the audience to believe what they assert to be "true", or if it simply means opening up lines for the audience to choose and follow. To avoid such complications, he, instead,

defines metadiscourse markers as "illocutionary force indicators that identify expositive illocutionary acts". According to him, metadiscourse devices attach a proposition onto the context.

Crismore who has been the subject of this criticism, later (1993) pointed out that metadiscourse markers solely act as tools that help readers understand what is proposed better and find their way along the text. Following a similar ideology, Blagojevic (2004) adds that metadiscourse markers makes the text a compact entity with both content and mechanics being attached to each other, so that the author is able to get his message, attitude, feeling and tone across. This point of view also forms the base of the grouping of markers as *the referential* (those devices that help organize the text) and *the expressive* (those that help conduct communication between two parties).

Approaching the issue from more of a communication-oriented aspect, Krause & O'Brien (1999) claim that her/his use of metadiscourse in writing may imply that the author is able to acknowledge the existence of an audience and interact with them. The study they conducted shows that the student writers who use more metadiscourse markers tend to be less egocentric in their writing due to higher level of audience perception.

Another area of research concerning metadiscourse markers is "the ways of using them" and "the preferred types by the authors across cultures and languages". When they write, it is not possible and/or necessary for the author to leave her/his cultural and linguistic characteristics aside. When they want or have to reflect their background onto what they write, they do it with the help of metadiscourse markers.

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Dafouz-Milne (2004) confirms this claiming, "when" the author has the chance to express her/his views using metadiscourse markers, it should be expected that the cultural conventions s/he is bound to will also be transferred to the text s/he writes". In the study she conducted, "newspapers" as a "genre" are investigated, and the British and Spanish newspapers are compared to see if the use of interpersonal or textual metadiscourse markers shows a difference between the languages. Interestingly, it is found out that although metadiscourse markers are present in both cases, there is a significant difference in the use of textual markers. Spanish newspapers use them more than their British counterparts, probably signifying that cultural traits might have a role in choosing the discourse tools in writing. Another cross-linguistic study investigating the use of textual metadiscourse was conducted by Vanhala-Aniszewski (2006). She worked on Russian and Finnish texts concluding that Russian texts hold more textual metadiscourse markers than Finnish ones, while the latter is richer in interpersonal metadiscourse markers. This specific outcome and similar conclusions might give an opinion about the rhetorical habits and cultural background of the examined societies.

Among these discussions, one aspect concerning these discourse tools stands out: "Metadiscourse markers carry a set of roles to make the piece of writing a 'good' one". According to Intaraprawat & Steffensen (1995); a "good" essay ideally has metadiscourse markers in it and the markers help in the following way:

1. Argumentative texts, which are by nature one of the most challenging text types to write and read, due to the fact that they require complex high level

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reasoning and cognitive tasks to be completed, become less burdensome for the reader to understand.

2. The readers and the author become connected as the author uses cues that indicate understanding of, and agreement or disagreement with the position of the audience.

3. As certain discourse markers need to be used in certain contexts, they help the audience understand the type of the writing.

With advantages they bring like these, metadiscourse markers are believed to have indispensable places in a text. Not knowing how to utilize them adequately or appropriately, an author may design a faulty text and suffer from miscommunication with the readers. Cheng & Steffensen (1996)'s study with university students taking a composition course underlines this importance of metadiscourse instruction. Novice writers may not be able to focus on communicating with the audience as their attention could mainly be given to the action of text writing and the mechanical aspects of it. With a methodology on metadiscourse, they should be expected to become more aware of the "ultimate goal of writing: communicating with the audience", therefore becoming arguably better writers.

As it has become clear that it is necessary to teach metadiscourse, the researchers started to investigate how the process of using metadiscourse takes place. For example, Can (2006) wrote an MA thesis to find out the ways freshmen university students organize their texts and design their writing, which produced useful implications for teaching. He worked with monolingual Turkish speakers,

bilingual Turkish students and monolingual American students, all of whom wrote argumentative essays. The organizational patterns as well as the metadiscourse markers they used were analyzed. Can reports that based on the scores given to each paper, it was concluded that monolingual American participants did better than bilingual and monolingual Turkish speakers of English. It was also found that the American writers were able to follow the desired organizational route and they utilized more appropriate connectives and other metadiscourse markers that made their texts more cohesive and comprehensible.

Metadiscourse as a Tool of Written Communication

Among other roles it bears, metadiscourse markers may act as tools of interaction between the reader and the author of a certain type of text. Writer's personality, own position in an argument, relationship with the potential readers, their distance to their presumed stance, and the commitment to the propositional content might be denoted and communicated through metadiscourse markers. This allows both sides of the interaction to get involved with each other as well as with the text itself (Hyland, 2004). Vande Kopple's (1997) influential account of metadiscourse markers indicates that these "tools" give the audience the opportunity to evaluate and relate to the written material, which help them create stronger bonds with the writer as the two parties communicate with each other. Apart from this bonding, metadiscourse markers also authorize the authors to influence the audience and lead them to think and believe in a way he wishes them to think (Barton, 1995).

Different ideas have been proposed to understand the dynamics of this communication between the readers and the author. Hyland (2002) suggests that the communication is carried out on two different levels. First level includes the use of "textual markers", through which the authors organize their text and the carry out the structural arrangement of the material. The second one is achieved through the "interpersonal metadiscourse markers" which allow the written discourse to bear the characteristics and comfort of an oral conversation, thanks to devices like "person markers" and "attitude markers". Thompson (2001), in a similar line with Hyland (2002), summarizes the communication that takes place between the readers and the author of the text as a two-sided process. First; it is a transactional operation with the necessary linguistic devices guiding the audience through the text. Second; it poses a real interaction between two parties constructing the product collaboratively. The latter takes places with the author raising questions and creating situations to elicit a reaction which forms into a meaningful cognitive exchange between the readers and the writer of the material.

Apart from creating the chance for the authors of "conversing" with the readers, Crismore, Markkanen & Steffensen (1993) claim that metadiscourse markers also help authors hold a stance that would convey their personal traits and positive/negative attitude towards their target audience. This way of organizing and presenting the position will make the author's message more recognizable and relatable to the readers. Hyland (2004) agrees, saying the use of metadiscourse markers will create a chance for the authors to discuss and negotiate their side of the propositional content with the audience.

Metadiscourse markers are also thought to be useful in making and drawing interpretations concerning the author's disciplinary knowledge (Hyland, 2004). While they shape the text and evolve it into the final version, the text will have been prepared under the influences of both the culture and the academic discipline the author belongs to. This will give the readers a chance to relate what is presented to them or reject it: again, based on their own cultural and scholarly traits. This two-way abstract communication is deemed indispensable in author-reader relations and carried out thanks to metadiscourse markers.

Metadiscourse in Language Instruction

Several studies have shown that "teaching" the concept of metadiscourse has been effective in both raising awareness concerning the acknowledgment of an audience, and serving the ultimate purpose of communication. Cheng & Steffensen (1996) conducted one to show that instruction on metadiscourse might help students build a sense of audience, which they may lack in the early stages of their writing career. In the experiment they designed, the group that did not receive instruction on metadiscourse received lower grades than the other group. This difference in grades and the results show that without having a clear understanding of the potential readers of their production, student writers inevitably fail in fulfilling the communicative goals of written material. This also makes their writing a less appealing piece for the audience, which in most cases, is their teacher.

Intaraprawat (1988) holds a similar stance. She suggests that students, who are not aware of the rhetorical conventions and nature of a text, would eventually produce an essay that lacks the communicative quality. This should also cause a failure in transacting the propositional content. Her investigation, which was carried out with Margaret Steffensen (1995), seems to validate this. They conclude that in a tertiary level ESL context, effective use of metadiscourse might be an indicator of "good communication and writing".

Teaching metadiscourse markers are thought to be helpful in not only developing writing, but other skills associated with it. Camiciottoli (2003) claims that if learners of English are made aware of the concept of metadiscourse and if their classes introduce them, the reading comprehension might also be expected to improve. In short, it is clear that English teachers of different levels should gear their students with the power of metadiscourse markers to assist them to develop into more competent language users.

<u>Types of Metadiscourse</u>

Abdi (2002) reminds us that the classification of metadiscourse markers that was proposed by Vande Kopple (1985) was one the first and foremost comprehensive functional groupings in the literature. Numerous taxonomies have been presented since then and there seems to be a general consensus now that the metadiscourse markers should be divided into two main categories: "Textual and interpersonal metadiscourse markers". Textual markers are the devices that help the author form

his words into a coherent text; whereas interpersonal markers can be used for forming the connection between the reader and the writer. It should be noted here, however, that there are overlaps between these categories because one word or structure might function as either, or both in differing contexts. For that reason, it is not always possible to make a clear distinction (Barton, 1995). Hyland (2004) also remarks that these categories should ever be open-ended and should not be definitive at all because a writer may add as many devices as needed or a metadiscourse marker may not be functioning in its traditional way in certain instances. It should also be noted that a metadiscourse marker is not always a word, for it may be a full sentence or a clause. In some cases, entire paragraphs may carry the role of a metadiscourse marker (Dafouz-Milne, 2004).

Following sections will give a more detailed account on these two groups of markers. Then, several taxonomies to group them further will be presented.

Textual Metadiscourse Markers

The more "mechanical" of the apparati in use, textual markers are helpful tools to link and organize the words, clauses, and sentences so that they ultimately form into an intransigent text (Krause & O'Brien, 1999). Crismore and Farnsworth (1990) summarize the functions of textual metadiscourse markers as guiding the audience through the text and contributing to the basic authorial goals, like being comprehensible and clear. Supporting this view, Bunton (1999) states that textual

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markers are useful in making the text a coherent one as these devices help authors organize her/his thoughts and present them in an understandable way.

Interpersonal Metadiscourse Markers

Interpersonal markers fulfill the role of the communicating agent of the metadiscourse markers in general. They are believed to help authors create a bond with the audience by acknowledging their presence, understanding their stance, and presenting ideas to change this perceived stance. Vande Kopple (1997) also states that this type of markers help the writers express their own way of thinking, inclinations, and feelings, which in turn, makes the whole process a two-way interaction. While doing this, the author's underlying motives and objectives may also surface (Hyland, 1998). It is possible that this mutual acknowledgment and reciprocal understanding of each other both stem from and lead to the reformulation of claims by the author, and reinterpretation of the input by the readers (Hyland, 1995). Moreover, Crismore & Farnsworth (1990) underpin that if an author prefers to use interpersonal metadiscourse markers, s/he will be able to let the readers see the attitude s/he bears towards the propositional content of the text. Authorial stance is one of the important aspects of writing; because of the personal and cultural load it carries (Krause & O'Brien, 1999).

　　With capabilities of this kind, interpersonal metadiscourse markers are especially useful for argumentative and persuasive writing, as suggested by Abdi (2002), because of the special interactive nature these essays have. He claims that if a

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writer uses adequate amount of appropriate interpersonal markers, s/he will be able to reach the beliefs and feelings of the readers as well as expressing those of his own.

Taxonomies of Metadiscourse Markers

Vande Kopple (1985), proposing the groupings that set the base for modern classifications, prepared the following list as his basic taxonomy of metadiscourse markers.

    a. Connectives

    b. Code glosses

    c. Illocutionary markers

    d. Narrators

    e. Attitude markers

    f. Commentaries

    g. Validity markers

It is crucial to note here that this taxonomy does not sort the categories into two main "textual" and "interpersonal" markers categories, and as Cheng & Steffensen (1996) advises, if we desire to adapt this taxonomy to the modern way, first three groups would fall into textual markers category, while the remaining four should be counted as interpersonal markers.

