

摘 要

模糊语言现象是一种极为普遍的语言现象。既而莱可芙又将模糊限制语区别于一般的模糊语言现象,认为其是模糊语言家族中最为普遍、最为典型,因而也是最值得研究的语言现象之一。本文主要从社会语用学的角度探究新闻英语中模糊限制语的功能模式,以利于英语学习者阅读、写作英语新闻,提高其英语水平。

国内外许多研究已涉及英语模糊限制语,有助于人们对其理解和掌握。但对模糊限制语在英语新闻文体中的研究鲜有涉及。因此,论文第一章中指出在关联-顺应框架下研究新闻英语中模糊限制语的必要性和重要性。第二章概括总结了前人对模糊限制语的研究。

区别于以往的研究,第三章选用了我国学者杨平提出的“关联-顺应模式”作为理论基础,并辅之以徐盛桓“礼貌原则的新构想”,通过分析研究具体新闻语料,尝试性地提出了模糊限制语在新闻英语中的功能框架。在该框架下,限制语的两大功能可归纳为:(1)成为实现新闻文体特征的一种有效方式;(2)成为调和新闻语篇中人际关系的有利途径。再进一步细分,这两大功能可归纳为七项次功能。前四项,即有助于提高新闻的客观性,有助于提升新闻的适切性,有助于实现新闻语言简洁性的特征,有助于增加新闻的幽默感,是限制语实现新闻文体特征的具体表现;后三项,即有助于作者自我保护,有助于迎合读者要求,有助于保卫新闻中“第三方”的利益,是限制语调和新闻语篇中人际关系功能的具体表现。第四、五章分别详述了这两大功能与其次功能。

最后,第六章总结了模糊限制语在新闻英语中的功能,指出其存在与加强的重要性及其在英语学习者学习过程中的突出地位。文章还分析指出英语新闻模糊限制语可从新闻的不同次语体出发进一步深入研究。

关键字: 新闻英语模糊限制语 关联-顺应模式 礼貌原则新构想 功能框架

Abstract

Linguistic vagueness has been widely evidenced as a popular phenomenon in language, and hedges, which are the most common, typical and worthwhile elements in the study of vagueness, have been differentiated from it by Lakoff. The thesis takes the social-pragmatic perspective in analyzing hedges' functions in English news. It aims to develop a coherent framework in analyzing hedges in English news context and tends to help English learners get an easy access to English news reading and writing, serving as an efficient way of improving their English level.

Lots of studies on English hedges make due contributions to the understanding and mastering of them both at home and abroad, but far from satisfaction, especially in the study of hedges in different genre-based texts. So the first chapter of the thesis has concluded the significance of the study in view of the little study on hedges in English news and the important role played by the learning of appropriate use of hedges for English learners.

The second chapter has given the scenario of previous studies on hedges in various approaches. In view of these studies, it has been pointed out that hedges are also widely used in news reporting. However, the specific study of hedges in English news writing is rare.

In the third chapter, the Relevance-Adaptation Model by our scholar Yang Ping, as well as the New Concept of Politeness Principle by Xu Shenghuan, displays great force in the functional analysis of hedges in English news. Subsequently, the author has tentatively suggested the functional framework of hedges employed in English news. The functions of hedges in news reporting can be categorized into two superordinate functions, that is, a way to realize the characteristics of news style and a way to coordinate the three parties' intra-relationships in the reporting communication. To be subdivided, hedges can be employed to improve news objectiveness, to elevate news appropriateness, to bring news brevity and to integrate the sense of humor into news reporting so as to fulfill the demands of news style; next, they can be rephrased into three sub-functions in lubricating the involved intra-personal relationships in news context, that is, to protect the author himself/herself, to cater for the readers' requirements and to safeguard the *third party's* interests. And the

pragmatic functions of hedges in English news are analyzed with concrete sample sentences taken from recently issued magazines or papers briefly in this chapter, with the following two chapters demonstrating the elaborate illustration.

To sum up, the sixth chapter concludes the functions of hedges in English news and infers hedges' significance in English learners' study. And still the analysis of hedges in the sub-styles of English news needs future exploration. Finally some suggestions for future research are pinpointed.

Key words: Hedges in English News Relevance-Adaptation Model New Concept of Politeness Principle Functional Framework

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Chapter One Introduction

1.1 Background

Along with the emergence of “fuzzy sets” theory by L. Zadeh in 1965, the study of fuzziness in natural language emerges, which has provided a better way of depicting natural languages. Since then, the prevalence of fuzziness in human languages has been the linguists’ new perspective in exploring languages. In subsequence, based on Zadeh’s concept of “fuzzy set”, “grade of membership” and “member function”, early works began to deal with the concept of hedges.

Hedges, carefully distinguished from linguistic fuzziness, are a kind of “words whose job is to make things fuzzier” (Lakoff, 1972). The term was first proposed by G. Lakoff in his work *Hedges: A Meaning Criteria and the Logic of Fuzzy Concepts*. And this definition about hedges is derived from the perspective of language philosophy. The following scholars were inspired by this demarcation and they also illustrated this concept from other different viewpoints, such as semantics, pragmatics, psychology, philosophy, etc. Besides, some linguists have focused on the classification and functions of hedges in general in their studies. In terms of classification, the contributions by L. Zadeh and E.F.Prince can not be omitted. Professor Wu Tieping’s work *Fuzzy Linguistics* has detailed Zadeh’s differentiation of hedges from the point of view of semantics, logic and grammatical structures. While, Prince et. al. has classified hedges from discourse analysis perspective, that is, the two kinds of hedges— Shields and Approximators.

The pragmatic analysis of linguistic phenomena is valuable and appealing to language users and learners. Thus, hedges, functioning as a significant kind of communicative strategy, should be widely and deeply studied on their practical usage.

1.2 Significance of the Study

Seeing previous scholars’ study on English news style, we can conclude that the timeliness, accuracy, brevity have always been emphasized; in addition, the sense of humor is also more and more advocated in news nowadays. Needless to say, this is a way to improve

English news' popularity in times of the emergence of multifarious mass communication channels, such as the internet, the TV programs, and the broadcasting agencies. So, news reporting, as an original and potentially potent communicative medium, must find out a way to stand out of all these new forms of media to gain its status in the mind of the public. The achievement of this point should be taken into serious consideration by these journalists or reporting writers. What's more, although news reporting doesn't need to listen to its readers' comment or questioning directly, it's still a kind of communication including speaker and audience or hearer silently. Audience or readers' appraisal for them is crucial to their prosperity. Therefore, the adherence to the news characteristics and the catering to readers' favorites are equally decisive as successive and popular reports.

Despite of the illustrations or depictions, which just effect the subsidiary functions in news reports, linguistic expressions are still the primary means of statement of facts or opinions in relatively formal written news reports. But which kind or kinds of linguistic devices can appropriately fulfill this bi-directional task, namely, both clinging to news features and catering for the readers simultaneously?

Hedges, a kind of highly explored linguistic strategy in communicative activities, have been elaborately analyzed from the perspective of their meaning potentials and the semantic features. Their pragmatic effects in daily communication and written forms, taking Hyland (1998)'s study on hedges in scientific papers as an example, are carefully derived; while, such kind of research of hedges' functions in journalistic English is not much. This is the first point necessarily mentioned here.

Secondly, Relevance-Adaptation Model is a brand-new and potent model in analyzing the motivations of pragmatic language use contextually and mentally. In accordance with Jef Verschueren's Adaptation Theory, the use of language should be containing both the utterers' many voices and interpreters' many voices (Verschueren, 1999: 77). Working as a writer or speaker, he/she should not only mind him/her own business, but also the audience's reactions and other factors should certainly be carefully thought over. As can be concluded here, the application of language should both serve the writer or speaker's own business and function to cater for the audience's needs or tastes. The analysis in this paper just embraces these two aspects in the use of hedges in journalistic English and tentatively proposes the functional

framework of hedges in consideration of these two aspects with the help of Relevance-Adaptation Model. And to be certain, the functional analysis of hedges by this model is rare, though some studies have taken hedges as a communicative strategy on context.

The beauty of the application of this theory in functional analysis of hedges in journalistic English can be concluded as follows:

(1) Context is an essential idea in pragmatics. Being relevant and adapted to versatile contexts are the decisive factors for communicators' mutual understanding. What's more, the analysis of functions of certain linguistic phenomenon should also take communicators into account. That is, the mutual achievement of communication, with both the writer and the audience in view, signal a successful interaction and news reporting is not the exception either. In a word, the appropriate employment of hedges functions to help to create the ideal communicative context in news reporting.

(2) Language functions as a way to establish harmonious interpersonal relationships. Pragmatic vagueness works as a powerful communicative strategy. And hedges, as part of pragmatic vagueness, play a role in smoothing interpersonal interaction. The appropriate application of hedges in news also facilitates the particular goals to be achieved in reporting.

The third point is that the news style is not a coherently unanimous one, and it is combined through various news materials, which has naturally led to its various sub-styles. English news reports will definitely vary with the changes of these contextual factors according to Crystal & Davy's description (1969:74) . And these factors can be content differentiations (such as scientific news, political news, entertainment news and sports, etc), and the nature of reported events (that is, hard news and soft news) (Zhang Jian, 2004: 33-34). In Verschueren's opinion, the contextual factors and stylistic factors can mutually adapt to each other on various levels, which should give rise to the different uses of hedges either in realizing forms or occurrence frequencies in journalistic English. So, undoubtedly, the functions of hedges in each sub-style of English news could fluctuate to a certain degree. However, because of the limited energy and conditions, this paper may not be able to study this point deeply; just some tentative demonstrations will be mentioned in the paper in facilitating the analysis of the functions of hedges in negotiating the intra-personal relationships.

Fourthly, based on Hymes (1972: 21-24)'s Communicative Competence, the aim of language learning is the ability to perform a repertoire of speech acts in order to participate in speech events. This is another way of saying that the practical performance with the target language is the most important aim in the acquisition process for these language learners. English, as a world language, has become most people's second language; to be added, English news, as a powerful and prevalent medium for those English learners' study, should be carefully analyzed. Therefore, in the acquisition of English, both teachers and learners should pay particular attention to English hedges, which is a common phenomenon in it, and try to reach the goal of correct understanding and flexible employment of them.

1.3 Scope and Structure of the Thesis

This paper will take Prince et. al's classification of hedges, that is, Shields and Approximators, as well as the addition to this categorization by Chinese scholar Yao Jun, as the basis of sample or example collection. The theoretical analysis will be from Yang Ping's Relevance-Adaptation Model, and the modification of Brown and Levinson's Politeness Principle by our scholar Xu Shenghuan, that is the New Concept of Politeness Principle.

The sample sentences or expressions to be collected and analyzed are from lately *Time* and *Newsweek*, since these articles are written by native English speakers, and they can reflect the use of hedges in English news in the native speakers' tradition. In addition, the sources are totally written. As usual, written language is regarded as more precise and standard, so the analysis of written records with the prevalent use of hedges can fully demonstrate, in one aspect, the ubiquity of hedges in language application and, in other sense, their contributive role in facilitating precision in such a matter-of-fact context in the well-acknowledged sense. As a consequence, the specific functions of hedges in them to be detected will be more particular and conspicuous, and the paper is more meaningful in the analysis.

Along with the demonstration of the use of different categories of hedges in different subject-oriented sub-styles of English news in brief, which can be classified into ten sub-styles, that is, political news, economic news, technological news, cultural news, sports news, violence and crime news, disaster news, weather news, obituary, entertainment and miscellanies(Zhang Jian, 2004:34) in terms of the reported content, the coverage of these

evidential sentences or expressions will be more comprehensive instead of being partial and in lack of persuasiveness. And through this thesis, the tentatively proposed functional framework in analyzing hedges in journalistic English are fully elucidated with the aid of Relevance-Adaptation Model, which is rare in functional analysis of hedges in different genres. Next, the demonstration for the main contents for each chapter is listed out successively.

Chapter One gives a general introduction. The close relationship between vague language and hedges is presented. And the significance of the study is expounded. In addition, the theoretical framework of the study is pragmatics, which is briefly mentioned in the part. In the end, the construction of the thesis is listed out to help create readers' general idea about the thesis.

Chapter Two depicts the scenario of the historical research on hedges. Particularly, the categorization of hedges is elaborated, since the pragmatic classification of hedges and its functions are closely related with the following study on journalistic English.

Chapter Three presents the theoretical foundations of the thesis and the tentatively proposed functional framework of hedges in journalistic English based on it. Firstly, the theoretical bases are illustrated and compared. The Relevance theory by Sperber & Wilson and Jef Verschueren's Adaptation Theory are elaborated. Besides, our scholar Yang Ping's Relevance-Adaptation Model has grasped the essence of these two theories, and this model must play a more powerful role in practical analysis. Other pertinent pragmatic theories are inferior to this relatively new model by comparison. Secondly, the tentative framework of hedges' functions in journalistic English is proposed, and the two major functions of hedges are the fulfillment of English news style features and the coordination of the involved intra-personal relationships. The following two chapters have elaborated the two major functions with concrete samples respectively.

Chapter Four lists the sub-functions of hedges in fulfilling English news style's features. Firstly, some general features of journalistic English at the level of lexicon and syntactics are displayed and their correlation with hedges' semantic features is transparently pinpointed, through which the indispensable position of hedges in journalistic English reflects the characteristics of news reporting in a sense. Next, the detailed analysis of the four

sub-functions of hedges in realizing news style is to come. They serve the function of improving news objectiveness or truthfulness, elevating news appropriateness, bringing news brevity and integrating the sense of humor into news.