Table 1. Textual Metadiscourse Markers

Name of the marker	Function
1. Logical connectives	express semantic relation between main clauses
2. Frame markers	explicitly refer to discourse acts or text stages
3. Endophoric markers	refer to information in other parts of the text
4. Evidentials	refer to source of information from other texts
5. Code glosses	help readers grasp meanings of ideational material

Table 2. Interpersonal Metadiscourse Markers

Name of the marker	Function
1. Hedges	withhold writer's full commitment to statements
2. Emphatics	emphasize force or writer's full commitment to statements
3. Attitude markers	express writer's attitude to propositional content
4. Relational markers	explicitly refer to or build relationship with reader
5. Person markers	explicit reference to the author(s)

Hyland (1998) comes up with a taxonomy that reflects his views of "metadiscourse" which can be summarized as follows: The way an author utilizes metadiscourse

markers is a demonstration of her/his attitude, feeling, distance, and how inclusive s/he wishes to be about the audience. His categorization was inspired by and adapted from Crismore, Markkanen & Steffensen (1993)'s, and it gives a detailed explanation concerning the functions of the devices:

It has been observed that taxonomies of interpersonal markers have been influenced by Vande Kopple (1985)'s pioneering idealization. Blagojevic (2004)'s version can be seen below:

a. Hedges: Uncertainty and generalization devices
b. Emphatics: Devices used to express strong claims and assertions
c. Attitude markers: Devices through which authors convey their attitudes
d. Commentaries: Devices for authors to connect with and address the audience.

Hyland (1998) also gives types of interpersonal metadiscourse markers which are revised in 2004; in the study he conducted with Polly Tse. It is presented below:

Interactive resources (Textual markers)
a. Transitions: Form meaningful relations between main clauses.
b. Frame markers: Discourse acts, sequential expressions, text stages
c. Endophoric markers: Referral to information within the text.
d. Evidentials: Referral to information in other sources.
e. Code glosses: Assist readers in understanding the ideational material.

Interactional resources (Interpersonal markers)

a. Hedges: Withhold writer's commitment to the proposition.
b. Boosters: Emphasize writer's commitment to the proposition

c. Attitude markers: Express writer's attitude towards proposition

d. Engagement markers: Tools that establish relationship with the author and the readers

e. Self-mentions: Self-referral made by the author

As the study focuses specifically on hedges, the following sections will give detailed description and categorization of hedging devices and modality marker "can" which might act as a possibility marker, thus a hedge, in certain contexts.

Hedges

Hedging devices are considered to be important tools especially in academic writing (Hyland, 1994). As it is not possible, neither acceptable, to have a very strong or absolute tone in writing papers, hedges are useful tools that come to save face of the author. They assist her/him to gain the respect of the readers and other scholars as the authors claims will have been presented and discussed in a diplomatic way.

Although the function of the hedges in written discourse seems clear; how to use them appropriately has been found challenging by especially foreign language learners and writers of various academic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Therefore many different accounts have been proposed to understand and explain this phenomenon. Blagojevic (2004), one of those researchers who work on the Norwegian context of academic writing, defines hedges as "linguistic items" that lessen the strength of a claim or imposition produced by the writer of a text.

Crismore, Markkanen & Steffensen (1993) say that hedges demonstrate the lack of connection and devotion by the author to the truth value of the propositions s/he makes. They help to hide the personal stance an author holds, as well as her/his feelings and commitment to the discussion. Hyland (2004) states that the author is able to convey her/his unwillingness to categorize the propositional information through hedges.

From a more pragmatic point of view, Crompton (1997) claims that hedging is one of irrevocable characteristics of the written academic discourse, as well as being a marker of politeness when used in the contexts of epistemic modality or statements of uncertainty in general. For example, in an argumentative essay, the author automatically creates a face-threatening act towards those in the target audience who would not agree with her/him, as s/he discusses the issues and states her/his own stance. However, with the mitigation power a hedging device gives the writer, this threat is removed and the context that potentially creates impoliteness is eliminated. Salager-Meyer (1994) also presents a similar pragmatic account and she summarizes the main purposes of using a hedge. She claims that they create "purposive fuzziness and vagueness" (as a "politeness device") and express modesty of the author as using hedges equal to acknowledging that s/he knows that it is not possible to reach the absolute truth. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that hedges reveal the exact and true academic position of writers, because in a way, through the use of hedges, an author reveals the utmost strength s/he owns. Hinkel (2005) also adds s/he is able to remove the heavy burden of responsibility of what s/he writes by intentionally sounding unsure, indirect, and polite to the audience.

As in the case of metadiscourse markers in general, different researchers have tried to present their own taxonomies of hedges or propose eclectic groupings. Hedges are claimed to include a variety of structures; a spectrum ranging from modal auxiliaries to simple personal pronouns. The inclusion or omission of certain grammatical structures depends on the researcher's own viewpoint on hedges. For example, those who believe that main function of hedges is maintaining face, might include modal structures in his categorization, while others would also consider simple questions, impersonal structures or "if-clauses" (Hyland, 1994).

In order to systematize these forms and structures that might act as hedges, Crompton (1997) lists a number of qualities that allow certain linguistic forms to function as hedging devices in a text. Based on his conclusions, he counts "probability adverbs" (verbs that set the writers free from the weight of the propositions they present, like "show", or "claim", etc.); modal auxiliaries, and statements that do not have "copula be" as the main verb among hedges. Hyland (1994) also summarizes the linguistic groups that express hedged statements as "modal auxiliaries, adjectival, adverbial and nominal modal expressions, modal lexical verbs, if-clauses, question forms, passive voice, impersonal phrases, and time referents". Of all hedging devices, especially modal auxiliaries have been cited to be used by authors to create sympathetic support from the colleagues and readers by signaling tentativeness (Hyland, 2000).

Apart from the linguistic scope of hedges, the differing contexts they are used in have also been investigated extensively. Hinkel, in her 2005 study, for instance, focused specifically on the use of these tools by native and nonnative speakers of

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English in academic texts. She found that the scope of hedge types used by the participants that speak ESL is remarkably narrower than the "native" speakers. In a similar study, the difference between "native" and speakers of ESL/EFL is exhibited by Hyland (2000). It has been found out that the rate of recognition of the hedges and boosters are better in the case of L1 speakers of English than L2 speakers. Despite this, for both groups the better recognized discourse marker is boosters, which is explained by the researcher as "hedges are more invisible". The context of foreign and second language learners have been approached from the aspect of textbooks and other language learning and teaching materials, as well. Hyland (1994)'s study has shown that no matter how much the importance and necessity of using hedges and other interpersonal discourse markers in academic texts are underlined, the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Science and Technology (EST) textbooks fail to use them appropriately or as much as required.

Apart from the first language backgrounds of learners, type, and amount of the hedges used in a text may also be dependent on genre, text type, cultural background of the author, or the characteristics and the wishes of the target audience. Doyuran (2009)'s study aimed to discover these possible variables that determine the choice of type and frequency of use of hedges in Turkish scientific articles. A comparative analysis of geological engineering and linguistics articles show that the number of hedges used in linguistics papers is higher than those in geological engineering papers. It is underlined; however, despite this difference in quantity, the reason of hedge use is similar: "strengthening arguments by admitting limitations and uncertainties." Yarar (2001), whose work has also inspired Doyuran, worked on

adverbial structures that might be functioning as hedges in Turkish academic context. She, focusing on "approximators", tried to see if the use of such hedging devices differs from one section to another in an academic article, and discovered that although aims of using them are similar, the amount changes.

Text type might be another determinant of the habits of using hedging markers. Salager-Meyer (1994) sets out to find if there is a difference between research papers and case reports written in medical English in terms of availability of instances that would allow the author to use hedges. It has been understood that the most frequently used hedging devices in both types of writing are "shields", "approximators" and "compound hedges". As the study also aimed to see which section of each text type hosts more hedges; the introduction, discussion, methods, and case report sections of each paper have been analyzed. Shields, compound hedges, approximators are favored the most in these sections respectively. It should be noted here that the terminology to define the types of hedges have been proposed by Salager-Meyer herself, which is given below in detail.

1. Shields: modal verbs expressing possibility, semi-auxiliaries (appear), probability adverbs (probably) and their derivative adjectives, epistemic verbs (suggest)
2. Approximators: roughly, somewhat, often
3. Expressions of the authors' personal doubt and direct involvement: we believe
4. Emotionally charged intensifiers: particularly encouraging

There are a number of other researchers who came up with their own version

of taxonomy of hedges. Crompton (1997) is one of them:

1. Copulas other than be
2. Epistemic modals
3. Clauses summarizing the possibility of the proposition being true. e.g. "*It is likely that…*"
4. Adverbials of possibility
5. Factive reporting verbs such as "show", "demonstrate", "prove" etc.
6. Reported proposition that a hypothesized entity X exists and the author can be taken to be responsible for making the hypothesis. e.g "*These findings suggest that…*"

Blagojevic's (2004) classification includes dividing the related linguistic tools

into the following groups:

1) Attribute hedges: allow the reader to see the accuracy of the informatory terms used

2) Reliability hedges: allow the author to evaluate and comment on the content

3) Author´s presence: means that the author is able to express her/ his own beliefs and ways of thinking. It is noted that the audience is not forced to agree with anything proposed

4) Author´s absence: shows that authors abstains from showing her/his views on the content and hides her/his presence to hedge her/his assertions

Hinkel's (2005) taxonomies of hedges and intensifiers have been considered

as reference in this study, although ultimately Bayyurt's (2010) classification has

been utilized for the analysis. The two corresponding accounts are given below.

Hinkel's classification of hedges (2005)

1. Epistemic hedges: *according to* (+noun), *actually, apparent(-ly), approximate(-ly), broad(-ly), clear(- ly), comparative(-ly), essential(-ly), indeed, likely, most* (+ adjective), *normal(-ly), potential(-ly), probable(-ly),rare(-ly), somehow, somewhat, theoretically, the*/possessive pronoun *very* (+superlative adjective + noun, e.g., *the/his/their very best/last minute/mo-ment/dollar/penny/chance*), *unlikely.*

2. Lexical hedges: (*at*) *about,* (*a*) *few, in a way, kind of,* (*a*) *little* + noun, *maybe, like, many, more or less, more, most, much, several, something like, sort of.*

3. Possibility hedges: *by* (*some/any*) *chance, hopefully, perhaps, possible, possibly, in* (*the*) *case* (*of*), *if you/we know/understand* (*what* [pronoun] *mean*(*s*)), *if you catch/get/understand my meaning/drift, if you know what I mean* (*to say*).

4. Downtoners: *at all, a bit, all but, a good/great deal, almost, as good/well as, at least, barely,   basically, dead* (+ adjective), *enough, fairly,* (*a*) *few, hardly, in the least/ slightest, just,* (*a*) *little* (+   adjective), *merely, mildly, nearly, not a* (+ countable noun, e.g., *thing/person*), *only, partly, partially, practically, pretty* (+ adjective), *quite* (+adjective), *rather, relatively, scarcely, simply,   slightly, somewhat, sufficiently, truly, virtually.*

5. Assertive pronouns: *any-* words (*anybody, anyone, anything*), *any, some-*pronominals (*somebody, someone, something*), *some*

6. Adverbs of frequency: e.g., *annually, daily, frequently, monthly, per day/hour/year occasionally,   often, oftentimes, seldom, sometimes, sporadically, regularly, usually, weekly.*

Bayyurt's classification of hedges (2010)

1. Epistemic hedges

2. Lexical hedges

3. Possibility hedges

4. Downtoners

5. Assertive pronouns

6. Adverbs of frequency

7. Direct/indirect person markers

As discussed extensively above use of hedges and metadiscourse markers help an author establish her/his stance in a text. The study, besides trying to account for the frequency and the ways student writers use these tools, also aims to draw conclusions concerning how they hold an authorial stance in a text. For this reason, the next chapter will introduce the term "stance" in written academic discourse in detail, as well as listing findings of the related research.

Authorial Stance

"Stance", as defined by Barton (1993) is the expression of "certainty, generalization and actuality" of claims by the author. In other words; when an author makes an assertion with appropriate and adequate support attached to it, to make it certain, generalizable, and true in its own terms, s/he creates her/his stance concerning the issue s/he is discussing. Hyland (2005) determines that when writers are engaged in argumentative texts, they are required to hold a position, which is clearly realized with textual stance devices. It is very difficult to imagine an argumentative essay without the part or parts where the author expresses her/his own views and feelings. In order to evaluate and negotiate a problem, one needs to decide which side they are on first. When academics of certain established backgrounds may be more advantageous in creating and expressing stance, thanks to their credentials; student writers do not come with such power; therefore, they are advised to be more careful in expressing their stance, especially concerning issues that require expertise or knowledge of previous research. Hyland (2001) highlights this, claiming authorial

positioning and holding a strong stance means holding a substantial amount of authority over the claims. Being unaware of this most of the time, students tend to generalize their statements (Barton, 1993) in order to avoid rejection or humiliation from their audience.

The relationship between metadiscourse makers and authorial stance is a close one. As Hyland (2004) summarizes, metadiscourse markers are devices that help an author state her/his standpoint, and express and support her/his position in an argument; in the way that has been introduced above. Clearly, these markers are thought to be useful in shaping arguments; therefore, they are needed for maintaining stance; especially in argumentative texts. A supportive viewpoint comes from Biber and Finegan (1988) who assert that writing with personal beliefs or feelings being attached to the text is accomplished through the use of adverbials. They list six of them, which are revealed by their corpus analysis: "honestly", "generally", "surely", "actually", "maybe", and "amazingly". These show that interpersonal discourse markers might make stance devices. It has been suggested that the more frequent the intensifiers (e.g. "surely" or "actually") are used, the more overtly the stance is expressed, in other words, the author positions himself in the text in a way that is clearly visible to the audience. However, hedging devices act the opposite way: hiding "the personal area" of the author in the discussion and in the text. Hyland & Tse (2004) claim that the attitudes towards the use of metadiscourse markers and habits of using them by authors are important indicators of author identity and author positioning in a text. Hyland (2001)'s study, for instance, tries to account for the writer's own presence in a text by examining the use of person markers, (i.e., self-

mention devices). The pre-assumption was that impersonal language use should be prevalent in academic discourse; therefore the amount of self-mention would be low. The results confirmed this; participants who are composed of graduate students deterred themselves from using the pronoun "I", claiming using it would be considered inappropriate by the academia and those who form their audience.

Baratta (2008) states that depending on the academic discipline the author belongs to, her/his choice of using personal or impersonal vocabulary would be an indicator of her/his position in the text. There is not a definitive rule or criterion for a text to be written in personal or impersonal language. Nevertheless, traditionally, academic writing has been thought to require the exclusion of personal feelings, attitudes and opinions, thus the use of the personal pronoun "I" and the like. However, as Baratta (2008) notes, it should be remembered that in argument, especially "the presence" of the author might be a necessary element in the discussion and does not pose a threat to the quality of the academic tone of the writing. The balance between making the essay sound like a diary and an encyclopedia entry should be accomplished by the author by choosing the right vocabulary and structures, depending on the topic, genre and text type as well as her/his own disciplinary concerns.

Writers' linguistic backgrounds and the writing practice of their first language might also be influential in her/his preference of hiding or projecting her/himself in the text. A study on cross-cultural differences concerning the argumentative writing at the university level shows that Japanese student writers do not express their position at the beginning of argument, saving it for the later chapters of the text.

This, Hirose (2003) deduces, shows that Japanese writers are inclined to employ an inductive organization style unlike Americans and presumably other Western writers, who are expected to hold a more deductive style. Kamimura & Oi (1998), also working on the practices of Japanese and American student writers in their cross-cultural study, found out that even similar structures like "I believe" and "I think" might act differently in a text. The former, is used as a stance device and an emphatic in American students' essays, whereas the latter is a hedge in Japenese students' writing.

As for the types of stance devices, Biber (2004) comes up with a taxonomy, which is as follows:

1. Modals and semi modal verbs

 a. Possibility modals/ permission modals/ability modals: can, could, may, might

 b. Logical necessity/obligation: must, should, have to, got to, ought to, better

 c. Prediction/volition: will, would, shall, be going to

2. Stance adverbials

 a. Attitudinal: surprisingly, hopefully, wisely

 b. Non-factive: frankly, mainly, truthfully

 c. Factive: undoubtedly, obviously, certainly

 d. Likelihood: evidently, predictably, roughly

In a study he conducted to see the place and importance of stance in spoken and written university registers, Biber (2004) notes that modals are generally utilized more in the spoken language. It is also important here to add, that possibility modals

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as stance devices are more frequently used than any other modal auxiliary in spoken context. For that reason, this study investigates how modals are utilized by the participants and how their practice is reflected in their stance behavior.

In the final chapter of the literature review, modality in English language and specifically the modal verb of "can" will be introduced. "Can" is under special focus, due to its ability to act a possibility marker, thus a hedge. This, however, is a fact that might be understated by the English teachers in Turkey. "Can" is usually introduced as an ability marker only, and the students may be expected to use it less as a possibility marker in their writing. In order to see if this holds true, frequency of occurrence and the way the use of the "can" modal will be analyzed.

Modality Markers

Dynamic, Deontic, Epistemic Modality

Palmer (2001), along with other modality researchers (Kratzer, 1991; Nuyts, 2006, Portner, 2009) gives the traditional modality marker categorization in the English language as follows:

Dynamic Modality

Dynamic modality markers are those who let the users of the language form sentences that convey the meaning of "being able" to do something (Nuyts, 2006). "Can" and modal-like structure "be able to" are two prime examples.

Example 1:

John *can* swim very well.

He *is* no longer *able to* walk after that accident.

The willingness of the speaker may also be reflected by dynamic modals and similar structures, such as "will".

Example 2:

I *will* speak to the boss for you.

Deontic Modality

Deontic modals, on the other hand, include modal auxiliaries of permission and obligation (Palmer, 1986). Apart from auxiliaries such as "must" and "should", expressions like "need to" are counted to be a part of deontic modality.

Example 3:

I *must* study for my exams, or else, I might fail.

"Can" might be a deontic modal, as well as a dynamic modal. The following example shows how it is used by an authority to give permission. It also expresses the possibility of something to take place.

Example 4:

You *can* leave once you finish your papers.

Epistemic modality

Epistemic modals comprise the propositional aspect of modality in English. Coates (1995) gives the definition and function as follows: "Epistemic modality is concerned with the speaker's assumptions or assessment of possibilities and in most cases it indicates the speaker's confidence or the lack of confidence in the truth of the proposition expressed."

Modal auxiliaries like "may" and "might" are typical tools of epistemic modality, however, depending on the context, several others might act as epistemic modals. "Must" (when signifying high probability) and "can" (when used as a possibility marker) are two examples for this (Nuyts, 2006).

Example 5:

Some people *can* agree with the idea of euthanasia in the near future. (From a student essay).

Example 6:

The T.V. *must* be open, there is a weird voice coming from the apartment. [sic]

Epistemic modality in written discourse may be used frequently whenever a transaction of information or expression of opinion, belief or an attitude takes place (Weiyum He & Tsoneva, 1998). Therefore, as Hinkel (2009) states; it is related to the stance an author takes. The stronger s/he is bonded with an opinion, the higher number of modal expressions that express certainty s/he is expected to use. Baratta (2008) confirms this through the findings of his study, which reveal that persuasive and argumentative writing is generally rich in deontic and epistemic modal auxiliaries like "must and should" On the other hand, Hyland & Milton (1997) hint that instead of sounding sure with such certainty expressions; components of epistemic language, like possibility modals, should be more advised to be used because they give the author the chance of stating, maintaining and changing an opinion in a modest way.

Modality Markers in Writing

Halliday (1970) summarizes the conditions required for the "modality" to exist appropriately in a sentence: Either with a modal auxiliary, or other lexical structures such as "possible", "certain", etc. that is able to convey the meaning and feeling a modal auxiliary releases. Biber (2006) has found out these conditions might vary depending on the context the tools are used in. In the environment of modal auxiliaries, it should be underlined that due to the differing meanings the auxiliaries carry, the same modal might mean differently in another sentence. His study shows that the most frequently utilized group of auxiliaries appears to be "possibility

modals" within the larger group of epistemic modality, with "can" being the most frequent one to be found in use. "Can" has multiple meanings, as Klinge (1993) examines it: It might act as a possibility marker and an epistemic modal, as well as a permission marker and a deontic modal. Traditionally, ability is also a meaning conveyed by the auxiliary, in which case, it acts a dynamic modal. In Biber (2006)'s study, the possibility meaning has been found to be used more, as it has a role in expressing stance and conducting discussion. In this study, to examine the participating students' essays the uses of "can" have been chosen among other modality markers. In students' essays, the epistemic modality aspect of "can" is investigated as opposed its ability and/or permission aspects.

"Can" as an *Epistemic Modality Marker*

Being one of the ability modal structures, "can" is also a possibility modal that express "likelihood, vagueness and politeness" (Hinkel, 2009). Possibility modals are deemed appropriate to use in academic contexts instead of using stronger structures, depending on the requirements of the specific culture and language the text is created in. With the quality of softening claims or creating fuzziness, "can" and other possibility modals are counted as hedging devices when used in an academic text. Therefore, it is important to teach how to use modality expressions in order to have student writers add uncertainty, politeness and modesty to their writing. Hinkel (2009) reminds that "can" is one of the most stable modal auxiliaries in terms of the rate of use, along with "will". Modals like "may", "must", and "ought to", on the

other hand, are found to be utilized less in both American and British English. He concludes that this might be due to the hesitation of the writers to use strong claims or look too powerful. Weiyum He & Tsoneva (1998) tries to find out the reasons and instances of the use of "can" .They claim that when used in contexts of giving and asking for permission, "can" becomes a deontic modal auxiliary: however, in possibility and ability cases, it becomes a part of epistemic modality markers. In the study they conducted, it was revealed that 51, 5 % of the instances where the modal auxiliaries of "can" is present, the purpose of using it is to express either ability or possibility.

As mentioned above, however, in the EFL and ESL settings "can" is mainly taught as an ability marker, (i.e. a dynamic modal only), so the students tend to use it that way, more than other functions.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter of the thesis, demographic information related to the participants and the data collection setting and procedures are given.

Research Questions

The study tries to find answers to the following research questions, which will help researchers understand the ways student writers utilize hedges and the modal auxiliary "can" to hold an authorial stance and communicate with the reader.

1. How frequently and with what function are hedging devices used in the academic essays of first year university students?

2. What is the frequency of use of modal auxiliaries in the academic essays of first year university students?

3. How frequently and with what function is the modal auxiliary "can" used as a hedging device in the academic essays of first year university students?

Participants and Setting

The participants of the present study are first year students at the English Language Education Department of a state university in Istanbul, Turkey. As a part of their first

year curriculum, they were required to take the "English Composition" course in the first semester. As one student did not attend the sessions from the beginning, and two did not fulfill all requirements of the course, they were excluded from the study group. Mentioned requirements included writing three extended argumentative essays and two shorter ones. The structures of the essays will be explained in the related section in detail.

As required by the institution, all new students of the affiliated university take the English proficiency test before they start the departmental courses. All participants of the study also took this test and their level of English was certified as advanced.

8 of the participants are females, and 3 are males. Their ages range between 19 and 21.

As far as the linguistic backgrounds of the students are concerned, the situation of one specific student should be noted. A self-proclaimed multilingual person, he is able to communicate in six languages proficiently. Three of these languages were acquired as early as a mother tongue would be learned. For that reason, he is taken out of the analyses to avoid potential problems in evaluating the differences in use of hedges and modal auxiliaries. All of the remaining eleven students, who provided the necessary data, agreed to participate in the study as expressed openly in the consent form they were asked to fill out before the investigation started.