Chapter Five demonstrates the function of hedges in coordinating the involved intra-personal relationships in English news. To be specific, hedges function to protect authors themselves, to cater for readers' requirements and to safeguard the *third party's* interests.

Chapter Six concludes this thesis. In this part, the functions of hedges are summarized. Starting from this point, we get the implications of this study, that is, firstly, the detailed analysis of hedges in news sub-styles should be pursued; secondly, the importance of hedges in second language acquisition is crystal and to be extended, the daily communication is also inseparable from appropriate use of hedges. Lastly, the limitations are also pinpointed, such as the incomplete analysis of hedges in sub-styles of news reporting, which should be carried out with enormous materials and sophisticated data analysis.

Chapter Two Literature Review

Fuzziness is a common phenomenon in most languages. It refers to the complexity and indeterminacy or potentiality or borderline case by different scholars. Among them, the *borderline case* is commonly utilized in the study of linguistic fuzziness. This can be represented by the unclear boundaries of reference of many words in the subjective world, that is, the interrelationship of every two concepts is uninterrupted. Such cases are “bald”, “tall”, and “red” and so on (Zhang Qiao, 1998: 70).

Considering Mike, who is a borderline case of “tall”, we may be inclined to say it is indeterminate whether or not Mike is tall: the meaning of “tall” is too fuzzy to fix a specific height differentiating the two opposite concepts tall and not-tall. Not only does the single dimension of variation associated with such word as height for “tall” exist, but also the multi-dimensional fuzzy expressions connected with several different dimensions of variation are involved in determining. The applicability of “big” depends on both height and volume, and with “nice”, there is not even a clear-cut set of dimensions determining the applicability of it: it is a fuzzy matter as to which factors are relevant and the dimensions blend into one another.

So far, the fuzziness in the reference of words in language is much illustrated. While, the linguistic fuzziness can be extracted from a kind of expression, which is universally employed to modify, restrict concepts or propositions in view of avoiding much more assertive words and leaving room for further ratification, such as *sort of, almost, about, somewhat, seem, etc.* These are the hedges concluded from the previously mentioned Fuzzy semantics, which are viewed as the most common, typical and worthwhile in the study of vagueness in language (qtd. Zhang Qiao, Lakoff, 1998:39). And Jef Verschueren has defined hedges as “direct modifications of propositional content, without the detour of commenting on its status in attitudinal, epistemic or evidential terms, but equally indicative of metapragmatic awareness” (Jef Verschueren, 2000:193). So, the study of hedges should not be restricted in the framework of fuzzy semantics. Its pragmatic values are also appreciated in study. The detailed study of hedges in history will be presented, which will be the cornerstone for our further study.

2.1 The Taxonomies of Hedges

Before the systemic summarization of the study of hedges, the basic categories of hedges help us gain a general view of them. L. Zadeh, WuTieping, Hyland, Prince et al., He Ziran and Yao Jun classify hedges respectively, starting from different point of views and, consequently they have given different results.

2.1.1 From Grammatical Perspective

There are four categories of hedges according to Zadeh in terms of grammatical categories (qtd. Wu Tieping, 1999: 73):

- (i) Some adjectives and adverbs such as *sort of, a little bit, maybe, often, usually, always, quite, very, almost, some, somewhere, recently, somewhat, etc.*
- (ii) Words with suffixes such as *-ish, -likely, -ly, etc.*
- (iii) Phrases such as *as if, so...that, as though, so...as to, etc.* These phrases show the speaker's uncertainty about what he said.
- (iv) Sentences such as *I think, I guess, I wonder, As far as I can tell, etc.* These sentences can help the speaker to express himself more indirectly and more politely.

2.1.2 From Pragmatic Perspective

Based on the analysis of the corpus of the physician interaction of ICU, Prince and his colleagues have reached a conclusion that talks between doctors, even about medical technology, are still indeterminate and fuzzy to a great degree and in their utterances, hedges are adopted repeatedly (Prince et al., 1980: 83-89). According to their classification, there are at least two kinds of hedging devices. One is called Approximator which belongs to semantic category; the other is called Shield which belongs to pragmatic category.

E.g. (1) The answer is *sort of* wrong.

(2) *I think* the answer is wrong.

In the sentence 1), *sort of* denotes the utterer's incredulous attitude and weakens the truth value to some degree, but this hedge has nothing to do with the speaker-commitment. While, *I think* in 2) indicates that the degree of speaker-commitment is high and the utterer even considers that this proposition is only a personal statement. In other words, *sort of* is a hedge

with fuzzy meaning in itself, which is determined by its conceptual meaning; whereas, *I think* indicates that the utterer and the proposition denote a personal relationship, which is subjective.

Here is a clear diagram of hedges of Prince et al's taxonomy (qtd. Zhou Ruiqi, 2001:13) with proper instances:

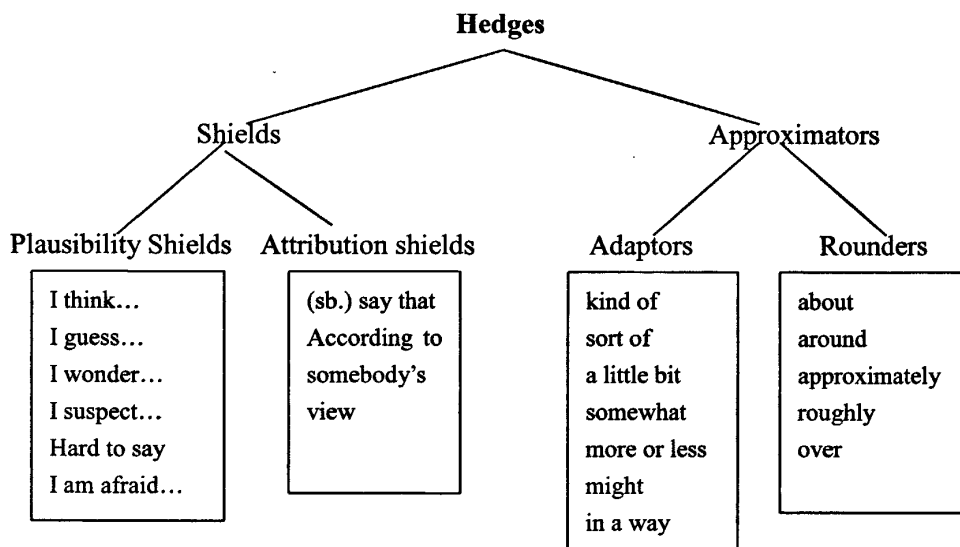


Figure 2.1 Prince et al's Model

Approximators are words or phrases that can affect the truth-conditions of propositions, either by adapting a term to a non-prototypical situation, or by indicating that some terms are round-off representations of some figure. Within Approximators, Adaptors, the words which can modify the degree of an utterance, and Rounders, the words which can bring a changeable range of understanding to an utterance, are the members.

While, Shields are those that do not affect the truth-conditions but reflect the degree of the speaker's commitment to the truth-value of the whole proposition conveyed. In other words, they will not change the original meaning of an utterance, but they can mitigate the affirmative tone of speaking. Shields can also be subdivided into two types: plausibility shields and attribution shields. Plausibility shields are the kind that can directly express the speaker's doubtful attitude to an utterance. Attribution Shields are used to express the attitude of guess or doubt that is expressed not by the speakers themselves but by a third person. They are more indirect than Plausibility Shields.

Next, Hyland (1998) has proposed an analytical framework for hedging in academic writing, that is, the content-oriented hedges, accuracy-oriented hedges, writer-oriented hedges and reader-oriented hedges. The model can be described as follows:

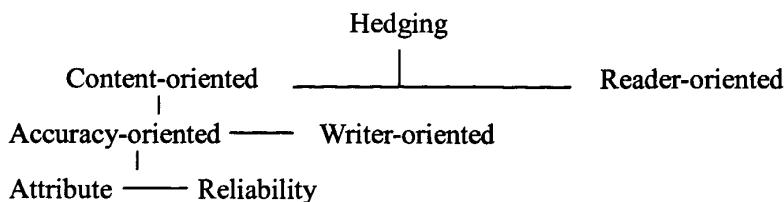


Figure 2.2 Hyland's Model

Content-oriented hedges can serve the effect of mitigating the relationship between propositional content and a non-linguistic mental representation of reality.

Accuracy-oriented hedges take the writer's desire into account to express propositions with greater precision in areas often characterized by revision and reinterpretation. These hedges are similar to the Approximators in Prince et al's taxonomy. And with its sub-division, there are attribute and reliability hedges, which have different motivations, functions and realization forms. Attribute hedges allow deviations in idealized behavior to be accurately expressed. They are partly equal to Rounders in Prince et al's categorization. Reliability hedges express simple subjective uncertainty in a proposition and thus implicate the writer's degree of confidence or certainty of his/her knowledge.

Writer-oriented hedges concentrate on writers and aim to shield the writers from the possible consequences of negotiability by restricting personal commitment. These hedges are probably equal to Shield in Prince et al's categorization.

Reader-oriented hedges display the various dimensions of the social relationships between the writer and the reader.

Our scholar He Ziran has also classified hedges in a similar way with Prince et al, and represented them in Chinese.

Depending on Prince et al. and HeZiran's categorization, our scholar Yao Jun (2003:81) has expanded the content of Approximators, the following figure is his new edition concerning the classification of Approxomators in practical usage:

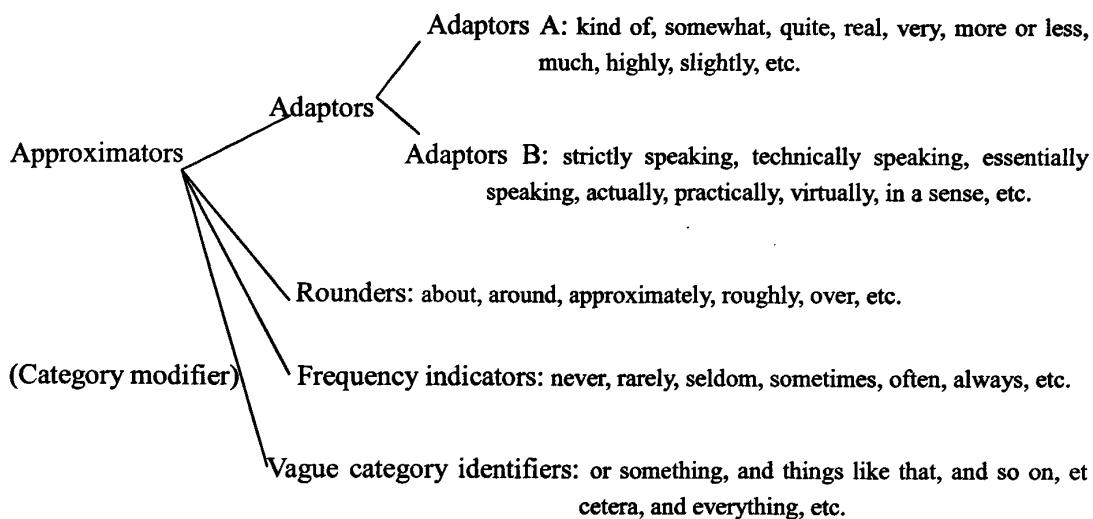


Figure 2.3 Yao Jun's Extension of Approximators

In this relatively more complicated categorization model, the author has subdivided Adaptors into Adaptors A, which are used directly to modify fuzzy words or phrases to indicate their subordinate degree, and Adaptors B, which are used to reconstruct the category structure under certain restricted standard.

On top of that, the author has added two kinds of hedges within Approximators, that is, the Frequency indicators and Vague category modifiers. The former expresses the temporal frequency of ascribing a certain object or thing to a certain category, and the latter is a peripheral member of Category modifiers, initially proposed by Joanna Channell, which is closely connected with Rosch's prototypicality within categories. Through the experiment of Channell, the use of Vague category identifiers is clinging to the use of proper exemplars, which are usually the members of the prototypicality the speaker aspires to present. The basic structure in using Vague category identifiers is Exemplar + Tag, such as *bread or something*.

From the classifications above, it is considered that Zadeh's framework has built a way of a quantitative approach to fuzzy semantics and fuzzy syntax. However, the following classified categories are constructed from the perspective of pragmatics, though these scholars have taken different materials as their analyzing tools. Therefore, these practically concluded classifications can be practically employed to analyze the real discourses to be beneficial to our deep understanding of hedges.

2.2 The Various Approaches to Hedges

2.2.1 The Logical or Semantic Study of Hedges

The study of hedges is prevalent both at home and abroad. As a consequence, the achievements are well accumulated, which are especially significant for our further study. Thus, in this part, the researches on English hedges are to be summarized from the logical or semantic perspective.

In Fuzzy set theory, Lofti A. Zadeh ' equation $\mu_A(X)$ is assumed to range in the interval $[0,1]$ and correspond to the grading membership between 0 and 1, with 0 and 1 representing non-membership and full membership, respectively. For example, if u is a set of integers from 0 to 100, then the grading membership of a man who is 25 years old within the class of young men might be ascribed to be 0.8 (qtd. Du Houwen, Zadeh, 1995: 64-69).

Based on this theory, Zadeh (1972) has proposed a basic idea that linguistic hedges such as "very", "more or less", "essentially", "slightly", etc. might be regarded as operators which act upon the fuzzy set representing the meaning of their operands. As an illustration, in case of the composite term "very tall man", the operator "very" influences the fuzzy meaning of the term "tall man". As it is clear, the analysis of hedges is from the point of view of semantics and logics.

And, according to his fuzzy set theory, there are two types of hedges. In terms of the first type, there is "very", "much", "more or less", "slightly", etc., which can be approximated by an operator acting upon a single fuzzy set, that is, they are used to restrict the vague degree of vague words. While in terms of the second type, they are "technically", "essentially", "practically", "particularly", etc., and the effect of these hedges is more complicated, requiring a description of the manner in which the components of their operands are modified (qtd. Wu Tiejing, 1999:71-72).

However, George Lakoff was the first person in proposing the term "hedges" from vague language. Her study of hedges can be traced back to an international conference on lexicography in New York in 1972. In this forum, Lakoff, the American transformative semanticist, gave a speech "Hedges and meaning criteria" on using fuzzy set theory in lexicography. This article was included in *Lexicography* in English edited by R. I. McDavid,

Jr., A. R. Duckett. Another article by Lakoff (1972) is “Hedges: a study in meaning criteria and the logic of fuzzy concepts” in *Papers from the 8th Regional Meeting*, in which she suggested that “some of the most interesting questions are raised by the study of words whose meaning implicitly involves fuzziness, words whose job is to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy” (Lakoff, 1972:195).

Her study was initiated with a discussion of the semantically restrictive effects of a sort of hedges such as *sort of*, *kind of*, *technically speaking*, etc. According to her point of view, words like “sort of” can transform the fuzziness or vagueness degree. For instance, in the phrase “sort of tall”, *sort of* heightens the medium value of “tall”, while the maxim value is lowered. Starting from the perspective of semantics, her study of linguistic hedges detected that some linguistic hedges could be interpreted beyond their surface meaning, which were not included in the dictionary.

What’s more, she considered that the functions of hedges were mainly embodied in two aspects:(1) They can change the truth value of propositions; (2) They express individual opinions or subjective evaluations. Since then, in the West, hedges have been referred to as *softeners* (Crystal & Davy, 1975), *downtoners* (Quirk et al, 1985), *weakeners* (Brown & Levinson, 1987), and *pragmatic devices* (Holmes, 1995), etc.

Her study has contributed a lot to the further study of hedges in language by the following scholars, both at home and abroad.

In China, Wu Tieping is the first scholar to introduce and systemically study vague language. His article “The First Study of fuzzy language” in *Foreign Language* is the first attempt to use the fuzzy theory to analyze the fuzzy phenomenon in natural language, which marks the birth of fuzzy linguistics in China. Later, he has published several articles about the fuzziness of language one after another and compiled some of these articles into a book, named *Fuzzy Linguistics*, published in 1999. In the book, the author has copiously quoted from many sources and explained the profound questions about fuzzy linguistics and the various factors influencing fuzziness in a simple way, such as geographical factors, political, economical and social ones. In the study of hedges, he has quoted Zadeh’s research results in his article.

Zhang Qiao (1998:188) has defined a hedge word as a word that brings in a fuzzy reading (e.g. *around two o'clock*), or modifies fuzziness to an extent (e.g. *very in very many*). She has also mentioned that hedges can be used to test fuzziness and any word which can combine with hedges belongs to a kind of fuzzy categories, for the premise of adding hedges is that the modified semantic meaning can be represented by degree.

In spite of their pioneering approach in this field, their studies are mainly semantics-oriented, so other approaches to hedges are still necessary.

2.2.2 The Cognitive Study of Hedges

As time goes by, the study of hedges has been extended. Scholars have taken great concern on the other aspects of hedges in addition to their semantic meaning. Eleanor Rosch (1973) has made the fundamental contributions from the perspective of cognitive psychology. Rosch has dealt with semantic prototypes from the cognitive viewpoint and argued that “natural languages themselves possess linguistic mechanisms for coding and coping its gradients of category membership”, to which hedges belong according to Rosch’ point of view. This is a brand new perspective in seeing this linguistic phenomenon, and it has provided us with a new way of interpreting and comprehending hedges.

2.2.3 The Pragmatic Study of Hedges

In 1975, Fraser has analyzed modal verbs from the perspective of pragmatics in his article “Hedged Performatives”. He has considered the effect that modals and semi-modals have on the illocutionary act denoted by a performative verb in performative sentences like “I must advise you to remain silent”, in which the modal word “must” gets the speaker off the hook, and relieves him or her of some of the responsibility, since “must” has connoted the objective requirements. He has also dealt with hedges from the point of view of mitigation and politeness research in 1980. According to him, expressing a desire to perform a speech act (e.g. *I’d like to suggest that...*) may be taken as a hedged, indirect performance of that speech act since it is taken as a way of indirectly asking the hearer for permission to perform the act, and this permission is taken for granted unless the hearer voices some opposition to the speech act.

Meanwhile, Brown and Levinson(1978) are mostly concerned with the interactive effects of hedges as a strategy for politeness in verbal communication, in which hedges are used to

weaken speech act and protect the negative face of the utterer or the hearer. They have viewed hedges as a device to avoid disagreement, and their analysis has also confirmed that, in some instances, hedges apply to the context of threats to positive face, that is to say, they provide redress for threats to self-esteem and the sense that others share the hearer's values.

In addition, Wales (1989) has pointed out that hedges are used to restrict or relax the utterance so as to decrease the possible risk. In other words, hedges are used to reduce the strong mood of the utterance or express politeness or show respect for people whose status is high.

Besides, for the pragmatic analysis of hedges, Joanna Channell should be an indispensable one in terms of the contributions in this aspect, since she has had a special interest in the application of linguistics to real world issues and she has been a pioneer in the study of hedges from the angle of pragmatics. Channell has proposed a closer definition, that is, "hedging refers to the use of words or expressions which encode the speaker/writer's degree of commitment to the truth of what they say" (Channell, 1994:218). In her work *Vague Language*, which has been composed on the basis of the results of her study on authentic data instead of theoretical research only, lots of Approximators in numbers and non-numerical forms are illustrated in terms of meaning, connotative implications and syntactical and collocational possibilities. The effect of using an Approximator is to designate an interval of numbers in her viewpoint. For example, the *or so* approximation tends to designate a longer interval than *about/(a)round one* in her empirical research. Furthermore, she has worked on approximations in academic writing on economics (Channell, 2000:175).

Moreover, except for the academic writings, the multifarious kinds of discourses on the various types of subjects are also under view in the extended analysis of hedges. The study of scientific writing was conspicuous. In 1989, G. Myers has pointed out the politeness effects of hedges in scientific papers in the "The Pragmatics of Politeness in Scientific Articles". In his viewpoint, hedges are utilized to adapt to the politeness needs, and the meaning of hedges in these articles is determined by the genre characteristics, the readers and the personality traits of the writers. And they are used to show how writers adjust how much precision they include, and similarly, the interviews with authors indicate their unconscious understanding of the maxim of Quantity (Myers, 1989:1-35).

Afterwards, Hyland has also studied the practical functions of hedges in scientific research paper, and he thinks that almost all language forms can be considered as hedges as long as they have functions as follows: (1)The speaker has less responsibility to the truth value of speech; (2)The speaker doesn't make speech too definite and leave questions open (Hyland, 1996). It is clear that in these academic writing, writers usually have the means of giving exact figures at their disposal, but they choose not to. The valuable influences of Approximators are stressed.

In general, hedges in academic articles not only function to show politeness, save face or cater for the texts' requirements, but they reflect the changeability of the textual contents and their linguistic laws. Simultaneously, the objectivity is stressed by using hedges in these papers.

Except for foreign scholars' studies, our scholar have also explored this aspect and gained some results. Wang Fengxin (2002)'s exploration of the application of fuzzy grammar of English opens a new sight at home. In his opinion, fuzziness means that a semantic notion has fuzzy delimitation in a narrow sense and is generalized in a broad sense to be indeterminate, imprecise, or inaccurate. Therefore, fuzziness, uncertainty or indeterminacy is in absolutely pervasive use while there is only one precise expression in a specific context. Generally, the pragmatic value of fuzziness, including fuzziness, ambiguity and vagueness, is termed as vagueness. Xu Changxian has elaborated the pragmatic functions of English hedges in general, such as making the expressions more euphemistic, more polite and appropriate, more humorous, establishing the harmonious personal relationship and relieving the utterers' responsibility (Xu Changxian, 2006:37-39).

As to the studies in view of the textual variations or textual qualities on their own, the achievements are not rare. Many scholars have explained hedges from the point of view of pragmatics in light of the different texts. Professor Ran Yongping analyzes the application of fuzzy language in news reports and the effects of fuzzy words or expressions in news can be concluded as vague, indirect and euphemistic transference of the source information, the generality force in reporting, the flexibility feature in avoiding too strict in reports and the attraction of them in reporting titles to readers (Ran Yongping, 1996:8-12). Zhang Shujing explains the reasons for the existence of fuzzy phenomenon in news reports and concludes

that it is an essential part in news (Zhang Shujing, 1999:22-24).

Other scholars, such as Zhao Yingling(1999), Huang Xiaoping(2002), explored the semantic features, linguistic realizations, motivations, categorizations, pragmatic functions and the translation of hedges in scientific discourse and academic articles(Yang Huiling, 2001; Yang Jie, 2002).

At last, according to the author's retrieval through the internet, it is found that among the 337 papers on linguistic hedges published in the four data bases on the cnki.net, most of them are the study of hedges from the perspective of logic and semantics, and the study of hedges on different genres are mainly in connection with English abstracts, medical English, economical writings, commercial writings, advertisements, political texts and political interviews and news. However, only ten of them are concerned with hedges in news, which is just 2.97% among all the relevant issues. The ratio is so low that further pragmatic study on this topic is really necessary due to the popularity of this medium.

2.3 Summary

To sum up, the development of the studies on hedges, including the classification of them in detail, is clearly presented in the section, and the textual factors in affecting the utilization of hedges are also pointed out, for vagueness is one of the features of natural language and it is universally presented in different styles, such as news, advertisements, literary works, daily conversations and so on. Nonetheless, the study of vagueness in various texts are frequently resorted to rather than the study of hedges in them—the most important member in linguistic vagueness. The pragmatic categorizations definitely demonstrate the communicative functions of hedges, but they are just in a very general way, rarely involving any specific factors, such as genres, genders and social status.

Although in the latter periods, scholars began to show the trend of study on the uses or functions in these particular discourses, the scope should be expanded to literary genres still, such as laws English, foreign trade negotiation.

When it comes to the published works, the study of linguistic vagueness is mainly focused on vagueness in generalities. Miao Dongshen's *The Guidance to Linguistic Vagueness*, Jiang Youjing's *The Elementary Introduction to Vague Rhetoric*, Chen Zhi'an et al.'s *The*

General Discussion on Vague Linguistics and others can serve as the evidences. No books have elaborately taken hedges as the chief topic, not to mention the specific research of hedges in particular texts.

News, working as a popular and well-received mass reading material, should be paid particular attention; in consequence, the particular exploration of functions or effects of hedges performed in news style are indispensable, which is a good way of promoting their proper use. A few scholars have explored news vagueness in a general way, but the detailed analysis of news' hedges is rare. For that reason, this thesis has an attempt to detect the functions of hedges in journalistic English from a new angle, namely the angle of relevance-adaptation model.

In view of this, Yao Jun's model, which is comparatively complete, will be much more applicable. So the selection of hedges in materials for perceiving their functions is to be carried out under the guidance of Yao Ping's modification of Prince et al. and He Ziran's categorization.

Chapter Three A Functional Analysis of Hedges in English News

As is shown with the introductory discussion, the study of hedges originates in logics and semantics, but has lately been developed further in pragmatics. So far, it has extended to areas like metacommunication and to communication strategies like mitigation and politeness. Therefore, hedges are often discussed within the frameworks of Speech Act Theory (e.g. House & Kasper, 1981; Blum, 1984), Illocutionary Acts (e.g. Fraser, 1975), Cooperative Principle and Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987). While in recent studies, Relevance Theory and Adaptation Theory have also been utilized to pursue the use of hedges deeply. And, the application of these relatively new theories is beneficial to the strong and comprehensive explanation of hedges in use.

In this paper, we will mainly take the last two theories as the theoretical basis, since they have been well combined into the Relevance-Adaptation Model by our scholar Yang Ping. To be certain, it is more potent in terms of its applicable capacity and explanative ability. Therefore, in this chapter, we will see the advantages of the theoretical basis in detail; in comparison, the shortages of the relatively old principles are expounded. As a consequence, the use of the new theories is sound and more favorable to support the tentatively suggested functional framework of hedges in English news.

3.1 Theoretical Foundations

3.1.1 Cooperative Principle and Conversational Implicature

Herbert Paul Grice has found that people are always cooperative in communication; to put it another way, people should observe the four maxims of Cooperative Principle in the process of communication. These maxims are as follows (qtd. Hu Zhuanglin, 2001:253-254):

Quantity: 1. Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange)

2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Quality: Try to make your contribution one that is true.

1. Do not say what you believe to be false.

2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

Relation: Be relevant.

Manner: Be perspicuous

1. Avoid obscurity of expression.
2. Avoid ambiguity.
3. Be brief.
4. Be orderly.

According to this theory, the frequent occurrence of hedges in human languages is unreal. But, Grice has also noticed that in daily communication, people do not usually say things directly, with sufficient information, so the violation of these maxims is quite common in real communication. What do these violations imply? From Grice's point of view, these violations just show the conversational implicature.