Participants all learned English as a foreign language in Turkey where they attended state schools; both in the primary and the high school level. All of the students graduated from *Anadolu Öğretmen Lisesi,* which are high school institutes training students to be eligible candidates for the Faculties of Education at tertiary level institutions in Turkey. None of them had native English speaking teachers in their English learning experience and never went abroad specifically to learn or practice English. The first time they had English classes differs from each other, despite similarities in the type of schools they attended. As explained by the students, this was due to the fact that primary schools in the eastern parts of Turkey may be lacking English teachers, learning facilities, and even proper buildings for the continuation of educational activities. Normally, the first English classes are supposed to be offered in the 4th grade of the primary school.

Bayyurt (2006) gave a comprehensive account on the structure of the foreign language education in state schools in Turkey. A major change was implemented and it came into action in the academic year starting in 30 September 2012[1;] however the participants of this study were the outcomes of the system outlined below.

> **"**In 1997, the Turkish Ministry of National Education passed Act 4306, which specified that the structure of the Turkish primary education system change in the following way: 2 primary education comprises eight years of schooling. The graduates of these schools are given primary school diplomas.
> The students start learning a foreign language (primarily English) in fourth grade (fourth and fifth grades, two hours a week; sixth, seventh and eighth grades, four hours a week). Secondary education follows eight years of primary education and includes general, vocational and technical schools. General high schools aim at preparing students for higher education rather than for a particular vocation. As in sixth, seventh and eighth grades, the students learn a foreign language (primarily English) for four hours a week with an option of extending their exposure to a foreign language by two hours

by choosing English as an elective course, in addition to their regular study time.

…

In addition to general, vocational and technical schools, there is another group of schools which fall under the category of general secondary education with intensive foreign language teaching, such as Anatolian high schools, private high schools—with or without a preparatory year where a foreign language such as English, French or German is taught. These high schools aim to prepare students for higher education while teaching them a foreign language intensively to enable them to follow scientific and technological advances in the world. The materials that are used in these schools are different from those in the schools where foreign language teaching materials designed by the Turkish Ministry of National Education are used. However, they are approved by the Turkish Ministry of National Education in terms of their suitability for the curricular needs of foreign language teaching in Turkey."

As for the coursebooks of the participants, all of them used *New Bridge to Success* in the 9th grade and used a variety of other coursebooks approved by The Ministry of Education when they started the foreign language education departments in their high schools. These include: *Matrix*, Oxford University Press (OUP); Hotline, (OUP); *Upstream Proficiency*, Express Publications (See Appendix A for the chapter where modal verb instruction is given in *New Bridge to Success*).

Data Collection Instruments

The Essays

As a part of the English Composition course mentioned above, students were required to write a series of essays which were revised by the writers a few times after submission as a part of the process-writing approach. Both teacher feedback and peer feedback was utilized during the revisions, and the original copies and revised

versions were all handed in as a portfolio at the end of the semester. Eight essays were submitted by the students in total, in a partial requirement to be eligible to pass the course. However, as the main focus of the study is "argumentative writing", only 5 of those were initially selected for this study. In order to avoid complications and confounding variables stemming from instruction on using hedges, only the first two sets were ultimately analyzed. These first two essays were "short", in the sense that they had 484 words on average in contrast to the other 3 essays which were "extended" pieces of writing, with 1160 words on average. The latter set required research from the literature before the compositions were written and urged students to use abilities like synthesizing, paraphrasing and summarizing. In short, with the reception of 2 essays from each student, 22 essays (10, 116 words) were collected from 11 participants. As this is a small scale corpus linguistics study, data were analyzed with the help of a corpus analysis tool, Simple Concordance Program (SCP).

The essay topics were:

1. Should the parents intrude in the children's lives too much and make their lives too easy, or should they let them learn by themselves? Discuss.

2. Do you think a grading system is useful and/or crucial in the education system? Why/ why not?

Topics of the essays were selected considering the interests of the target group and are believed to be thought-provoking. Therefore the students are expected to produce as many personal ideas as possible.

<u>The Interviews</u>

With the emergence of the interest in the use of modality markers and specifically, modal auxiliary of "can", it was decided that an interview with the participants would reveal the details of the ways the informants were taught English, especially the modal verbs. The informants were called for the interviews and the procedure was conducted in Turkish. The interviews were semi-structured in nature and were completed in 2 weeks' time. A total of 9 questions were asked concerning the participants' schooling and EFL education history; especially the design of the grammar classes, and the sessions where the modal verbs were taught. They were asked to rate their own modal-verb proficiency and also to list the functions of "can" impromptu. Those they listed were compared with their actual production and some pedagogical implications were drawn from the relation between their learning process and their use of modal verbs in academic texts.

No piloting could be performed beforehand because of the small size of the participants and the time restrictions.

The questions of the interview are as follows:

Table 3. Interview Questions

Questions

1. Do you remember how your grammar classes were designed in high school? If yes, can you describe them?

2. How would you describe the role of the teacher as s/he was presenting a grammar topic and conducting follow-up activities?

3. What tasks and responsibilities were you given in grammar classes as the learners?

4. Do you remember how the modal verbs were taught? If yes, can you describe?

5. How would you rate your proficiency level in using modal verbs appropriately in writing (intermediate, upper-intermediate, advanced?)

6. Can you list the functions of the modal verb "can" for me? What kinds of meanings does it have?

7. Which ones of those functions do you remember being taught explicitly in class?

8. Why do you think the functions that you mentioned being taught were selected by the instructor?

9. Which functions do you think you use the most in written (and/or spoken) language? /Why?

Data Analysis

The data analysis procedures of the study are comprised of 3 main sections: Analysis

of the hedges, modality markers (and "can" specifically) and the interviews.

Analysis of the Hedges

As the main component of the data analysis of the thesis, analysis of hedges included two steps: The first one was to determine the keywords: in other words, all hedges used in the essays, and to count them by hand to draw a general picture of the situation. First; I, the researcher of this study, listed the keywords and made the count. The same procedure was replicated later by a fellow research assistant and an MA candidate for inter-rater reliability. She also is an English teacher and she was writing her own thesis on Speech Acts at the time. The reason for her being chosen as the second-checker was that she accompanied me in every step of the research and we were sharing offices which helped us keep in close contact and to work collaboratively and relatively easy. Also, she was knowledgeable about using hedges and academic writing being an MA student herself. The fact that she is a teacher of the target language was also a major advantage, for there was no need for a briefing on hedges, modal verbs or "can" in particular beforehand. The results counting showed no discrepancies with the same keywords selected from the essay sets. In order to group the markers, Bayyurt's (2010) hedge taxonomy was adopted. The second step was to double check the existence of these markers or add the ones that had been missed out on the manual count which would help increase the reliability of the findings. After the typing process of all 22 essays, they were uploaded to the Simple Concordancing Program (SCP, Version 4.09) and instances of each marker were searched. Although this procedure was very important and decreased the dangers of anything being overlooked, the hand count was also crucial because words with double meanings might go unnoticed in the SCP analysis. For example,

when the usage of hedges was examined, "can" with the meaning of "ability" had to be removed from the count but the SCP is not able to remove it, as it is programmed to list all the instances of the selected words present in the examined data set. For this reason, the hand count results and the computerized counting needed to be compared at all times to eliminate discrepancies.

The identification of hedges proved to be a difficult linguistic task, primarily due to the multifunctional nature and low transparency of the analyzed items. During the classification of the data, it was found for instance, that some of the hedges could be placed in two or even three metadiscoursal categories at the same time. In addition, it was not always clear if an item ("a metadiscoursal candidate") was really a metadiscoursal one or whether it belonged to the propositional content. At the end of the analysis, 50 of the words correctly used in the essay sets were classified as hedges.

Analysis of the Modal Auxiliaries and the Interviews

The count of modal auxiliaries constituted the second part of the investigation. Although the same counting procedure was held for each modal verb found in the data, special attention was given to "can". Apart from "can"; "should, may, must, shall, might, could, ought to, will" and "would" were all found to be present in the data, all of which are usually listed among the fundamental modal auxiliaries (Biber, 2004; Hinkel, 2009). Apart from the frequency of the different modal auxiliaries, various functions of "can" were also identified. At this point of the research, the

descriptive analysis of the frequency of occurrences was supported with the results of the participant interviews, which gave insight concerning the use of the modal verbs and the educational background of the participants, especially hints about the way they were taught modality markers and "can".

The interviews were transcribed and analyzed with the help of the research tool NVivo 8. A full transcription was made before being uploaded to the program, and thanks to the coding and querying facilities provided by the program, quantitative result sets were obtained. Each answer provided a keyword that would form into a category of analysis. Answers to the questions related to the design of the grammar classes, and the sessions where the modal auxiliary of "can" was taught were used to compare the real production data with the expressed functionalities of the mentioned modal verb.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The main aim of this thesis is to give a detailed description of the frequency of

hedges and modal auxiliaries used by first year university students in argumentative

essays in order to understand how they hold an authorial stance in the text. Two sets

of essays were gathered for this purpose, and, in the following section, findings will

be presented.

Hedges

In this study, hedges are counted to see what the student authors' position is; in other

words, how much they hide or show themselves in argumentative texts. Moreover, it

is assumed that with this piece of information, it will be clear if they use the

appropriate tone of academic writing. Bayyurt's (2010) taxonomy is used to count the

hedges and calculate the percentages. The concordance analysis produced the

following set of results (for the list of hedges found in the essays, please see

Appendix B):

Table 4. Amounts of Hedges Used by Participants

Type of the hedge	Number (#)	Percentage (%)*
1. Epistemic hedges (EPS)	141	1.40
2. Lexical hedges (LEX)	488	4.90
3. Possibility hedges (POSS)	21	0.20
4. Downtoners (DOWN)	36	0.40
5. Assertive pronouns (ASS)	273	2.70
6. Adverbs of frequency (FREQ)	73	0.70
7. Direct/indirect person markers (PM)	272	2.70
TOTAL (T)	1304	

*Calculations were made to see what percent is the amount of each type of hedge of the total number of words (10, 116) found in the corpus.

The above table shows the total amount of hedges used in all of the essays of the participants. Lexical hedges are observed to be used most frequently among all other categories, probably due to its being the largest among the examined groups (Hyland, 1996). It has been suggested that it is not always possible to appoint one word or phrase directly into a category (Salager-Meyer, 1994) and "lexical hedges" is the group, whose functionality is vague due to the group's fuzzy borders; especially when compared to more concretely defined frequency words or direct/indirect person markers.

Possibility hedges are preferred the least. This might be the result of the fact that it is not advised by writing instructors to make hasty generalizations to avoid the obligation of using sources and doing research. It is not uncommon to come across phrases like "It is generally known that...", "Most people...", and they are criticized because of the ambiguity they create, and because how unprofessional and non-academic they sound.

Such expressions, therefore, are one of the most attended mistakes and are strongly and explicitly objected, to the extent that the students might avoid possibility hedges to be on the safe side.

Person markers are used extensively and are the most commonly referred to subject in the corpus has been found to be the author her/himself: "I", "my", and related first person pronouns and adjectives comprised of the 48% of all person markers. The second most frequently mentioned marker is "they", referring to students and parents, occurring 42 times.

To account for how they hold stance with the number of hedges used in the text, it can be deduced from the data that Student 3, using the highest amount of hedges, hid his personal voice and avoided face-threatening situations and hasty generalizations. The lowest amount is observed in the case of Student 1 with 72 counts in total. The average number of hedged instances is 112.50.

As this is an in-depth descriptive analysis, the following section will present the frequency tables for each participant, in the use of hedges, with related examples from the data.

Table 5. Amounts of Hedges Used by Student 1 (S1)

Type of the hedge	Number (#)	Percentage (%)*
1. Epistemic hedges (EPS)	16	1.55
2. Lexical hedges (LEX)	26	2.50
3. Possibility hedges (POSS)	3	0.30
4. Downtoners (DOWN)	6	0.60
5. Assertive pronouns (ASS)	8	0.80
6. Adverbs of frequency (FREQ)	3	0.30
7. Direct/indirect person markers (PM)	10	1.00
TOTAL (T)	72	

*Calculations were made to see what percent is the amount of each type of hedge of the total number of words (1, 027) found in the S1's essay set.