In practice, the implicature is generated by the speaker's saying of something which is potentially inadequate, false, irrelevant or opaque. Since the speaker does not seem to be trying to deceive the audience deliberately in any sense, the audience would, in turn, be forced to seek for other possible interpretations, where the implicature emerges. And, obviously, hedges do violate the maxims and the news reporters often use hedges instead of direct and accurate expressions. Thus, the use of hedges in news directs readers to seek after the kind of implicature. Through this inferential process of implicature, hedges' functions in news can be derived.

However, this principle does not touch upon the interpersonal relationships, which is so crucial in communication. So the analysis of hedges in use with it contains the huge weak-point, which, in return, will lead to the partial feedback definitely.

3.1.2 Politeness Principle and New Concept of Politeness Principle

As to the motivation for the use of hedges, a lot of discussions have concentrated on their use in spoken discourse, and the most frequently mentioned motivating factor is politeness. Politeness is a "pragmatic mechanism" (Trosbory, 1995), in which a variety of structures work together according to the speaker's intention of achieving smooth communication.

Politeness has been of great concern to a number of linguists, and principles of politeness have been presented, notably by R. Lakoff, Brown and Levinson, and Leech. Leech's description of Politeness principle is included in six maxims. That is (qtd. He Zhaoxiong, 1999: 219),

- 1) Tact maxim (in impositives and commissives)
- 2) Generosity maxim (in impositives and commissives)
- 3) Approbation maxim (in expressives and assertives)
- 4) Modesty maxim (in expressives and assertives)
- 5) Agreement maxim (in assertives)
- 6) Sympathy maxim (in assertives)

And the principle involved may be realized in giving options and minimizing cost of others. Although this Politeness Principle was initially proposed as a way of deepening the study on Conversational Implicature in actual communication, it was in lack of comprehensiveness as a pragmatic theory in explaining the politeness in society in both eastern and western countries. Our scholar Xu Shenghuan (1992) has pinpointed its disadvantages, including three aspects in total.

Firstly, the theory does not cover some usual polite or impolite phenomena in languages in spite that it has generalized the deliberate violation of Cooperative Principle arising from the euphemistic use of language in view of reducing pejorative, antagonistic or divergent words between communicators. Secondly, the six pairs of maxim-minimum use of languages go to extreme without the consideration of various social contexts or of opposition to people's widespread habits in linguistic communication. Thirdly, and most importantly, he has proposed independently the *third party* in communication, to which sufficient importance is not attached in previous pragmatic theories.

As a result, Professor Xu's New Concept of Politeness Principle has been proposed with a view of promoting the interrelationship of various involved parties, coming up with the employable politeness strategies. In the former part of the theory, it is to coordinate the three parties' relationships in communication, that is, the triangle relationships among speaker,

audience and the *third party*, who are not the direct audience or receiver of what the speaker says, but in one way or another, they get some connection with the communication itself. They can be either the subject or topic of communication or some even distant and indirect referents in it. For the latter part of the theory, it is concerned with the negative and positive politeness strategies. Considering the three parties in news reporting, we can grasp the interpersonal function of hedges in coordinating various factors to achieve success in communication, and this function can be elaborated into the three parts, based on the three parties' distinction in the revised theory.

Just as the well-known point, that is, the polite use of languages is concerned with the partners' communicative relationships and their mutual social positions and close-distant relationships in reality. To truly transcribe these factors theoretically, Xu Shenghuan (1992) has depicted three ways of promoting mutual relationships. They are:

- (1) to pay attention to speaker himself, referring to these that is suitable for one's own identify in society, accompanied by being always modest;
- (2) to respect the partner, referring to these that is appropriate to the partner and usually in a respectful or polite manner.
- (3) to take the *third party* into account. That is to pay particular attention to the present third party and the mentioned third party with a view of avoiding saying what is unfit for him/her or, if necessary, saying what is proper or beneficial for him/her.

When it comes to the employment of politeness strategy, he has also suggested two. The one is the Positive strategy, saying what is modest, respectful or courteous; the other is the Negative strategy, saying what is moderate. Combining the ways of promoting relationships and the application of politeness strategies just leads to Xu Shenghuan's New Concept of Politeness Principle, which is of great importance to our later interpretation of interpersonal relations in news context, and it also results in the hedges' function in coordinating the intra-personal relationships in it.

3.1.3 Relevance-Adaptation Model

In the light of our scholars' study, each principle or theory has its own existed values seeing from the perspective of fact, but still it is inadequate, leaving room for correctness or supplement. So based on the previously proposed theories, Dan Sperber and D. Wilson

(1986/1995) have developed a theory of overt communication and understanding, that is, the *Relevance Theory*, from the cognitive viewpoint. Their assumption is that human cognition is relevance-oriented: we pay attention to information that seems relevant to us. So the process of linguistic communication is a process of cognition-inference mutual manifestness, and the cooperative agreement of the two is derived from the “optimal relevance”. The inference in search of the optimal relevance is based on contextual assumptions. However, contextual effects are not obtained gratuitously: they cost some mental effort to derive, and the greater the effort needed to derive them, the lower the relevance will be. Thus, relevance depends on contextual effects and processing effort. The greater the contextual effects, the greater the relevance; but the greater the processing effort needed to obtain these effects, the lower the relevance. And the optimal relevance is meant to spell out what the hearer is looking for in terms of effort and effect. On a given interpretation, an utterance is optimally relevant if and only if (He Zhaoxiong, 2000:200):

- (a) it achieves enough contextual effects to be worth the hearer’s attention;
- (b) it puts the hearer to no gratuitous processing effort in achieving those effects.

Relevance Theory has been equally concerned with the implicit and explicit sides of communication rather than the implicit side only. Although it does not put out predictions as to whether more polite or less polite behavior is more likely in a given situation, it can explain why, for example, a less direct formulation may be more relevant than a direct one.

Subsequently, in the realm of Jef Verschueren (2000)’s Adaptation Theory, the various levels of language construction adapted to the diverse contexts are depicted in detail. It touches upon the prerequisite conditions for linguistic choices and provides the convenience for their pragmatic implications. The author has proposed that the process of language use is a process of making choices in language dynamically. He also holds that language has such characteristics as variability, negotiability and adaptability in understanding the process of “making choices”, which is the base-line description of language use. Variability is concerned with the property of language which defines the range of possibilities from which choices can be made. Negotiability refers to the linguistic choices are not made mechanically or according to strict rules or fixed form-function relations, but rather on the basis of highly flexible principles and strategies; besides, it implies indeterminacy of various kinds. Adaptability is

the property of language which enables human beings to make negotiable linguistic choices from a variable scope of possibilities in such a way as to come to points of satisfaction for interactive needs. The three notions above-mentioned are fundamentally inseparable. They do not represent topics of investigation, but merely interrelated properties of the overall object of investigation for linguistic pragmatics, the functionality or meaningful functioning of language. Among them, Adaptability will be taken as the point of reference in the theory formation and empirical research, keeping in mind that it has no content without both variability and negotiability. Using Adaptability as the starting point to pragmatically illustrate linguistic phenomenon, we should take the following four aspects into consideration: contextual correlates of adaptability, structural objects of adaptability, dynamics of adaptability and salience of adaptation processes.

Nonetheless, the defects of the two theories are frequently criticized by scholars. To surmount the Relevance theory's bias to theoretical description and lack of linguistic regularities, and the insufficiency of adaptation theory in general principle governing the whole process of adaptation, Yang Ping (2001:21-28) has put forward the Relevance-Adaptation Model in terms of linguistic generation from the speaker's point of view. This model is a combination of the merits of the previous two and it is also a supplement to the two theories.

Originating from the Ostensive-Inference Model and the Adaptation Model, this new model claims that verbal communication aims at seeking optimal relevance, and the pursuing of relevance stems from the inter-adaptation between linguistic structures and contextual correlates. The major arguments of this model are presented below one by one (Yang Ping, 2001:25) :

- (1) The purpose of the hearer and the speaker in communication is to search for the optimal relevance.
- (2) The process of choice-making is constant in language application. That is, to communicate continuously, the partners have to make choices in language or languages successively on the basis of relevance principle.
- (3) The relevance assumption of communicators determines his or her linguistic expression. An adaptation process is a process of searching for relevance. In other

words, the relevance assumption is generated in the process of contextual adaptation under the guide of relevance principle.

(4) Relevance-adaptation is a dynamic and mutual adaptation process of contextual correlates and structural factors. That is to say, the choice of textual constructions and contents, linguistic structures, vocabulary and tone is adapted to the physical, social and psychological world, and vice versa.

(5) Relevance-adaptation procedure is a process of strategy-making. Not only does the speaker choose the linguistics forms, but also the communicative strategies. Since there is no one-to-one correspondence between functions and forms, the linguistic choices are driven by certain hidden motivations.

The inner correlation of these factors in communication is illustrated as follows:

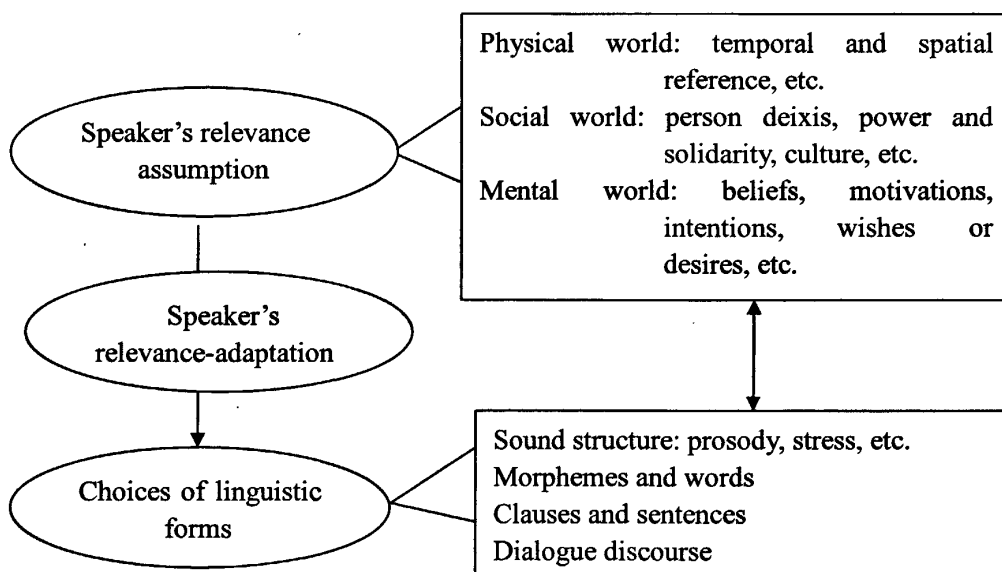


Figure 3.1 Relevance-Adaptation Model in Linguistic Application

As a whole, the generation of utterance is based on cognitive relevance. On the one hand, speaker's ostensive expression must be necessarily relevant to be worth the hearer's effort to deal with. On the other hand, the utterance must be in accordance with both the speaker and hearer's preference and cognitive ability to achieve the optimal cognitive effect. As a result, the speaker should make the assumption and evaluation about the hearer's cognitive resources

and inferential ability to arrive at the optimal relevance.

Firstly, the speaker's relevance assumption is the result of adaptation to hearer's concrete context. This adaptive process is also a relevance-pursuing process. To be relevant, the speaker has to comprehend the various ingredients in the physical, social and mental world, such as the temporal and spatial references, power and solidarity, beliefs, motivations, wishes or desires, and so on. In the dynamic process of contextual adaptation to come to relevance, context is a variable for good.

Secondly, the speaker formulates the relevance assumption on the basis of contextual correlates conforming to relevance principle. It is just this assumption that determines the choices of linguistic forms, which is reflected on the various levels of linguistic structures, such as phonemes, intonation, sentence structures, contents and textual structures.

As has been noted, in the first place, the Relevance-Adaptation Model has made up for the descriptive insufficiency of Relevance Theory, since its relevance assumption is derived from the concrete contextual factors, which should be, therefore, listed out. It has taken both cognitive ability and contextual correlates into account in terms of linguistic choices. Accordingly, the result of relevance assumption bears witness to the generation of linguistic structures.

In the second place, this model has compensated for the inadequacy of theoretical explanation of Adaptation Theory, since it has pointed out the adaptive mechanism from the cognitive relevance viewpoint. Compared with Verschueren's "saliency", which refers to the operation of reflexive awareness involved in language use (Verschueren, 2000: 67), this mechanism is much more profound and applicable in explanation.

To sum up, hedges, mainly words, phrases and sentence structures by previous categorization of them, as a communicative strategy widely proven by scholars are the frequently resorted to linguistic choices in communication. To be extended, they have been applied to news context in large quantities. And the heterogeneous contextual factors do influence the choice of hedges to gain their respective pragmatic functions in English news. Different from other pragmatic explanations of hedges, the Relevance-Adaptation Model will deeply expound the generated mechanism of hedges in English news in terms of both cognitive relevance and contextual correlates. In combination of the two theories'

preponderances, we can explore the pragmatic functions of hedges in English news profoundly, which will be the adaptive functions of hedges in news writing relevantly as a communicative medium. Through this exploration, we can detect that the application of hedges in English news is inherently adaptive in relating to the contextual correlates physically, socially and mentally. And to go a step further, it is beneficial to our understanding and mastering of English as a second language.

3.2 A Suggested Framework of Analyzing Hedges in English News

In accordance with the previous theories, the use of language is a process of making choices in view of different contexts. In communication, the use of hedges is also a process of adaptation to various contexts, that is, the physical, social and mental contexts. To be integrated, the adaptive process of hedges in journalistic English includes two major rationales. The one is the objective context as a whole, that is, the particular style—news writing, which has its own writing characteristics and requirements; the other one is the intra-personal relationships, which should be kept in mind in any communicative context, so there is no exception to English news.

Hedges as an independent linguistic phenomenon have the features of their own, and these qualities are facilitating their application to news writing in terms of hedges' adaptation to news writing environment. What's more, the three parties----writers, readers, the *third party*, mainly the source(s) or object(s) of the news information in English news----in interaction demarcated clearly in New Concept of Politeness Principle by Professor Xu are necessarily explored with hedges as the negotiating elements in coordinating the various relations in communication. Consequently, the functional framework of hedges in English news can be tentatively concluded as follows:

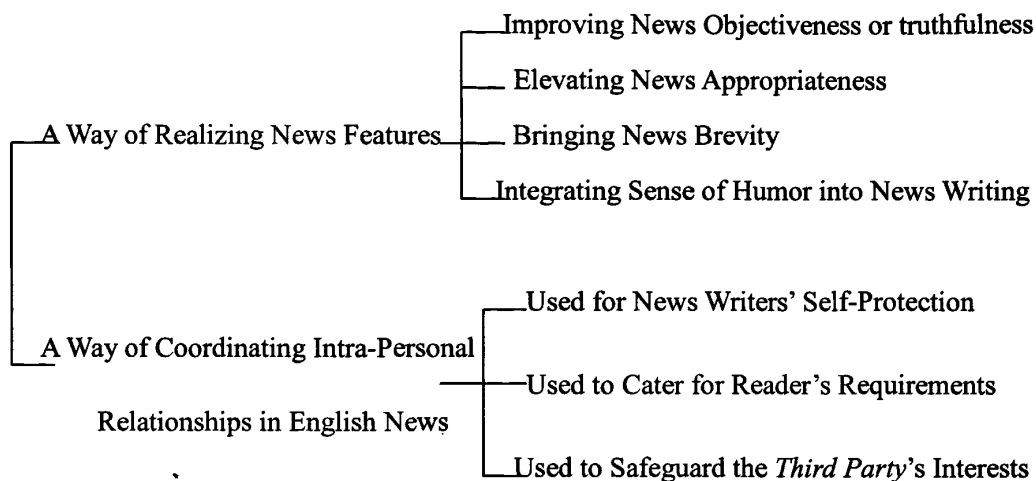


Figure 3.2 A Tentatively Proposed Functional Framework of Hedges in English News

As is shown in the above framework, the pragmatic functions can be summarized into two major ones, which will still be elaborated into four and three sub-functions respectively.

The former one is related with the realization of news style writing. English News has the unique qualities as a whole, such as objectiveness, truthfulness, timeliness and so on. To cater for these characteristics, reporters or news writers have to choose the linguistic devices at the various levels of language. As a result, the hedges are often their agreeable option. In return, hedges do assume the responsibility of facilitating the realization of news characteristics. To be specific, hedges play an important role in achieving news features to be elaborated into the following four aspects.

Firstly, the use of hedges can be a helpful tool in achieving the objectiveness or truthfulness. For instance, in “*early polls suggest that* the public already feels that Omba is well educated and intelligent” (“Details, Details” in *Newsweek* May 7, 2007), the objective presentation, rather than giving the sense of personal viewpoint in reporting, is embodied by the initial Attribution shield “early polls suggest”.

Secondly, the use of hedges can elevate the appropriateness of English news reporting. For instance, “china has been responsible for *about* 50 percent of the accumulative growth in economically sensitive commodities such as oil and *a variety of* base metals...” (“China Exports Trouble” in *Newsweek* March 19, 2007). The exact number is not always available to

news writers because of limited time or restricted accessible data, so they take the advantage of Rounders “about” and “a variety of” in making their writing more accurate.

Thirdly, hedges are applied to bring news brevity. Succinct writing with conspicuous theme is always prevalent in news writing, so the degree to come to this point signals news writers’ degree of professional capability. In coming to this purpose, news’ writers have taken the advantage of hedges. For instance, in “we *could* start by extending anti-cruelty laws to include a few legal rights for higher mammals” (“Deserving of Respect” in *Newsweek* May 7, 2007), the modal verb “could” can delete the full exhibition of supportive evidences in view of not being assaulted by outer forces, so naturally it can result in the brief demonstration of view.

Fourthly, hedges function to integrate the sense of humor in English news writing. For instance, in “as *legions of* international fans are about to find out, opera can be spellbindingly seductive” (“Northern Exposure” in *Time* May 7, 2007), the fans have been compared to large number of soldiers, and the overwhelming impression on readers appears. So this kind of expression often gives rise to formulate an actively humorous atmosphere.

The latter one is connected with the satisfaction of involved intra-personal relationships in news. To establish harmonious relationships among participants is indispensable to any kind of communication. Therefore, to fulfill this requirement of English news, writers employ hedges to try to protect themselves, satisfy the readers’ needs and safeguard the *third party’s* interests.

At first, to protect the writers themselves is constantly pursued by any writer in the writing process. For instance, in “‘Achieving stability has been the dominant goal of American foreign policy from the 19th century forward,’ says *Victor Silverman*” (“The Perils of Order” in *Newsweek*, March 5, 2007), the Attribution shield has properly transfer the responsibility of the truth-value to “Victor Silverman”, and the writer is just a recorder here.

Next, readers do not enjoy the detailed reports; instead, they would rather to read those briefly presented ones with their particularly wanted information. That is to say, they are eager to take the least effort to get the most information in news. In catering for the readers’ mental demands, writers will definitely make effort to tailor reporting to the appropriate contents and length. Hedges just display their advantages in contracting the news contents to

relatively shorter length. This point can be derived from the hedges used to bring news brevity in adapting to news style qualities.

Lastly, the *third party*'s interests can not be overlooked. For instance, in "but, *according to insiders*, the talks were tentative" ("Road War Riots" in *Newsweek* March 19, 2007), the "insiders" is just a Vague category identifier here, and this word has put the source providers, or interpreted as the *third party*, behind the scenes, in which way the *third party*'s interests are well acknowledged.

As for the elaborate illustration of these functions of hedges in English news, the following two chapters undertake the work.

Chapter Four Hedges for Realizing Characteristics of English News Style

The use of hedges in journalistic English has been proved to be prevalent and certain, its prominent pragmatic functions should become a study focus, which is sure to be forceful in stimulating the writers' or reporters' attention in producing articles consciously and unconsciously.

According to the Relevance-Adaptation Model, choices can indeed be made at every possible level of structure with various degrees of consciousness and it has been claimed that linguistic choices originate from the language producer's communicative needs, which activate the motivation in his/her mind. In order to realize the motivation, the language producer has to choose an appropriate communicative strategy. So, in order to cater for the news style features, that is, timeliness or freshness, objectiveness, accuracy or precision, brevity and the sense of humor, reporters must pay much attention to the linguistic choices (choose the most appropriate linguistic forms) and can make choices from various communicative strategies(both language-internal and language-external ones). Therefore, it is supposed that hedges, as part of vague language, in news reporting are the result of linguistic choice from various strategies in view of facilitating to fulfill the various news style features.

Moreover, hedges in news are also assumed to be a result of linguistic adaptation. Verschueren (2000) argues that linguistic use is a dynamic process of adaptation between linguistic structure and the context. Contextual correlates of adaptability potentially include all the ingredients of the communicative context with which linguistic choices have to be inter-adaptable. In news, hedges have been selected to adapt to the stylistic characteristics of English. As a consequence, their pragmatic functions to meet these news features will be accounted in this section.

In sum, the interrelationship between news features and the semantic features of hedges will be elucidated, serving as the cornerstone for the latter part of this chapter. Next, each of these sub-functions of hedges in English news will be fully explained with lately accumulated samples from big and influential newspapers or magazines. Therefore the feasibility of these

functions is certain.

4.1 News' Features and Hedges' Semantic Features

To be valuable, news has such determinants as timeliness, freshness, significance, prominence, proximity, novelty and interest (Zhang Jian, 2004). Therefore, how to employ linguistic resources to achieve these goals is of great concern to journalists or journalistic editors. A brief review of these characteristics of English news is manifested in terms of lexical and syntactical level, aiming to establish a superficially comprehensive impression of English news. Then, the characteristics of hedges are elucidated from the pragmatic perspective. At last, the interrelationship of hedges and news reporting, which is the basis for the hedges' adaptation function to news style, is accounted in detail.

4.1.1 Peculiarities of English News

The features of journalistic English can be elaborated from two aspects, that is, from the lexical level and the syntactical level.

4.1.1.1 At the Lexical Level

In light of the lexical level, the various degrees of the readers and the communicative purpose of news are greatly taken into consideration. So, English news usually makes use of acronyms, abbreviations and journalistic coinages. To be certain, the originality of English news is in the reflection of the choices of words. Its most prominent characteristics can be concluded into altogether seven aspects.

At the beginning, English news take those familiar names of persons or things as representatives. Secondly, the blending of alien words into English news is another feature, which can greatly appeal to readers' interest and attention or accurately reveal the connotation of certain words. Thirdly, various forms to express "say" show the exact meaning of saying something in English news felicitously to avoid reiteration of the single word in composition. Fourthly, new words emerge one after another in English news. Two sorts of new words are frequently resorted to. The one is new meanings added to old words, such as sex symbol (meaning sexual stars), umbrella (used for protection) and soul (referring to American Negroes and their culture); the other is new coinages coming from new developments in society, such as beatnik, citynik. Fifthly, vogue words or buzzwords in English news are prevalent in a

certain periods of time. These words are powerful in expressing because of their semantic specialties. Besides, some of them have permeated into daily life, becoming common expressions. Catalyst, clout, backlash are the representatives of this group. Sixthly, vivid words and expressions are applied to English news with a view to increase readers' interest. At last, in addition to the pursuance of accurate and succinct expressions in news writing, vague language is indispensable, which is a kind of supplement to the accuracy of news and make the reports more reliable.

On the whole, the first six peculiarities of English news are acceptable and apparent to most readers; while, the last one, the vague expression, usually gives rise to uncover the potential meanings. The latent reference and force of these vague expressions, among which hedges appear with quite high frequency, are often of great interest to readers and are of great concern to readers' comprehension of the articles' or writers' attitudes.

4.1.1.2 At the Syntactical Level

When it comes to the syntactical structures of English news, its heterogeneous features are conspicuous as opposed to other styles.

To begin with, the frequent appearance of passive voice in English news is one of the most notable ones. The reason for this phenomenon is that, under most circumstances, newspaper readers are reading carelessly, only if it comes to their interest, the readers would concentrate on the details. Hence, the earlier the information gets into readers' recognition span, the more appealing it is to the readers. By virtue of this common reading psychology, the undertaker is put in the initial position in passive sentences in order to attract the readers' attention.

Secondly, the relevant background knowledge or materials are woven in by means of linguistic devices to deepen the theme or show author's standpoint ingeniously. These linguistic structures are the insertion of appositions, phrases and attributive clauses.

Next, seeing that news report is to record what and how people have said, done or heard, the constant resort to direct or indirect quotations is given rise to. This is a way to add the factuality and vividness of news report also. Meanwhile, the objectivity, as opposed to the authors' personal slant, is most incisively embodied through these quoted remarks, which will probably guarantee the maximum objectiveness.

Finally, to be attractive, news report writing takes advantage of rhetorical devices. In general, these devices include alliteration, humor, metaphor, hyperbole, parallelism, pun and proverbs.

According to the categorization of hedges, the Attributive shields, namely the speaker or doer of the quotation remarks, are prominent in English Journalism.

4.1.2 Semantic Features of Hedges

Starting from pragmatics, semantic features of hedges can be concluded as the following four points (qtd. He Jisheng, 1994:8-9).

4.1.2.1 Cancellability

In light of Grice's analysis of conversational implicature, the reasons for cancellability are that on the one hand, there is an added presupposition before the proposition; on the other hand, the deposit of proposition in a particular context can change speaker's intention or eliminate the original meaning of the proposition. In this sense, hedges own the ability to cancel the original meaning of the expressions. For instance, "Williams is a *regular* fish". Obviously, the original proposition, "Williams is a fish", is not a semantically and logically correct expression when referring to a person, but under the modification of "regular" ahead of fish, the implication of this sentence is that Williams possesses such characteristic of fishes as swimming fast. So this proposition implies that Williams is an outstanding swimming athlete. The superficial meaning has been replaced by the connoted one with the addition of the hedged word.

Generally speaking, the cancellability of hedges can be reflected in two aspects. The one is that hedges can alter the truth-value of propositions semantically or logically; the other is that they can nullify the propositional meaning through context.

4.1.2.2 Markedness

The second feature of hedges is their markedness. In accordance with Markedness Theory, some linguistic elements show some distinguishing feature, which can function to tell one element from others. And markedness and unmarkedness are employed in all levels of linguistic analysis. Comparing these two expressions, "I like books" and "I like English books", we can see that the former is unmarked, while the latter is marked.