The performance of Student 1 (S1) reflects the general tendency of the students in using hedges; that is, the most frequently used hedge category is "the lexicals" and the least preferred ones are "possibility hedges" and "adverbs of frequency". It is interesting to observe how they seem to be avoiding making generalizations and inferences concerning the possibility of situations. If they had not, they might have opted to express them without using adverbials like "probably, possibly", etc. (Bayyurt, 2010). However, even when the need arose, they chose to use epistemic hedges like modal verbs instead. The interview results had confirmed that 54.60% of

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English teachers of the participants had been given explicit grammar instruction, and 58.33% of them relied on textbooks, which traditionally introduced the emphatic modals, acting as ability and possibility markers, while adverbials and hedging devices are overlooked or skipped altogether. For the reason stated above, it can be deduced that S1 possibly preferred modal verbs over possibility markers to indicate uncertainty.

Below can be found example sentences taken from the corpus.

Examples:

Epistemic Hedges (EPS):

1. *"Grades do not encourage learning and students may not want to go on their school career."*

In the example above, the modal auxiliary of "may" is preferred to express uncertainty and hiding the stance. This was the most common epistemic hedging device S1 used and it correlates with the findings of the interview with S1, who had declared that in high school, "can" was just introduced as an ability marker, not a possibility marker. (See the "Modal Verbs" section for more detailed information on the interviews conducted with the participants.)

Lexical Hedges (LEX):

2. *"Maybe this is because they don't want to study or go on with their school career."*

"Maybe" was one of the most salient hedging devices used throughout the corpus. In the least frequently used category, S1 chose to use one of the most preferred hedging devices, probably due to the fact that it is being used relatively more frequently than other such devices (Gilquin & Paquot, 2008).

Possibility Hedges (POSS):

3. *"For example, students probably take their grades just according to the exam results."*

The salience of "probably" is significant, in that it was used 12 times out of all 21 instances (57.10 %) of possibility markers. Similar to S1, it was preferred over other markers like "likely", "potentially", etc.

Downtoners (DOWN):

4. *"... assistance is necessary in learning, but his definition of assistance is a little bit different from ours."*

This was an example of appropriate use of downtoners. There is no significant or unexpected situation to comment on.

Assertive Pronouns (ASS):

5. *"However, because of some media reports about a generation is at risk, parents became very anxious about their children and overprotective towards them."* [sic]

The most commonly used assertive pronouns found in the corpus were "some" and "any", "Some" being the most salient of all; including compounds like

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"somehow, somebody" etc. 132 of all 273 assertive pronouns are listed to be some-words.

It should be noted, however, that the sentence above is actually a discouraged use of hedging markers as it creates fuzziness as to what or who is meant by those media reports. Instead, when taught explicitly on hedges, students are directed to clarify who they are citing when they form such sentences to support their own claims. This usage therefore, is a not an appropriate way of establishing stance and bringing support from a source.

Adverbs of Frequency (FREQ):

6. *"They are not always efficient in education system."*

The use of "sometimes, frequently, usually" are observed throughout the corpus. However, S1's preference of using negative structured adverbs can be approached as an interesting choice. Among all the adverbs of frequency, the rate of using such negative compounds is found to be a small one, comprising 10.5% only.

Direct/Indirect person markers (PM)

7. *"Many people including me believe that grades do not encourage learning."*

S1 opted to express himself by referring her/his author self explicitly.

Table 6. Amounts of Hedges Used by S2

Type of the hedge	Number (#)	Percentage (%)
1. EPS	5	0.60
2. LEX	28	3.20
3. POSS	3	0.30
4. DOWN	2	0.20
5. ASS	15	1.70
6. FREQ	13	1.50
7. PM	112	12.90
T	78	

*Calculations were made to see what percent is the amount of each type of hedge of the total number of words (862) found in the S2's essay set.

Student 2 (S2) used few downtoners, among which "a bit, partly, nearly" can be counted (Bayyurt, 2010). The use of modal auxiliaries that belong to the category of epistemic hedges is low in frequency (2 modal auxiliaries that express possibility in total). S/he preferred to express uncertainty or soften her/his claims by using lexical hedges, in line with the remaining participants' choices.

Examples from her/his essays are found below.

Examples:

<u>EPS:</u>

1. "For example, when parents make their children's lives too easy, they can actually harm their children."

S2 used two of the limited number of modal auxiliaries and epistemic markers in the same sentence. It is important to note that s/he was a part of the group which formed the 16.60 % percent of participants who were presented with the role of possibility marker "can" and s/he uses it here. This might be an indicator of the fact that the intake has been realized.

<u>LEX:</u>

2. "Lastly there are another group of people who somehow manage to succeed without much effort."

"Somehow" was the least used "some-word" in the entire corpus, occurring only three times. S2 may have tried to soften her/his statements with this hedging device, instead of using a more salient "probably" or "possibly".

<u>POSS:</u>

3. "Probably, there isn't any school which doesn't give any exams, tests."

The use of the possibility hedges here does not pose a different example from the rest of the corpus.

4. "These are friends, school environment and mostly family."

The sentence above shows that S2 may have preferred to sound less certain of her/his own claims, in other words hide her/his authorial existence. This is observable from the fact that s/he does not use hedging devices when listing the factors that affect a student's life apart from the one s/he aims to discuss in detail and believes to be the most important of all.

ASS:

5. "Any action which parent can see it as trivial one may have an important meaning for the children…"

Use of "any" and "some" words are characteristics of assertive pronouns (Bayyurt, 2010) and along with compound structures like "someone", "anybody"; singular uses like the one presented in this example is also possible.

FREQ:

6. "Sometimes, families think that they should do all, the necessary things…"

"Some", as mentioned above, is a versatile hedging device, and can act as a frequency marker or an assertive pronoun depending on the preferences of the author. Here, S2 preferred to soften her/his claim by using "sometimes", which prevents her/him from possible counterarguments by the audience, who might disagree, if nothing or a stronger adverbial like "always" was used.

PM:

7. "The reason why I support this opinion is that grades cause students to study…"

S2 was one of the student authors who did not choose to hide her/his presence in the text by using person markers, which are the most frequently used after lexical hedges, assertive pronouns, and frequency markers. Her/his most preferred person markers (58.30 %) were directly referencing her/himself as the author:" I, me, my", etc.

<u>STUDENT 3</u>

Figure 7. Amounts of Hedges Used by S3

Type of the hedge	Number (#)	Percentage (%)
1. EPS	20	2.30
2. LEX	81	8.60
3. POSS	3	0.30
4. DOWN	2	0.20
5. ASS	34	3.90
6. FREQ	3	0.30
7. PM	19	2.10
T	162	100

*Calculations were made to see what percent is the amount of each type of hedge of the total number of words (864) found in the S3's essay set.

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Similar to the case of Student 1, Student 3 (S3) preferred lexical markers over other types of hedges. The least frequently utilized marker sets are groups of possibility markers, downtoners, and frequency markers.

Examples:

EPS:

1. *"An exemplification of this when the learner who starts the school newly gets low marker, might now want to attend the school."*

Although "may" is one of the most frequently used epistemic modals found in the data (113 of all 459 modals) "might" is not preferred as much, with only 33 instances recorded. S3 used it to soften her/his arguments in accordance with the rest of the cases of epistemic modality.

LEX:

2. *"The teacher markes [sic] the assignment with a 'star' to show his appreciation, the teacher does not only gives [sic] extra points."*

This lexical hedge example is interesting to show that "only" which is normally a booster, is used as a hedging device, with the help of a negative marker: "not".

POSS:

3. *"Third of all, if a parent creates more demands, it is likely that they create bad features on them."*

Likely is one of the least used possibility markers by this student and throughout the corpus in general (10 items out of 114).

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<u>DOWN</u>:

4. *"In these foundations, almost all students require getting some feedback."*

Another example of using negative or similar structures with a booster is observed in this case of downtoners. "Almost" weakens the strength of "all", and the compound acts as a hedging device.

<u>ASS</u>:

5. *"An exemplification of this, when he faces a difficulty he needs somebody around him."*

The use of "somebody" helps the author avoid mentioning someone specifically and therefore a situation that would be potentially face-threatening.

<u>FREQ</u>:

6. *"Usually, the help of the family is beneficial but not completely."*

In this example, apart from the frequency marker, which is used in a way that is not different than the use of "usually" in the rest of the data, we can observe that "negative marker + booster" combination helps the author try to hide her/his position effectively.

<u>PM</u>:

7. *"Thus the relationship between us may weaken."*

It is interesting to see that the writer associates herself/himself with the subjects s/he deals with in the text. In this specific case, what S3 means by "us" is

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"the group of students and their parents". Being a member of the student community, S3 opted to position himself within that group, therefore creating more tangible bonds with the audience.

<u>STUDENT 4</u>

Table 8. Amounts of hedges used by S4

Type of the hedge	Number (#)	Percentage (%)
1. EPS	20	2.30
2. LEX	60	7.00
3. POSS	1	0.10
4. DOWN	7	0.80
5. ASS	26	3.00
6. FREQ	2	0.20
7. PM	27	3.10
T	143	

*Calculations were made to see what percent is the amount of each type of hedge of the total number of words (847) found in the S4's essay set.

S4 is a remarkable case in the data in the sense that s/he uses person markers probably to make a visible existence of her/him in the text; unlike fellow participants who used this category of hedges less in number to theoretically hide their presence.

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Examples:

<u>EPS:</u>

1. *"The grades of a student may be enough to prove the success of the student."*

The preference of choosing an epistemic modal instead of "copula -be" in this case is probably to soften the claims on purpose, because this sentence is an expression of logical deduction that holds true, and sounding certain, might not have been inappropriate if this had not been an academic paper. However, due to the requirements of a formal tone, S4 chose to use a modal verb even though he had not been instructed to do so.

<u>LEX:</u>

2. *"Those kids tend to have less confidence are more vulnerable..."*

"to tend to", "to be inclined to" and similar structures are grouped into the "lexical hedges" because they help the author avoid making hasty generalizations that s/he cannot possibly make.

<u>POSS:</u>

3. *"It is possible to get better feedbacks [sic] so a teacher should find a way to evaluate students."*

Apart from the adverbial "possibly", the adjective "possible" can also be used to soften the strength of the statements and claims, and S4 used it in this way.

<u>DOWN:</u>

4. "However, their children are too busy to finish their homework, partially because of the tasks they have given them."

"Partially" downgrades the load of judgment S4 puts into the reason s/he creates. Therefore, this helps her/him highlight her/his own competence of making cause-effect relations without referring to a credible source.

<u>ASS:</u>

5. "As it is mentioned above, there may be some cases in which the grades are mistaken and misleading."

Among other ways of using assertive pronouns starting with "some", one can also use it as a quantifier, which also acts as a hedge in this sentence.

<u>FREQ:</u>

6. "Parents commonly reproach or support their children about their school and studies."

Instead of saying "always" or not using any epistemic adverbial or frequency marker to make a logical generalization, S4 opted to use "commonly". This might be due to the fact that they are not capable of making such generalizations, unless it is a certain fact and known by all.

<u>PM:</u>

7. "Most children's grades are affected by the teacher-student relationship."

According to Bayyurt (2010), markers and structures denoting possession represent the author's direct or indirect inclusion in the text, and as mentioned above; this participant used them frequently, which shows that s/he may not mind being visible to the reader or raising a voice.