In applying this theory to the study of hedges, it is often noticed that the characteristics of unhedged propositions contain those of hedged ones, but the opposite does not hold water. Inasmuch, “He is a tall man”(unhedged) entails the meaning potential of “He is a very tall man”(hedged), since the range of “very tall man” is embedded in the range of “tall man”, but the scope of “very tall man” has eliminated the concept of ordinarily tall man.

4.1.2.3 Indefiniteness

Indefiniteness refers to the use of hedges to make the propositions less accurate, exact or affirmative on the side of the speaker in describing or stating one’s opinions on certain statement or question. This can be seen from the various definitions of hedges from the perspective of pragmatics.

Pragmatically, to hedge is to avoid making a decisive statement to turn out to be wrong or not acceptable (Matthews, 2000: 160), or to qualify or tone-down utterances and statements to not commit yourself to a particular action or decision (Collins, 1987:775). From these above-mentioned illustrations on hedges, we can deduce that they share a common element, that is, “indeterminacy” or “indefiniteness”. So it is extremely important to master this feature of hedges in properly utilizing and understanding them in communication.

In the first place, the indefiniteness embodies the linguistic vagueness. Just because of this aspect, hedges can vary the truth-value of propositions and cancel the original meaning of them in implying the conversational implicature to the audience. To be concluded, hedges could not perform the other practical functions without this feature in themselves.

In the second place, indefiniteness just reflects the partial or complete cognitive and psychological process of the speaker in doing a speech act. The distance between people’s cognition and the objective world is the fundamental cause of the vagueness in language. Human brain does not respond to the objective world in the way like a mirror. When they are uncertain about what to be described or how to express their attitudes and opinions, they are unconsciously taking the advantage of hedges in obscuring their words to appear indefinite. In addition, some things in life should not be stated bluntly or truthfully and that there are times when necessary, not to call a spider a spider, but to use some euphemistic-sounding designations or expressions and to deliberately shun mentioning directly for the purpose of disguise in case of losing face or for fear of hurting other people’s feeling.

As a consequence, hedges are endowed with the indefiniteness both in semantics and in psychology. In the sentence, “it seemed to me that skills in comprehension are of great importance”, the speaker is just displaying his own point of view. Through the use of the agentless structure “it seems to me”, the speaker’s non-affirmative tone and indefiniteness are detected with a view of avoiding further retort.

4.1.2.4 Indirectness

In verbal communication, indirectness means a kind of randomness, which is especially permeating among hedges. This makes hedges create an atmosphere of politeness and kindness. In He Jisheng’s study, the degree of indirectness of hedges has direct correlation ratio with the degree of politeness. If you benefit from others, the more indirect the hedges, the more polite the expressions are; however, if you benefit others, the lower the degree of indirectness of hedges, the higher degree of politeness is.

4.1.3 The Convergence of Features of News and Hedges

These semantic features of hedges work as the basis for their practical functions in real communication in light of Politeness theory, Cooperative theory and Relevance-Adaptation model. They can be used to restrict or relax the utterance so as to decrease the possible risk, to reduce the strong mood of the utterance or express politeness or show respect for people whose status is high, or to work as a negative strategy for politeness to weaken speech act and protect the negative face of the utterer or hearer.

Meanwhile, news writing demands objectiveness, precision and timeliness in general. These requirements are realized through the adaptation to the choice of linguistic devices at the level of lexicon and syntax. In a whole, the production of English news reporting is the process of contextual correlates between contexts and linguistic structures. Obviously, just as mentioned above, hedged words are an important part at the level of lexicon choice; subsequently, at the level of syntax, writers frequently resort to agentless structure, direct or indirect quotations, which are the major portion of Shields under the hedges’ classification by Prince et al. In general, these devices are available in showing politeness and adapting to multifarious contexts, and successive functions of hedges in news appear.

To sum up, the appealing force of hedges in news reporting is obvious, now that they cater for the fulfillment of news features in the choice of linguistic devices. To put it in

another word, the cancellability, indefiniteness, markedness, and indirectness of hedges adjust the implementation of news reporting to a successful communicative text; while, looking from another aspect, the refined depiction of English news is with the hedges at disposal. With the correlated view in mind, the question of how these practical influences hedges perform in English news is to be elaborated in the following part.

4.2 Fulfillment of the Features of English News Style

In accordance with the above-mentioned features of English news reporting, that is, timeliness or freshness, truthfulness or objectiveness, accuracy or precision, brevity and the sense of humor, hedges can be utilized to fulfill the function of improving news objectiveness, elevating news appropriateness, being brief in writing and achieving the sense of humor in news respectively. The following sections are the in-depth explanations for each of the sub-functions of hedges in English news.

4.2.1 Improving News' Objectiveness or Truthfulness

In light of the various scholars' summary of hedges distribution in different scientific papers, Zeng Zhaoxiong (2005: 29) has inferred that the use of hedges in any kind of scientific sub-genres primarily aims to emphasize the objectiveness. Scientific writing can be attributed to an objectivity-oriented style, so does the English news reporting. Objectivity or truthfulness has always been one of the life-lines for news reporting, such as timeliness, prominence, proximity, novelty and interest (Zhang Jian, 2004: 32-33). And it ensures the result of freeing oneself from personal prejudice.

When it comes to news reports, it means that the reporters should report the events as objectively as possible with little involvement of their own personal viewpoints, tendencies or attitudes. In other words, the truth or fact is primary and news reporting is secondary. Wherever there is no fact or truth, there is no news. In a word, the news lies on the objective reflection of truth or fact. Accordingly, the down-to-earth representation of the happenings or others' expressions and thoughts is embodied in writing by either the direct or indirect quotations, which are the important member in hedges' family. In this way, Attribution shields resultantly occur frequently in reporting with a view to presenting the happenings as objectively and truthfully as possible; and in return, seeing the permeated quotations every

five or seven sentences, the readers are likely to be repressed from protest or interrogation when it comes to the divergent thinking between the reported content and the readers' personal understanding. This is especially true in citations of the famous or authoritative representatives on a certain field as initiated by such typical phrases as "according to..., in view of..., ..announced by..", or just by the direct presentation of experts' or authorities' or authoritative organizations' names. A few examples are abstracted from the collected magazines to be put below as the sound evidence.

- a. "In an emergency department, you work like mad for half an hour on someone ..."
Becker says. (from "To Treat the Dead" in *Time* May 7, 2007)
- b. What they saw amazed them, *according to Dr. Lance Becker*, an authority on emergency medicine at the university of Pennsylvania. (ibid.)
- c. If, in China, hits the 8 percent growth target *announced by Wen*,..(from "China Exports Trouble, Too" in *Newsweek* March 19, 2007)
- d. *A study at four hospitals, published last year by the University of California, showed a remarkable rate of success in treating sudden cardiac arrest with an approach involved....(ibid.)*
- e. *Science backs up the notion that mess has gotten a bad rap, starting with something you learned in high school in physics...(from "The Perils of Order" in Newsweek March 5, 2007)*
- f. But *studies by business professor William Starbuck at the University of Oregon show that strategic planning doesn't improve performance at companies, ... (ibid.)*
- g. *Early polls suggest that the public already feels that Omba is well educated and intelligent. (from "Details, Details" in Newsweek May 7, 2007)*

The announcement of authorities or experts is represented in direct quotation or adduced opinion in the first two samples. Becker is obviously an expert in this particular medical research, so his remarks are resorted to both by direct quotation in sample *a* and by adduced opinion with the rewrite in sample *b*. And sample *c* is similar to *b*. However, the implications of some empirical research data or numerical analysis best illustrate the principle that fact speaks the truth. The left examples, especially in scientific reporting, give us the facts derived from studies, polls or scientific results. To be absolutely sure, they are the best representatives

of improving news objectiveness or truthfulness.

Another point to be elucidated as to news objectiveness is that even the most assured propositions have an inherently limited period of acceptance, so categorical assertions of truth are decidedly hazardous under such circumstances. Hedges are, therefore, an important means of stating uncertain claims with appropriate caution.

- a. That's typical of the way people look at messiness—it's someone else's mess that always *seems* most problematic. (from "The Perils of Order" in *Newsweek* March 5, 2007)
- b. Becker also endorses hypothermia lowering body temperature from 37 to 33 degrees Celsius—which *appears to* slow the chemical reactions touched off by reperfusion. (from "To Treat The Dead" in *Time* May 7, 2007)
- c. *So far*, the studies don't look good. (from "Making Sense of Melting Ice" in *Newsweek* April 2, 2007)
- d. There are no world powers to point to *in this regard*, but Israel offers an interesting example on a regional scale. (from "The Perils of Order" in *Newsweek* March 5, 2007)
- e. *More significantly*, GM is showing a willingness to roll the dice, something it hasn't really done in decades. (from "Road War Riots" in *Newsweek*, March 19, 2007)
- f. The result could be that Airbus *operationally* breaks up into a collection of leaner, independent companies that would give Europe a fresh chance to compete in aviation. (from "The House Divided" in *Newsweek* March 19, 2007)

The use of "seem or appear" implies the possible partial disagreement coming from some readers and it also demonstrates the changeable stance of the writers in these expressions. Similarly, the modifying words or phrases like "technically speaking, generally speaking, strictly speaking", to be evidenced in the left four samples, come to the fore to hedge the special sphere, degree, time or other aspects of the propositions as a whole, although these factors are sometimes themselves not so exact. Just through these exact or vague modifiers, the whole propositions are looked upon as more objective and credible, since it is a truth that the more detailed and restricted the happenings or viewpoints, the more authentic they appear.

4.2.2 Elevating News' Appropriateness

The designation of hedges referred to these linguistic items “whose job is to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy” (qtd. He Ziran, 2000:102). That is to say, hedges can make precise meaning fuzzier or fuzzy meaning less fuzzy. In this description, the effects of making propositions vague are in the parallel position with that of rendering propositions precision in hedged expressions. Hence, as far as hedges are concerned, fuzziness and precision have turned into the two sides of one coin. Just as Cai Longquan (2008:1-6)'s study on the possibility of hedges in making the remarks precise, hedges function to make news precise or accurate in their employment to elevate news' appropriateness.

4.2.2.1 The Fuzziness of Hedges

As Salager-Meyer (1994:150) has presented that hedges are often linked with purposive vagueness and tentativeness, which can be traced back to G. Lakoff's viewpoints. At this point, the author assumes that fuzziness of hedges is to deliver some kind of accuracy or precision to news reporting, and the explanative remarks are as follows.

According to Lakoff (1973: 458-459)'s point of view, natural linguistic sentences are not often totally true, false or meaningless, but rather they transcend the mono-meaning level, and they are somewhat true or somewhat false. The membership in conceptual categories is not just a simple yes-or-no question, but a matter of degree, requiring a more-or-less rather than all-or-nothing consideration. Along with the degree of closeness of the yes-no or true-false polarity, news writers try to select the most appropriate expressions. Although, undoubtedly, writers are always aiming to offer the exact information in keeping with the truthfulness of news, they have also made it clear that it is impossible to depict the realistic world or real situation exactly; meanwhile, they are fearing of being overthrown entirely one day with the development of society or the incomplete accumulation of materials in interviews in connection with their categorical depictions. As we can realize here, hedges enable them to express their uncertainty or make equivocal propositions, just to make the reporting realistic and reliable.

In addition, it is well known that exactness is not that tasteful on all occasions, as Sadock (1977) has mentioned that the proper use of words are closely connected with the various contextual factors, insinuating that it is absolutely wrong to think that the more precise the

words are used the better their effects will be. When people communicate in a language, hedges can sometimes satisfy the need of communication much better. The case is always that the readers do not expect the details but only the generalized gist, and some information is just beyond their understanding due to the restricted background knowledge. This is especially true in various news reports. For instance, generally speaking, the scientific writing involves great potential knowledge to laymen, without which the mutual understanding can never be achieved. Under such circumstances, hedges characteristic of their special vagueness make texts more acceptable to readers. So, in such reader-targeted discourses, hedges can meet the needs of the readers, in spite of the specialties of journalists in each special section of the papers or magazines, who can make the conceptions definite.

What can fulfill the needs of writers and readers should be looked upon as making the sufficient information available. On the basis of the Quantity maxim in Grice's Cooperative principle, one should make the contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of the exchange and do not make the contribution more informative than is required. Considering both the news writers' interests and the likely readers' requirements, that is, the aim to adapt to these concrete needs, the vagueness of hedges can be interpreted as making precise meaning fuzzy to get to the point; accordingly, they can also be regarded as rendering a kind of accuracy unquestionably.

In a word, how to conceal writers' standpoint or present those views or facts in lack of sufficient evidence has become the responsibility of hedges in light of their vagueness. In return, this effect of making propositions vague takes over the load of producing precision in communication. The supportive samples derived from the author's collection of news reporting are listed out below.

- a. The hows and whys of this contagion speak *volumes* to the new and important role China now plays in driving the global economy and shaping trends in world financial markets. (from "China Exports Trouble" in *Newsweek* March 19, 2007)
- b. While a \$ 2.6 trillion Chinese economy amounts to *only about 5* percent of overall world output, it makes up a *much larger* share of the growth in the global economy. (ibid.)

- c. China has been responsible for *about* 50 percent of the accumulative growth in *economically* sensitive commodities such as oil and *a variety of* base metals, like aluminum, copper, lead, nickel, steel, tin and zinc. (ibid.)
- d. as the world's largest saver with the biggest current account surplus, China has played a *major* role in injecting investable funds into financial markets already awash in *excess* liquidity. (ibid.)
- e. Last week mass layoffs, the first in Airbus history, won't *likely* be the last. (from "The House Divided" in Newsweek March 19, 2007)
- f. Following announcements of 10,000 job cuts and *several possible* factory sell-offs, European unionists responded last week. (ibid.)

From the sample sentences, Rounders, especially quantifiers, appear frequently in news. Take biz-news as an example. Since business news reports usually depict the developing tendency of economy, and the increase or decrease of economical situations have always been evidenced by concrete data, the usages of numbers occur from time to time to serve as the formidable support. However, these data are not always exact and the long figures are not suitable for readers' reading comprehension, which may just obscure the overall comprehension or interrupt the grasp of the main themes. On the other hand, the source numbers may not be that accurate. Therefore, in view of these considerations, *volumes*, *about*, *a variety of*, *several* are employed in the above sentences.

Apart from the Rounders, the frequency of lexical adjectives should also be dealt with. Although lexical hedges are not as common as the Rounders, they still constitute a part of hedges' group and make the information presented uncertain, tentative or less precise. To what degree should the role be called as a *major* role? How much should be understood as *excess* in injecting investable funds into finance? These can only be evaluated through the experience considering the all-round contributive factors, in delivering the approximate justification. It is not easy for the writer or any economical expert to solidify, so just leaving room for discussion. And because of their lack of the absolute confirmation, the typical adjectives, such as *likely*, *possible* italicized above, limit the truth commitment of the writer to the modest degree, in which sense, the use of vague adjectives is a way of displaying the meaning appropriately in news writing.

4.2.2.2 The Precision-Making of Hedges

Besides what has been mentioned in the last section, hedges also alternatively function to decrease fuzziness. In another word, the change of fuzzy proposition into a semantically or pragmatically precise one has been compromised by these linguistic hedges.

According to Lakoff (qtd. Zhang Qiao, 1998: 38)'s research on this subject, which animal, such as robin, eagle, chicken/goose/duck, penguin and bat, can be categorized as belonging to bird-likeness should be staged in view if each animal's approaching to truthfulness. And it is not easy to reach a unanimous answer to this question since the bird-likeness category is itself vague. The Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics (Hadumod Bussmann, 2000) has defined hedges as "provid[ing] a means for indicating in what sense a member belongs to its particular category. The need for hedges is based on the fact certain members are considered to be better or more typical examples of the category, depending on the given cultural background". Hedges have made such categorization openly and clearly to the audience, that is (qtd. Zhang Qiao, 1998: 38),

- (1) A robin is a bird. (true)
- (2) A chicken is sort of a bird. (true, or approximately true)
- (3) A penguin is sort of a bird. (true, or less true than 2)
- (4) A bat is sort of a bird. (false, or approximately false)

The prototype robin in bird-likeness has been clearly expressed in the first sentence, while the following three sentences are ranged according to their degree of truth in belonging to this category realized by *sort of*, a hedge word, linguistically.

It is clear that the degree referents in language have made the expressions or propositions more accurate, which would be undemarcable otherwise. As has been prevalently approved, the world consists of an infinite variety of objects with different substances, shapes, colors and etc., and these cognitive categories are labeled by words, taking the focal or prototypical ones as the point of orientation. Under such unboundariness of categorization in reality, hedges play a role in giving the degree or extent to these peripheral members. Contrary to their originally difficult-to-define situation in a certain category, the hedges put them into their respective stages with a view of their truth degree in the category. All in all, what has been derived from this aspect of reality is that hedges serve the purpose of making vague

meaning less vague or precise.

This point can be illustrated by the samples taken from news reports also:

- a. Since then, Airbus has done a 180-degree turn – refocusing on *smaller, more-energy-efficient* planes, streamlining management and cutting jobs. (from “China Exports Trouble, too” in *Newsweek*, March 19, 2007)
- b. But Florentines are *far less* concerned with the satisfaction of museum-goers than with the preservation of their city. (from “Making Room for Art” in *Newsweek*, March 19, 2007)
- c. Changing the rules has been *more* evolutionary than revolutionary: for his film “Breach”, he *had to* rely on the old approach, handing control of the film to Universal for marketing and release. (from “Hollywood’s New Moguls” in *Newsweek*, March 19, 2007)
- d. ...and you have some idea why this Southeast Asian sport is so visually addictive. (from “By Leaps and Bounds” in *Time*, May 28, 2007)
- e. A *deadly* few microbes cause pandemics, like madcow disease and AIDS. (from “Attack of the Aliens” in *Newsweek* Jan. 15, 2007)
- f. The method is costly and its side effects are understood. (from “Deserving of Respect” in *Newsweek* May 7, 2007)
- g. There are only two ways to minimize disorder: don’t do much, or spend lots of energy constantly restoring order instead of spending it on something *potentially much more* useful. (from “The Perils of Order” in *Newsweek* March 5, 2007)
- h. *More* often, though, countries err on the side of excess order, and thrive when they back off—as has been the case in China, where a rise in productivity has *roughly* tracked the government’s willingness to loosen up *a bit*. (ibid.)

In these samples presented above, the occurrence of adjective comparative constructions is predominant, along with the adverbs of degree, such as *completely, hardly, partly, rather, kind of, sort of*, which function to emphasize, strengthen, or weaken the following verbs. These adjectives and adverbs are in the sub-category of Approximators ---- they are Adaptors. Adaptors are these that modify the propositional meaning in terms of degree with real situations as the basis. So the adverbial or adjectival phrases are much more potent in this

respect. As is the case in sample sentence *g*, *potentially* is used to limit the openness of fact, *much* to modify the degree of large quantity and *more* to enhance the usefulness capacity. In the scientific news context, certain results or evidences could only be represented with grading at every possible level of discovery. The varyingly indefinite grading is to be exactly reported in news by means of comparative adjectives, adverbs of degree or the combination of both working as phrasal hedges ostensibly.

To be summed up, the appearance of hedges in such truthfulness- or accuracy-centered texts can be concluded into two reasons: the one is that hedges in news grasp the degree of flexibility and avoid absoluteness in themselves, allowing for the free understanding or managing; the other is that the presentation of these concepts with vague categorization in themselves make the news report more appropriate.

4.2.3 Bringing News' Brevity

It is well known that the conciseness in news report writing is universal. The reason is that the layout of the printed sheet is limited, which can be reflected, just as mentioned previously, in the frequent occurrence of acronyms, abbreviations. The use of hedges is important in achieving the effect of being succinct and terse in texts. In return, the conciseness in the composing process could also appeal to the readers' interests and promote the reports' readability, just as the subsequent examples have shown:

- a. ...the overall effects of a China slowdown *could* easily knock more than 0.5 percentage points off global economic growth in 2007. (from "China Exports Trouble, too" in *Newsweek* March 19, 2007)
- b. If such efforts do increase, Chinese officials *may* find it increasingly difficult to avoid the twin dangers of Moscow and Seoul and the unpalatable alternatives that they represent: an embarrassing call to boycott or *a wave of* protests, either of which *could seriously* damage Beijing's prestige. (ibid.)
- c. We *could* start by extending anti-cruelty laws to include a few legal rights for higher mammals. (from "Deserving of Respect" in *Newsweek* May 7, 2007)
- d. The United States and Europe *would have to* act quickly to back it, lest Albanians or Serbs turn to violence, potentially spilling over borders. (ibid.)

Obviously, the *could*, *may* and *have to* in the above sentences function to modify the writers' commitment to the truth of the proposition, since they just give us a guess or indeterminate evaluation of the reporter without good evidences explicitly displayed in detail as supportive basis. So modal verbs always, on the one hand, avoid absoluteness in expressions to not provoke anger, disagreement or contempt from the readers' part, and on the other hand, they can omit the full exhibition of supportive evidences. Thus, the brevity of news is attainable by means of modal verbs. However, modal verbs are not the only means to achieve brevity in news, and other kinds of hedges do possess this function. As what has been demonstrated afterwards, these hedges are also found in making news brief:

- a. In 1998-99, Serbia's military drove *nearly* a million Kosovar citizens from their homes.
(from "Time to Decide" in *Newsweek* March 19, 2007)
- b. ..like Susuma Teramoto, a 31-year-old from Japan, will accept salaries of *approximately* \$200 a month, plus food and lodging...(from "By Leaps and Bounds" in *Time* May 28, 2007)
- c. Without *some kind of* ideology, the politician is asking voters to buy a pig in a poke.
(from "In Defense of Partisan Bickering" in *Time* February 5, 2007)
- d. ..., some conservatives *seem* willing to overlook the mayor's colorful past. (from "Master of Disaster" in *Newsweek* March 12, 2007)

It is apparent that *nearly*, *approximately* are typical Rounders in hedging expressions. They are deposited before the concrete numbers making the noun phrases inaccurate in surface, while in this situation, the unnecessary elaboration of these exact numbers is well represented by the Rounders. As a result, the Rounders embedded in news function to make the whole content concise resulting in drawing the readers' attention towards the gist.

Similarly, in sample *c*, the ideology is not described transparently through the use of *some kind of*. And it takes on the responsibility of vaguely determining the potential meaning of ideology, which does not need definite designation in the particular context.

At last, in sample *d*, *seem*, together with *appear* and others, are normally ascribed to Plausibility Shields, or to be more specific, they are nominated as Epistemic sensory verbs, expressing the mitigation of the writer's commitment to the truth-value of the expression. Referring from the nomination of this kind of hedges, we can see that speakers or writers

usually present something based on their own senses. Although they sound unclear as to the reference, it can facilitate the reporter to manifest the attitudes or opinions without too many unnecessary details. As to be summed up, by virtue of these hedges or phrasal hedges, news can be presented in a manner of terse writing.

4.2.4 Integrating the Sense of Humor into English News

It is well acknowledged that the increase of humor in news reporting is the up-going tendency in journalism. In recent years, some scholars concentrating on the study of western news works consider the strong sense of humor as a significant characteristic of western news reporting. Forces integrated into news from humor and the humorous materials embedded into news demonstrate an aesthetic perception out of intelligence or wisdom. Although the different conceptions of humor exist in different countries, in general, humor has one thing in common, that is, humor is interesting, euphemistic and causing laughter so as to give rise to association or inference in its implicated meaning. To be brief, humor admits of aftertastes in grasping the speaker's or writer's sentiment and affection serving the purpose of aesthetic satisfaction. As to its influence, the far-reaching educational significance is always the target.

However, in talking about the relatively serious genre—news writing, some people may have doubt about the sense of humor being embedded into it, but it is groundless. The reasons are as follows:

In the first place, humor is pervasive in daily life, and news is an objective reflection of real life. So it is without doubt that news should reflect the humorous realities.

In the second place, the sense of humor appeals to readers' interests. On the one hand, news emphasize political stances, on the other hand, it is equally important that news should stress ideological content, artistic quality and interests. Humor is inherently preferred by human beings though it is not an inborn or acquired skill for everyone.

At last, to resist the fierce competition in the market, news paper or magazine has to be more interesting and vivid to be more acceptable to its readers. Literally, journalists and writers manage to produce humorous and lively news reports.

All in all, to be humorous is a way of presenting news more vivid and flexible. Accordingly, how to realize this purpose is a test of news writers' professional capability. One way of realizing this in news, to be frank, also the simplest one, is to realistically record the

humorous events or expressions with some skill or not. Through the true-to-life record or description, news article can sound vivid and humorous in eliciting associations or inferences. The other way is through the skillful arrangement of hedges, since hedges function to express things or events euphemistically (Xu Changxian, 2006:37) so as to inspire audience to conjecture. For this, let's see the sample sentences to get a macro-view about this point:

- a. As *legions of* international fans are about to find out, opera can be spellbindingly seductive. (from "Northern Exposure" in *Time* May 7, 2007)
- b. "He can do anything", says one top studio exec. "The audience has *enormous* affection for him." His appeal is so universal that it transcends race...says an industry insider. "That's a *pretty hard trick*." (from "The \$4 Billion Man" in *Newsweek* April 16-23, 2007)

In view of Conversational implicature, the violation of any maxim in Cooperative principle gives rise to imply speaker or writer's intended meaning potential. In the above two sample sentences, the mass of fans is compared to the large size troops, and certainly, it is not suitable in terms of relevance and manner superficially. However, it gives the audience a sense of grand spectacle in mind; accordingly, a sense of humor accompanies.

In the second example, the amount of affection of the audience to Will Smith, one of the most famous Hollywood powers, is exaggerated to the enormous extent, at the first sight of which readers may feel overwhelmed by floods; in the same way, the lively and humorous atmosphere appears. At the end of sample two, readers may assume as if Will Smith's stardom and glamour is really achieved through "craft or trick" with the initially modifying Adaptor *pretty*, which is just contrary to the writer's original writing purpose, but exalts the jocular or facetious tone in reporting.

After the illustration of hedges' function in adapting to news styles concretely and ostensibly, the hidden interpersonal relationship has come to the focus.

Chapter Five Hedges for Coordinating Intra-Personal Relationships in English news

Starting from another perspective, it is widely accepted that the pragmatic functions of utterance refer mainly to the relationship between the subject and object of communication, which have an equal relationship. That is, all language use is interpersonal in the sense that the message expressed is meant for other people to hear or read, and its meaning always results in the negotiation between the participants. Establishing and maintaining such a harmonious relationship between them are quite important for successful communication, that is, communication requires people to cooperate.