<u>STUDENT 5</u>

Table 9. Amounts of hedges used by S5

Type of the hedge	Number (#)	Percentage (%)
1. EPS	12	1.20
2. LEX	50	5.20
3. POSS	0	0.00
4. DOWN	1	0.10
5. ASS	21	2.10
6. FREQ	6	0.60
7. PM	10	1.00
T	100	

*Calculations were made to see what percent is the amount of each type of hedge of the total number of words (961) found in the S5's essay set.

The distinctive feature of S5's set of data is the lack of possibility markers, the relatively less frequent use of downtoners, and frequency markers when compared to the other participants. Heavy reliance on lexical hedges is in line with the general tendency.

Examples:

EPS:

1. *"We can argue that if parents have too much control over their child, it can prevent the child's to manifest himself sufficiently."*

Instead of using a more assertive verb such as "state" or "say"; "argue" lessens the strength of the author's claim and helps her/him to acknowledge the possible existence of counterarguments.

LEX:

2. *"This situation can get rather disturbing for most cases."*

*"*Rather" is used to express uncertainty while highlighting the amount of the "disturbance" mentioned in the sentence.

DOWN:

3. *"On the other hand, it is widely accepted that without exams we cannot test achievement."*

The only downtoner in this student's data set, "widely" is thought to be used to avoid making a baseless generalization by using no adverbial or the likes of "completely" and "totally".

ASS:

4. *"... developing technology enables a person to benefit from various sources such as education via computer or skimming any book..."*

Like S4, S5 chose to use "any" without being a part of a pronoun. Assertive pronouns are observed with relatively more frequency in S5's set when compared with the other hedges found in the data.

FREQ:

5. *"As grading system cannot always fair and cheating when applied on the exams, students may often alienate from courses [sic]."*

"Often" is one of the rare frequency adverbs found in the corpus, occurring only 5.30% of the time among all other frequency adverbs.

PM:

6. *"As he makes mistakes while making important decisions, he will learn how to amend them in his own. [sic]*

S5 referred to the "student who has a problem with her/his parents' pressure concerning her /his grades and schoolwork". The use of "he" therefore, possibly creates a direct "personal" relation.

Table 10. Amounts of Hedges Used by S6

Type of the hedge	Number (#)	Percentage (%)
1. EPS	14	1,6
2. LEX	39	4,4
3. POSS	2	0,2
4. DOWN	8	0,9
5. ASS	25	2,8
6. FREQ	14	1,6
7. PM	9	1
T	111	

*Calculations were made to see what percent is the amount of each type of hedge of the total number of words (871) found in the S6's essay set.

Student 6's performance bears no significant difference from the rest of the participants with lexical hedges being used the most and the possibility markers the least.

Examples:

EPS:

1. *"It is claimed that when parents make their children's lives too easy so as to protect them from harmful effects of modern world."*

"Claim" is categorized as one of the epistemic hedges in Bayyurt (2010)'s study. Avoiding verbs that denote certainty may have helped S6 to raise a more academic voice.

LEX:

2. *"To some extent, grades can be a big part of students' lives because they affect their future."*

"Some" is normally categorized under assertive pronouns; however, here it is used within a phrase that is a lexical hedge. "To some extent" limits the scope of the generalization of the student, helping him softening his proposition.

POSS:

3. *"Other than grading, maybe, asking the students to show to practice what they have learned will be more productive…"*

As mentioned before (see S1's analysis) participating students used "maybe" as a possibility marker with great frequency. 43% of all frequency markers are found to be "maybe". This prevalence is reflected in S6's choices as well.

DOWN:

4. *"Also, teachers generally use grading as a punishment, not a prize…"*

"Generally" is among the most preferred downtoners along with "most", and frequency markers like "commonly", when there is a need to produce a statement while lacking concise evidence to support it. This specific instance is a good example of this.

ASS:

5. *"Namely, this is up to person's choices what to learn, and forcing somebody to learn something."*

"Something", with "somebody" and "someone", is used the most by the participating students. Their role as fillers or as words that would replace almost anything whose name is not known, has an effect on this widespread usage. When this small scale corpus is compared with more professional and larger ones, it is clearly seen that this results are supported. For instance, "Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)", which is made up of 450 million words, lists 295501 instances of "something" and 47902 sentences where "somebody" is used. These are the largest groups of assertive pronouns found within the corpus.

FREQ:

6. *"Grades are not always useful parts of our education lives…"*

The functionalities of a negative particle and a frequency marker which would normally act like an emphatic has been discussed before (See the analysis for S1). Apart from the power of hiding stance, use of this structure shows how the author works with the language demonstrating her/his rule on it.

PM:

7. *"I agree them, namely I don't think that learning becomes easier when combined with grades…"* [sic]

S6 clearly establishes and holds her/his stance, thanks to the subject pronoun of "I", which is the most direct way of stating one's own opinions and highlighting her/his existence in the text as a side of the argument.

STUDENT 7

Table 11. Amounts of Hedges Used by S7

Type of the hedge	Number (#)	Percentage (%)
1. EPS	9	0.90
2. LEX	25	2.50
3. POSS	2	0.20
4. DOWN	0	0.00
5. ASS	27	2.70
6. FREQ	3	0.30
7. PM	12	1.20
T	78	100

*Calculations were made to see what percent is the amount of each type of hedge of the total number of words (996) found in the S7's essay set.

Student 7 did not use any downtoners and is the subject of the only case in the corpus, where the assertive pronouns outnumber the lexical hedges. The data has shown that the most commonly used hedge in this set was "some".

Examples:

<u>EPS:</u>

1. *"Now it's high time for them to stand on their own two feet and they may know the answer."*

   Epistemic hedges, as discussed above in related instances, are less in number when compared with lexical hedges. The majority of the existing epistemic hedges is comprised of epistemic modal auxiliaries. "May" is preferred the most by all the participants of the study (see Table 16). In this respect, S7 does not differ from the rest of the group (see Example 1).

<u>LEX:</u>

2. *"It is seemingly without any problems but they* might *not know the answers."*

   "Seemingly" addresses the sense of sight, which may be misguiding especially when compared to "knowing" or "learning" from some credible source. With this meaning it adds to the sentence it is used in; "seemingly" acts as a lexical hedge.

<u>POSS:</u>

3. *"If grading did not exist, many students probably would not take the courses serious."*

   The cases of "probably" and "possibly" has been widely discussed in previous cases, and S7's use of this adverbial shows no difference. Its use complies

with the widely acknowledged way of utilizing the hedge both grammatically and meaningwise.

ASS:

4. *"Not everything is possible for students to be successful."*

The use of a negative particle and an emphatic has been mentioned in the case of "not always" and in this sentence quoted above, an assertive pronoun is created out of another emphatic; "everything", with the help of "not".

FREQ:

5. *"Parents should not always show their children everything directly."*

S7 is a remarkable case in the sense that s/he followed the method of making hedging devices out of a booster with "not" preceding in more than one instance. The way s/he formed the sentence with the mentioned "not-possibility marker" combination does not differ from the other examples taken from the corpus.

PM:

6. *"This result, as I said whether success or failure, brings self-knowledge as valuable as gold."*

S7 used the pronoun "I" to express her/his ideas concerning the argument s/he discusses. This is the most frequent way of holding stance in an argumentative essay (Hyland, 1998), and at the time, being unaware of the other ways of the authors position, they could have preferred this marker the most.

Table 12. Amounts of Hedges Used by S8

Type of the hedge	Number (#)	Percentage (%)
1. EPS	14	1.10
2. LEX	44	3.50
3. POSS	3	0.20
4. DOWN	1	0.08
5. ASS	39	3.10
6. FREQ	5	0.40
7. PM	21	1.60
T	127	

*Calculations were made to see what percent is the amount of each type of hedge of the total number of words (1237) found in the S8's essay set.

Student 8 used assertive pronouns and lexical hedges more than other markers, and like S7, who did not use any, chose to express uncertainty and hide her/his stance without using many downtoners. This might be due to the fact that the topics they were given did not require them to put forward many original propositions, but rather express their feelings and possible "causes" that lead to the situation given in the essay cues. A more academic topic would require them to consult to what has already been discussed about the issue as well as produce their own explanations and/or solutions.

Examples:

<u>EPS:</u>

1. *"In fact, parents should show their children how to do something instead of doing it."*

*"*In fact*"* is generally used to clarify the statement in order to avoid misunderstandings. S8 clearly used it for this purpose. In its own original environment, the sentence preceding this presents a counterargument, and the student writer expresses her/his own beliefs concerning the issue with the following sentence, which starts with "in fact".

<u>LEX:</u>

2. *"It does not necessarily encourage them."*

Another combination of "not-emphatic" to express uncertainty can be found in this example taken from the corpus. Normally, "necessarily" means "inevitably" and would be a booster had it not been used with "not" appearing immediately before it.

<u>POSS:</u>

3. *"We can see that the grading system do not encourage the students to learn but most probably to study."*

"Probably" and its role in sentences has been discussed before, as it has been encountered often in the corpus. However, the striking point about this example is that although it helps the author sound uncertain and hide his positioning in the

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argument; "most", that precedes the hedge, adds to the strength of the adverbial and therefore creates a situation of contradiction. It is found that this way is the most applied when a student wants to make a generalization that would potentially be accepted by the audience, but still cannot be made because of the inappropriacy of doing so in an academic text. As the participating students were not explicitly taught about hedging devices and the importance of academic tone in writing, it can be concluded that they naturally tend to write in this "right" way.

DOWN:

4. *"How parents interpret bringing a child up is very important in that it is one of the main factors affecting a child's whole life."*

The only downtoner used by S8, is "main". Along with "general" and "most", "main" is a hedge that helps the author "downplay the significance of the propositions" (Bayyurt, 2010) s/he makes.

ASS:

5. *"Some people think that people should not raise their children in an environment where they can do anything they want."*

"Some" as mentioned in several instances, is the most referred assertive pronoun by the participants. The usage we see in this example bears no significant difference neither in terms of structure nor meaning from the rest of those examined before.

6. *"... but sometimes lead them to failure and disinterest."*

Deprived of making scientific inquiries to see "how often", S8 chose to use the most preferred frequency adverb found within the corpus (68 out of 114) "sometimes" to make up for the lack of knowledge.

PM:

7. *"They may also learn from parents how to study for the class and learn..."*

In a different way from S3, who opted to include her/himself into the group of students s/he discusses in her/his essay, S8 chose to separate her/himself by using "they" instead of "we".

Table 13. Amounts of Hedges Used by S9

Type of the hedge	Number (#)	Percentage (%)
1. EPS	8	1.10
2. LEX	64	9.50
3. POSS	1	0.10
4. DOWN	6	0.80
5. ASS	25	3.70
6. FREQ	6	0.80
7. PM	9	1.30
T	119	

*Calculations were made to see what percent is the amount of each type of hedge of the total number of words (673) found in the S9's essay set.

Student 9 (S9) is among the participants who used lexical hedges most frequently and s/he also ranks fourth in the amount of using hedges. As can be seen in Table 13, downtoners and possibility markers are used the least by S9. In addition, in her/his essays, S9 used epistemic modals and other epistemic structures rarely. This shows the student's dependence on lexical hedges and assertive pronouns heavily in order to express uncertainty and hide her/his authorial stance confirming Bayyurt (2010)'s findings in her study.

Examples:

<u>EPS:</u>

1. *"Secondly, when parents have extreme involvement in their children's especially in terms of feelings…"*

"Especially" seems to help S9 to express the important part in the discussion, in other words the points s/he wants to highlight with a specific purpose. As a stance marker, it also helps the author clarify and form the ideas more systematically.

<u>LEX:</u>

2. *"Supposedly grades are the best application used in education."*

The only instance within the corpus where "supposedly" is used as a hedging device can be found in S9's data set. As a writer who relies on lexical hedges for softening claims, S9 has used a wide variety, from more common words and phrases, most of which are discussed above, to rarer ones like "supposedly".

<u>POSS:</u>

3. *"It is unlikely for parents to let students do what they want."*

"Likely"s infrequence occurrence (10 out of 114 total instances) within the corpus has been mentioned in the analysis of S3. "Unlikely" however, was used only once, and is found in the essay of S9. With the previously discussed "supposedly" which is also used only by S9, it might be concluded that this student writer's lexicon could be larger than the others. The possibility of using dictionaries is eliminated because the essays were all written in class, with the teacher in attendance.

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DOWN:

4. *"Virtually all people believe that they cause stress."*

Another striking example from the S9's essay set is the use of "virtually". This adverbial is also used only once by this mentioned participant, further supporting the claim that this student's lexicon could be more developed then her/his peers.

ASS:

5. *"Some of the parents are not aware that they give harm to their children's lives."*

As mentioned, the use of the assertive pronouns and similar structures are one of the most preferred ways of making hedge statements. S9 also used this method in giving a general statement and personal deduction concerning the subjects of the discussion and their practices.

FREQ:

6. *"A strict grading on studies may commonly discourage students about their academic development."*

"Commonly" was found in 5 instances in the corpus, becoming one of the rarest. S9 used this hedging device with the epistemic modal auxiliary "may", and this removed much of the strength of the statement.

PM:

"He can be more enthusiastic for English class."

"He" is used by the exemplary student S9 to elaborate on her/his propositions concerning grades. Author's position and viewpoint is reflected in her/his choice of referring students in this way: S/he chose to stay out of the group s/he examines; instead of "he" s/he could have used" I" if s/he had counted himself/herself as a part of the people s/he writes about.

STUDENT 10

Table 14. Amounts of hedges used by S10

Type of the hedge	Number (#)	Percentage (%)
1. EPS	13	1.50
2. LEX	42	4.90
3. POSS	1	0.10
4. DOWN	2	0.20
5. ASS	21	2.40
6. FREQ	4	0.40
7. PM	34	4.00
T	151	

*Calculations were made to see what percent is the amount of each type of hedge of the total number of words (841) found in the S10's essay set.

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Student 10 is the second student who used hedges the most after Student 3, who had used them 162 times. In line with most of the other participants' choices; the favorite type is lexical category, and all the lexical hedges and epistemic modality markers took the place of possibility markers in hiding position.

Examples:

EPS:

1. *"...grades under certain circumstances can be both encouraging and discouraging..."*

"Can", whose role as an ability marker vs. epistemic modal auxiliary is discussed in the related section of the "Results and Discussion". It is found to be less preferred in a context used above. One of the reasons for this could be that students are taught only *ability* function of "can" in their earlier language learning experience. Hence in contexts where they want to express possibility they prefer modals like "may" and "might" instead of "can".

LEX:

2. *"Apparently parents always care for their children however everything has a limit..."*

Among all other lexical hedges S10 used, "apparently" stands out from the rest, as it is the only time this adverbial is used within the entire corpus.

POSS:

3. *"However, they maybe forget all that put them to disadvantage."*

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Cases of "maybe" have been discussed above in several examples. S10 also uses marker in a way that shows no difference from the rest of her/his peers.

DOWN:

4. *"Nearly everybody think grades as a tool of 'pekiştireç' (enforcement?)…"*

Downtoners are the second least favorite category of hedges (first being possibility hedges). "Nearly", in this small group of 36 hedges, has been used only twice, one of which is given above.

ASS:

5. *"Students will use it somewhere in life…"*

Probably due to the topics of the essays, "somebody", "someone" and similar assertive pronouns were found to be widespread. "Somewhere" occurs only in the sentence found above.

FREQ:

6. *"… where parents provide their children with usually the best of all things…"*

"Usually" is used in 22 sentences, out of all 114 where a frequency marker is found. It is interesting to observe in the quotation above that next to "usually", which is a hedging device, a superlative adjective is found. Superlative adjectives are typically emphatics that denote certainty (Hyland, 2004), and they also belong in the category of interpersonal metadiscourse markers. S10 combined the frequency adverbial in order to lessen the strength of the emphatic that follows.

PM:

7. *"They will just memorize things and the learning occurring here can't be said*

   as the real learning."

"They" signify the students that S10's essay talks about. Author positioned

herself/himself away from that group by not referring the students as "we".

STUDENT 11

Table 15. Amounts of hedges used by S11

Type of the hedge	Number (#)	Percentage (%)
1. EPS	10	1.00
2. LEX	29	3.10
3. POSS	2	0.20
4. DOWN	1	0.10
5. ASS	32	3.40
6. FREQ	14	1.40
7. PM	9	0.90
T	97	

*Calculations were made to see what percent is the amount of each type of hedge of the total number of words (935) found in the S11's essay set.

Student 11 used the assessment pronouns more than lexical hedges, which is a

deviation from the general tendency of the group. Least frequently utilized hedges

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are possibility markers and downtoners, which make up of the 2.06 and 1.03% of all hedges respectively.

Examples:

EPS:

1. *"If teachers and the educational system want to take feedback from students they might really have to find different ways."*

"Really" is an adverbial used to emphasize the truth value or the importance of the writer's propositions. It is generally used as an emphatic (Hyland 2004; Abdi, 2002) and in this instance, we can observe its co-occurrence with the modal auxiliary "might" which decreases the power of the booster and helps author to readjust his position.

LEX:

2. *"It is fairly enough for a student to get good grades but not learn everything."*

The only instance where the adverbial "fairly" is found in the corpus is in the sentence written above. Fairly means "moderately" or "more or less" and acts as a hedging device here, where it arranges the amount of adequacy conveyed with the immediate following word: "enough".

POSS:

3. *"They possibly hurt them instead of help."*

With its more frequent counterpart "probably", "possibly" is a widely used possibility marker. In the corpus that I studied, however, these two adverbials are most of the time replaced by modal auxiliaries or lexical devices that give a similar meaning.

DOWN:

4. *"...in almost all TV channel you will watch the news..."* [sic]

The role of "almost" in the sentence above, is to save the author from making a generalization that is either not true or cannot be proved.

ASS:

5. *"Parents don't trust their children about anything."*

"Anything" was used by S11 in a way that is commonly found in the corpus. According to Bayyurt (2010), these pronouns help the author highlight the significance of the claims and ideas. S11 made a bold claim that shows us that s/he probably is not afraid of indicating her/his own stance in the discussion.

FREQ:

6. *"English and American students often don't think about grades but in Turkey we do."*

As mentioned in the S5's data analysis, "often" does not occur frequently, and this sentence is one of the 6 instances found in the corpus which features "often" as a frequency marker.

PM:

7. *"What I am trying to say that the knowledge of being graded cause only trouble and failure."*

 S11 strongly highlights her/his own position, by explicitly referring to her/himself.

 In the second section of this chapter, the results and discussion concerning the modal auxiliaries and the modal auxiliary "can" in particular are presented.

Modal Auxiliaries

Participants of the study have been interviewed to gain more insight concerning their language learning background and possible reflections of it on their current performance and preferences of use with modal auxiliaries. In order to see a more quantified picture of the results of the interview data set, the transcriptions were uploaded and digitally coded on NVivo 8 software, which helps the researcher keep the track of each keyword and the value of it. These coded keywords, which are automatically linked to each grounded category, can be compared to one another, thanks to the query-running functionalities of the program. The categories drawn from the data and the interviews analyzed in this manner revealed that the main

pedagogical procedure in teacher training high schools is teacher-centered grammar instruction. Further NVivo 8 analyses of the data showed that 58.33% of the students inform that grammar instruction relied on textbooks, and the teacher literally read it out loud with students and following up by doing related exercises. With the rise of communicative language teaching, an undeniably good amount of teachers incorporated communicative tasks with grammar subjects. 33.33% of the students mentioned their English teachers designing communicative tasks for them. Despite this outcome, it should be noted here that especially for senior students whose top priority is the foreign language test of university entrance exam, teacher's sparing time on communicative aspect of language is not expected. (See the related methodology section for further information on the foreign language education system, language teaching policies and common practices in high schools in Turkey.)

In modal verb instruction, teachers of 41% of the students used textbooks and no other sources were introduced or practiced during the structure. 16.60% of teachers provided students with explicit categorization of the functions of the modal verbs, which should mean, that few students would be able to know the different meanings of a modal verb, or at least would have difficulty in using them in texts. This is directly linked to the interview question related to which function or functions the teacher focused on. The answers gathered from the participants had revealed that a teacher that is not introducing the possibility and prohibition functions of a modal verb, might lead to a case where students would use a limited number of modal auxiliaries and would prefer to utilize the functions that are most salient around.

The modal auxiliaries that students have used in their essays have been listed

as being comprised of *can*; *should, may, must, shall, might, could, ought to, will* and

would. All these verbs have been used the way they were introduced in the English

coursebook referenced in this study (New Bridge to Success). The amounts and

percentages of each modal used are given below.

Table 16. Amounts of Modal Auxiliaries Used by Participants

Modal auxiliary	Number (#)	Percentage (%)
1. should	112	1.10
2. will	50	0.40
3. would	13	0.10
4. can	121	1.20
5. may	113	1.10
6. must	21	0.20
7. could	12	0.10
8. shall	3	0.02
9. ought to	3	0.02
T	448	

*Calculations were made to see what percent is the amount of each type of hedge of the total number of words (10, 116) found in the essays.

The table shows that the most frequently used modal auxiliary by the participants is

"can". "May" and "should" follow it, being found in 113 and 112 different instances

respectively. Results indicate that possibility markers are used more than other deontic modals, being in line with the increased amount of hedges along the course of the semester. As "can" has more than one meaning, which function of "can" is observed in texts will be discussed in the following section.

<div align="center">"can"</div>

The more specific aspect of the modal auxiliaries investigation of the thesis is "can" and how the students use them in their essays. Prior to the discourse analysis, the students were interviewed about their preferences, and the way they were taught about the functions and use of the modal "can". 75% of the participants received an instruction that explicitly categorized the functions of "can", which would theoretically allow them to know how to use them appropriately in different contexts. Despite this, however, they state that the most underlined function in class by the instructor is "ability". This probably has led to all 11 students to call "ability" as the first and foremost function of the modal auxiliary. "Ability" is followed by "possibility" with 10 students including it into the list of functions. The least recalled function is "impossibility" ("cannot"), which is indicated by only 1 student. This is close to the amount of the people who give "requesting" as one of the meanings conveyed by the modal verb.

In order to show which function of "can" has been used most frequently in the essays, a further count was made. The results supported what the students

revealed in the interviews: "Can" as a possibility marker was not used as much as the ability marker. The figures can be seen in the table below:

Table 17. Functions of "can" used by the participants

Function	Number (#)	Percentage (%)
1. Possibility marker	22	18.18
2. Ability marker	75	62.00
3. Impossibility marker	2	1.65
4. Prohibition marker	3	2.4
5. Advice marker	19	15.7
T	121	100

The results of the study revealed that the participating students most frequently used "can" as a *dynamic* modal rather than an *epistemic* one. In their essays, students preferred "might" and "may" to express possibility instead of "can".

Below, you can find some examples featuring various uses and function of "can" from the corpus.

Example 1:

They are not always efficient in education system. They can be problem in student's life.

Example 2:

Firstly, when parents make their children's lives too easy, they can not build self-confidence.

Example 3:

Sometimes families think that they should they should do all the necessary things, and their children cannot do anything because of their very young age.

Example 4:

To sum up, the importance of relation between a parent and their children cannot be neglected.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Summary of the Findings & Teaching Implications

This descriptive study explored the ways in which first year university students in a department of foreign language education at a Turkish state university used modality markers in academic writing. The aim was to reveal a detailed description of how frequently each participating student used hedging devices, as well as the modal auxiliary "can" as a possibility marker in their essays.

The data analyses (the students' essays and the interviews) have shown that the participating students relied on their prior learning experience while using hedging devices in their essays. This factor might have an influence on the rare use of hedging devices in a purposeful way. In other words, the participants lacked awareness on how hedges might have helped them to hold/hide their positions in the arguments that they developed in their academic texts. Furthermore, the participants had a tendency to make hasty and baseless generalizations to avoid proposing untrue claims or reaching definitive conclusions. Although not explicitly instructed to do so, they still used hedges in their essays. This potential persuades us that explicit instruction on hedging might help student authors to position their opinion about the topic of discussion in the texts. The current high school English language curricula and stakeholders' (parents, school administration and similar) expectations on the

way English language is taught (primarily geared towards preparing students to standardized tests such as university entrance examination [LYS, TOEFL, etc.]) influence teachers' liberty to focus on all aspects of academic writing. To overcome this problem, we can suggest that teachers may give a brief instruction on the use of hedging in academic writing, to prepare them for their future studies in higher education.

Cross-linguistic and cross-cultural factors might also have an influence on the use of hedging in academic writing (Bayyurt, 2010; Can 2006) For example, in their respective studies Bayyurt (2010) and Can (2006) found that Turkish academic writers had a tendency to use more hedges than their American counterparts. However, Hinkel (2005) argues that despite this complex nature of hedges, there is still a way of introducing them as part of other grammatical topics, such as, frequency adverbs. In this sense, teachers should be competent in sorting different lexical items into different categories of hedges to help students with their academic writing practice.

In addition to these concerns stated above, another issue that surfaces is that the students relied more on lexical hedges rather than epistemic hedges and modals in their essays. Once again, this emphasizes the fact that students' prior language learning experience might have an influence on their restricted use of the *epistemic modality marker* "can" (please see the Results section for further discussion of the issue in relation to student's data). The results of the interview also support the significance of prior language learning experience on students' academic writing practice at university. When asked in the interviews, participants were not able to list

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all functions of "can" and everyone stated that "ability" has been the first and foremost meaning that comes to their mind whenever they hear this auxiliary. Supporting this oral performance, the majority also failed to use it as a possibility marker in their essays, preferring other lexical devices such as "may" or "might" whenever they wanted to use an epistemic modal. As students claim; in high school, teachers simply read out rules and formulas in grammar classes without introducing the different roles modal verbs assume in various contexts, which clearly leads to students' failure in using them appropriately when writing. To clarify; if they had been taught about the fact that "can" is used as a "hedge" and should be preferred in academic writing instead of, for instance, "copula be", unless one is so sure of the truth value of the argument, they would have had less difficulty in formulating hedged statements and using "can" in a context apart from expressing ability.

The effect of previous language instruction, and the amount and type of exposure to a certain feature of a modal verb's usage in language, has been also counted among possible reasons why the first year participants of Bayyurt & Martı (2010)'s study on speech act of suggestions preferred obligation statements (should, must, have to, had better) over other modal auxiliaries while making suggestions. Researchers revealed that in contrast to this group; a more "experienced" group of language learners (and users), the senior participants, followed "a balanced strategy", and they also used ability statements (can, could) as well as those mentioned above. Similar to the conclusion I have reached; they also suggested that senior students level of English language proficiency, and the previous linguistic knowledge, which

is believed to be based on the traditional formulas used in high school textbooks and the way of instruction, could be the reasons for this.

In short, it can be concluded that this exploratory study revealed that first year students in the foreign language education department utilized hedges to soften their claims, raise or lower their voice in text, and sound uncertain when need be. However, they did not do that purposefully or skillfully, and they need to improve in terms of the amount and variety of hedges they used. They relied on one category too much, ignoring the others, and the modal auxiliaries they used showed that due to lack of appropriate instruction, they tended to use modal verbs with their traditional meanings in mind, disregarding the secondary functions they bear. For that reason, in order to be a proficient academic writer in English, they need explicit academic writing instruction before they reach university level, as well as being introduced to all aspects and ways of using modal verbs.

Suggestions for Further Research

To understand the current and traditional practices of Turkish university students' use of hedges in academic writing in English, more studies should be conducted. For example, teachers may conduct action research to determine the situation and to analyze the needs of their students in improving their academic writing skills. In this way, they will be able to know what is necessary to focus on and what can be improved. Moreover, comparison of different methods of academic writing, e.g. comparison of peer vs. teacher feedback, or product vs. process writing in different classes by the same teacher, may give an idea about how to design their writing

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classes. Cross-cultural studies similar to the one Bayyurt's (2010) did might be helpful to understand the nature of the interaction between Turkish and English in students' academic essays. The effect of language transfer is another factor to developing and understanding this situation.

Studies on hedging may also be conducted with texts of different types, such as, logical division, cause-effect, and compare-contrast to explore different use of hedging in academic writing.

Finally, to reach a sound conclusion on the effect of instruction, two different groups of participating students may be considered, one receiving no instruction on hedging, but the other receiving instruction extensively. This should yield more conclusive results concerning the effect instruction might have on the use of hedges in academic writing.

Limitations of the Study

Since this study is exploratory and descriptive in nature, its results are suggestive rather than conclusive. Therefore, replicating it with a larger group of students with more essays might give a more generalizable set of results. Due to the limited amount of time, there was not a chance to compare the results of one group to another similar group, or with native speakers; which could have added to the academic value of the study.

In this study, another confounding factor that needs to be mentioned is that the researcher was the teacher of the course as well. Hattie and Marsh (2004) found

that there is not a correlation between teaching and conducting research; as most researchers conduct their own studies with data collected from their students. The shortcoming here was the fact that the two processes, i.e. researching and teaching, had to take place at the same time, which might have affected the objectivity of the research. In order to overcome this, besides the researcher's class, data could be collected from a parallel class taught by a different teacher with the same credentials as the researcher.

APPENDICES

A. "can" Instruction in *New Bridge to Success*

MAY, MIGHT, COULD, CAN　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　**UNIT 23**

Use:	
'May, might, could and can' are used to express a weak degree of possibility. **Example:** -He may be sick. (Perhaps he is ill.) -Tom might know Mary's address. (Perhaps Tom knows.)	- She might be studying at home. (Perhaps she is studying at home.) - He can ski on the mountains. (There is enough snow.) - Measles can be quite dangerous. (Sometimes they are dangerous.)

CAN/BE ABLE TO FOR ABILITY　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　**UNIT 13**

Use:	Example:
1- 'Can' is used to express the ability in the present or future. 2- 'Be able to' is used to express the ability in the present or future but 'am/is/are+able to' is uncommon (but possible). It is more commonly used in combination with other auxiliaries.	1- He can carry that heavy parcel because he is strong. 2- He will be able to carry the parcel.

	Modal verbs	Examples	Accepting / Refusing suggestions
a	can (informal suggestion)	We can go windsurfing.	That's a good idea. That's okay. That sounds great. Yes, why not? Yes, please. I'd love to. I'm sorry…
b	shall could (polite or formal suggestions)	Shall we visit her in the hospital? We could watch this soap opera on TV tonight.	I'm afraid … That's not a good idea. Actually, I'd rather not. Thank you very much indeed. Thank you.
c	Let's + bare infinitive	Let's play computer games.	Thanks. That's all right. Yes, please.
d	Why don't ………..?	Why don't we go by bicycle?	No, thank you.
e	How / What about + noun / - ing form?	How about going out for dinner? What about cinema?	

		Examples	Accepting/Refusing offers
a	will	I'll make you an omelette if you are hungry. (I am willing to make you an omelette.)	
b	Will (you) …….? (informal questions and invitations)	Will you have another piece of cake?	That's very kind of you. Thank you.
c	can could Can I …? } to offer to do something for someone else Could I …?	I can / could lend you some money. Can / Could I bring you something to drink?	Yes, please. I'm sorry… I'm afraid… No, thank you.
d	Shall I …? (Do you want me to …?)	Shall I answer the phone for you? (Do you want me to answer?)	
e	Would you like… } noun + Would you prefer…} infinitive (polite or formal offers, invitations)	Would you like some chips? Would you like me to help you? Would you like to dance? Would you prefer to eat chocolate?	

B. List of hedges found in the corpus

some	tend	advocate
a little bit	substantially	argue
many	widely	claim
may	often	propose
can	closely	disagree
sometimes	usual	maybe
not too	common	probably
mainly	not certain	not always
considerable	a bit	rather
considerably	perhaps	generally
few	imply	main
most (of)	partial	me
nearly	likely	actually
not only	normally	somehow
primarily	fairly	mostly
virtually	seemingly	any
possible	typically	commonly
approximately	usually	in fact
might	supposedly	especially
somebody	kind of	apparently
something	assert	possibly
almost	suggest	to some extent
partially	put forward	not necessarily

unlikely	you	our
I	they	my
he	him	your
she	her	his
it	us	her
we	them	their

C. Sample essays

1. Should Parents Make Their Children's Life Too Easy?

Being a parent is the world's one of the most beautiful social roles. However, the notion that our contemporary world is socially "polluted" makes parents very anxious about their children and parenting turns out to be a nightmare rather than being one of the most lovable situations. With their immoderate caring, a result of the aforementioned notion, they became very overprotective and started to help their children even in unnecessary conditions which made their children's life too easy. Consequently, modern children became more dependent on their family and their personal development is hindered.

To start with, childhood should be accepted as a preparatory stage for the rest life. Parents play a huge role in this period. They should let their children start doing tasks by themselves since they are not babies anymore. By doing this, their children will be more independent in their individual lives. However, because of some media reports about a generation is at risk, parents became very anxious about their children and overprotective towards them. This leads to not letting their children to take risks and blocking them from utilizing opportunities to improve themselves. In contrast to what media says, according to criminologists Chesney-Lind and Belknop (2004) and US data gathered by *Child Trends* (2007) the community is now safer than any time in modern history. Shortly, parents should not rely on the exaggerations of the media and let their children have a healthy and preparatory childhood process.

In addition, helping children too much in daily life is harmful for their cognitive development and for their advancement in problem-solving abilities. According to Vygostsky, a very remarkable psychologist in the field of children development and education, assistance is necessary in learning, but his definition of assistance is a little bit different from ours. To him, parents should help their children by giving some clues about how to achieve doing their tasks instead of simply joining them and doing some parts of the task in place of their children. To illustrate, a child is trying to do his/her homework but s/he comes across with some problems and wants some help from his/her mother. In this situation, according to Vygotsky, the mother should explain what the child should do and let him/her do it by him/herself. What is being emphasized here is that if the mother would simply tell the answers to the child, the child would learn nothing. Thus, in short, too much help obstructs children's cognitive development and their improvement in problem-solving abilities.

To conclude, children do not need a very easy life instead what they need is a preparatory life with proportionate difficulty. Parents should not forget that their role here is of great importance and cannot be ignored. Without their consciousness in this topic, there is a possibility that the world become filled with timid and too much dependent people.

2. Grades

In the schools, the students take grades according to their success. Teachers aim to state the situation of the students by giving grades them. The grades are crucial for the students' academic future because they construct their GPA. Many people including me, believe that grades do not encourage learning. Grades make students alienate from schools and they have bad effects on student's career and life.

Grades do not encourage learning and students may not want to go on their school career. For example, mostly students take their grades according to their exam's results. However, exams do not perfectly show a student's knowledge about specific topic, and if a student takes a bad grade, it discourages the students from attending this lesson. The students may not want to study this course and thinks that he/she will never be able to success in this course. If he/she goes on taking bad grades he won't attend the course and will be failed.

Opponents of this topic state that grades are essential and they increase the competity, and this makes the students learn easily and willingly. However competity can be sometimes dangerous. This even may lead the student to have psychological problems. For example, in a class if a student takes worse notes than his classmates, he thinks he is unsufficient. Because he focuses on only this issue, he does not mind learning and does not give importance to it. Learning stays at second plan. Therefore, grades do not encourage learning, and they distract the student's aim which is the learning.

To sum up, grades donot mean everything. They are not always efficient in education system. They can be problem in student's life. If an instructor wants to be sure whether a student learns a subject or not, the student should not have pressure of grades. Since grades do not always show the truth. Learning shouldn't depend on grades.

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