Notwithstanding no direct communicative parties are apparently visible in producing English news, there has always existed relatively complex intra-personal relationships. This leads the writers to choose different communicative strategies according to whom the audience is. Hedges are at their disposal. They are supposed to be employed to cater for the involved parties' communicative needs. To put it another way, the hedges used in English news reporting tend to establish the harmonious relationships between the involved parties by way of satisfying their needs respectively. And, the functions of satiating the requirements of the participants' needs in news communicative context are to be demonstrated.

5.1 Intra-Relationships of the Involved Parties in English News

Basically, Jef Verschueren's Adaptation process contains the processes of making choices in adapting to Utterers' many voices and to the Interpreters' many voices. Hedges, as the widely acknowledged choice in news English, are also supposed to take the Utterers' and Interpreters' voices into account. That is, on the one hand, they are used to satisfy Utterers' or writers' benefits; on the other hand, this linguistic choice in news adapts definitely for many voices of interpreters or audience in the Utterers' mind. Just as Verschueren (2000: 86-87) has put it:

when writing..., I am mentally constructing an audience for which I assume that what I say will be both relevant and accessible; I may even think of individuals I know for

modeling that audience; ...Or, when writing a report of any kind, even when one knows that it will only be put away, the linguistic choices get adapted to the criteria that are assumed to be expected by a constructed reader to be met.

This is especially true to Hyland (1996:433)'s analysis of scientific papers, in which the use of hedges is one of the indispensable rhetorical devices in coordinating the relationship of the four aspects, that is writer, audience, language and reality. But, in them, the identities of the interpreters or audience are not as distinctively distinguished as Xu Shenghuan's modified theory of Politeness Principle. That is, the *third party*, particularly mentioned in the derived theory, refers to the person(s) not directly involved into the communication, but is spoken of or mentioned or referred to in it either explicitly or implicitly by the communicative parties. And, in accordance, derived from this new theory, the three sides in news communicative environment can be depicted as follows by the author:

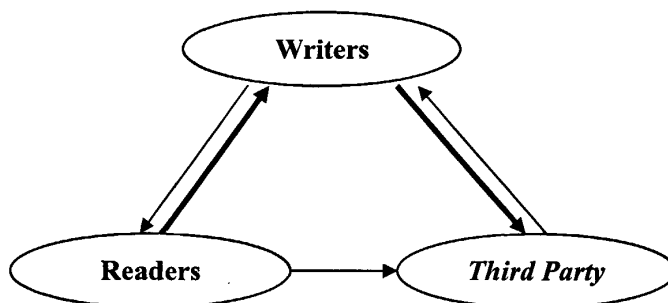


Figure 5.1 Intra-Personal Relationships in English News

As is shown in the above figure, the three parties participating in news writing communication flow, in a sense, into a circuit, with news writers standing as the nascent point. First of all, the writers should work professionally in transmitting information to the audience, for the ultimate goal of news is to let audience know the latest events truthfully and objectively. Here, the audience includes both the common readers getting little involved into news reporting and the *third party*, who has/have personally something to do with the reported contents. As it is shown, under news circumstances, the *third party* usually refers to the one(s) who has/have been responsible for some propositional truth-value or who has/have

been the object(s) of presentation in news reporting. Therefore, the *third party* can be the writers' source(s) or object(s) of news writing. And in reporting writing, to start with, the news writers should report fresh information with the aid of the *third party*; secondly, writers try to cater for readers' needs; thirdly, readers may be curious, suspicious, affirmative or negative to the source(s) or object(s). So through the above illustration, the thin black arrows run into a closed circuit to present the interrelationships of the three parties in news reporting as a whole.

However, apart from the closed circle in communication, the readers may also show approval or disapproval to the writers' writing represented by the left bold arrow from the "Readers" to the "Writers". At the same time, news writers in making use of the "*Third Party*" should inescapably guard for their interests in light of the New Concept of Politeness theory by Professor Xu represented by the right bold arrow from the "Writers" to the "*Third Party*". Although these two inversed relations, compared with the relational description in the closed circle, are lurking at the first sight, they are equally essential in the establishment of involved personal relationships in news reporting.

As has been noted, the interrelationship of the three parties is obvious. And how to fulfill the needs of this complex relationship is of great concern to news writers. So, hedges, as a powerful communicative strategy, can function to perform it well. On the whole, hedges can function to adapt the English news to achieve the harmonious intra-personal relationships among the three parties; and in turn, they satisfy the three parties with three elaborated sub-functions, that is, the function to self-protect on the writers' side, the function to satisfy the readers' needs and the function to guard the *third party*'s interests. Detailed description for each sub-function is demonstrated below.

5.2 Coordination of the Intra-Personal Relationships in English News

5.2.1 Used for News Writers' Self-Protection

In addition to journalistic writers' responsibility of obeying objectiveness and precision in reporting standing on the professional ground, they also take the obligation of guarantee their own faces, avoiding being attacked by the audience afterwards. In view of writers themselves, hedges are used as a strategy for protecting their own faces. And it is commonly

approved that hedges in English not only improve the preciseness of language, but also shelter the speaker or writer from criticism or insult.

To achieve this, first and foremost, news writers should avoid expressing their own standpoints, viewpoints or judgments concerning the events. This is, in a way, it is to maintain news objectiveness; while, at the same time, it is utilized by the writers as a way of escaping retort or personal attack from the opposites among the uncountable readers and the invisible *third party*. However, every kind of mass media is reporting or broadcasting with the representation of their respective supportive administrations. As for these governmental news agencies, such as Xinhua News Agency, the Voice of American or British Broadcasting Company, they stand for their respective governments in daily reports or broadcasts. Since for the same event, different papers or magazines would undoubtedly present different articles with different focus or emphasized or weakened areas in order to preserve their own interests to the most, but, simultaneously, to shame the antagonists circumlocutorily. Hedges' indirectness feature can aptly and conveniently make the harboring of the writers' opinions, to be exact, the attitudes of their back supporters, come true.

On the other hand, the news writers should publish any information with accuracy. While, because of the timeliness nature of news reporting, the difficulty or impossibility of accuracy for reporters arises. However, writers usually sacrifice accuracy to live up to timeliness. So the limited time for reporters to prepare, in turn, gives the reporter the excuse of being inaccurate in the substitution of providing many approximate numbers or assertions. From the perspective of reporters, hedges, especially Attributive shields and Rounders, which perform the functions of deriving the sources of expression and vaguing the exact number information respectively, are frequently resorted to as a means of fending off further questioning by readers both at home and abroad.

The following is the supportive instances from the present papers:

- a. "Achieving stability has been the dominant goal of American foreign policy from the 19th century forward," says *Victor Silverman*.(from "The Perils of Order" in *Newsweek*, March 5, 2007)
- b. "As the noise level increases, subjects do a better job of shifting their focus to a new location," says *Ward*. (ibid.)

- c. *Science back up the notion that mess has gotten a bad rap, starting with something you learned in high-school physics—anything you do increases the universe’s entropy—that is, disorder. (ibid.)*
- d. *Studies by business professor William Starbuck at the University of Oregon show that strategic planning doesn’t improve performance at companies,...(ibid.)*
- e. *After three years, Toyota’s models retain 52 percent of their value, versus 43 percent for GM, according to the Automotive Lease Guide.(from “Road War Riots” in Newsweek, March 19, 2007)*
- f. *Experts say this isn’t necessarily a bad thing, if it helps release the company from its self-destructive commitment to the freighter version of the superjumbo,... (ibid.)*
- g. *Many aviation analysts’ say the bloated European champion should be split along country lines. (ibid.)*
- h. *But later that day, Hanover had her own announcement: Giuliani’s announcement had caught her by surprise. (from “Master of Disaster” in Newsweek, March 12, 2007.)*
- i. *On 9/11, with the president hidden from view, “American’s Mayor” steeled the country by speaking the terrible truth: “The number of casualties will be more than any of us can bear.” (ibid.)*
- g. *“Right now the experience could be a lot better than it is,” admits Marco Fossi of the super-intendent’s office of the Uffizi. (from “Making Room for Art” in Newsweek, March 19,2007)*
- k. *“There is nothing to suggest that any of them are a suspect at this stage,” Shields said earlier this week. (from “Dangerous Games” in Time, April 9, 2007)*

The directly quoted remarks, indirect derivation of others’ judgments or assertions and the evidences from studies or laboratories are littering around in the overall articles from the beginning to the end. In Prince et al.’s classification, they belong to the Attribution shields, working to conceal the writers’ commitment to the truth-value of the whole proposition. And they attribute the belief in question to someone other than the writers, the writers’ own degree of commitment only being indirectly inferable as far as Prince et al.(1982)’s confirmation is concerned. What these propositions implicate is that the writers are not fully and personally committed in the usual way to the credence that the relevant state of affair is actually reached.

The recurring appearance of these Shields in English news reporting can be expounded through the following aspects. First of all, they are the most ostensible way of showing the others' attitudes and points of view, eliminating the suspicion of the writers' subjective assumptions. It releases the writers from taking responsibility for the truthfulness or credibility. Next, that practice works the truth is an acceptable rationale to all without explanation, namely, any fact approved or deducted from research or study usually gives the audience a sense of irreversible truth. The direct citation of these conclusions or statistical results is substantial in upholding or verifying the articles with the absolute absence of writers in showing their own judgments. At last, these hedges allow writers to anticipate negative consequences of being proved wrong on the part of readers or the *third party*. This explanation is confirmed by Hübler (1983)'s view that the reason for using hedges is to make sentences more acceptable to the hearer and accordingly increase their chances of ratification. And this is made necessary by the inherent negotiability of sentences. According to Hübler, the function of hedges is to reduce the risk of negation. Therefore, it can be claimed that, in all communication, the speakers or writers try hard to protect themselves from potential anger, belittling, detestation from the part of the addressees or hearers.

In this thesis, I have made a mini-corpus in giving factual proof to be more persuasive. Along with the previous discussion about the pragmatic categorization of hedges, the collection of hedges in news reporting is based on two major sub-categories with five and two minor branches under them respectively. So there are altogether seven minor branches in the selecting procedure to be accumulated under their particular branch names. And the use of Plausibility Shields about the collected five subjects of news reporting has been accumulated as follows to support the discussion:

Table 5.1 Attribution Shields (Attri. S)' Distribution in Collected News

Sub-Styles Hedge Categories	Business News	Political News	Arts and Culture	Sports	Science
Attribution Shields	62	54	36	44	65
Hedges Total	316	335	254	251	402
Rate of Attri. S	19.6%	16.1%	14.2%	17.5%	16.2%

In the last line of the table, the rate of Attribution shields almost hold one fifth of the total number of hedges in different news reports discriminated by content objects. Meantime, the fluctuation for this distribution is not in a great disparity. Thus, the nearly equal use of Attribution shields can be backed up substantially. As we can conclude that the use of Attribution shields is prevalent and predominant in news for the writers' self-protection.

To be more elaborated, the general table of the distribution of hedges in journalistic English can be demonstrated as:

Table 5.2 The Appearance of Hedges in Subject-oriented Sub-styles of English News

Sub-Styles Hedge Categories	Business News	Political News	Arts and Culture	Sports	Science
Adaptors A	28	47	43	14	41
Adaptors B	51	38	45	56	58
Rounders	65	54	50	42	76
Frequency Identifiers	3	11	10	6	13
Vague Category Identifiers	3	16	10	9	19
Total of Approximators	140	166	158	127	207
Plausibility Shields	43	62	30	44	65
Attribution Shields	51	41	35	43	65

For each kind of sub-style news, there are five articles from *Newsweek* or *Times*, with about 5,000 words for all of the five articles. And, seeing through the general table, we can analyze the hedges employed in these articles clearly. Therefore, except for the uses of Attributions, the Rounders in Approximators are also under discussion. They are in charge of guarding against the possibility of a faulty memory or being later shown to be wrong. And they occur with a relatively high frequency compared with other Approximators, and they

even surpass the degree of the high frequency of Shields in news reporting. It is fairly clear that the writers here are keeping Grice's quality maxim, not giving the information for which you lack adequate evidence, or saying what you believe to be false. Here are some of these:

- a. Every year, the cap of sea ice floating atop the North Pole dwindles *from about 14 million to 7 million* square kilometers—a number that would panic scientists if weren't a normal occurrence, courtesy of nature. (from "Making Sense of Melting Ice" in *Newsweek*, April 2, 2007)
- b. While a \$2.6 trillion Chinese economy amounts to only *about 5 percent* of overall world output, it makes up a much larger share of the growth in the global economy. (from "China Exports Trouble, Too" in *Newsweek*, March 19, 2007)
- c. Long known for being among the riskiest of assets, stock and bond markets in the developing world have enjoyed an exceptionally vigorous rally for the past *several* years. (ibid.)
- d. He spent *several* years studying opera—four of them at his father's school—before landing the lead in "Phantom". (from "Northern Exposure" in *Time* May 7, 2007)
- e. GM is also boosting its budget for new models by about \$1 billion this year. (from "Road War Riots" in *Newsweek* March 19, 2007)
- f. In 1998-99, Serbia's military drove *nearly* a million Kosovar citizens from their homes. (from "Time to Decide" in *Newsweek* March 19, 2007)
- g. *some* conservatives *seem* willing to overlook the mayor's colorful past. (from "Master of Disaster" in *Newsweek* March 12, 2007)
- h. He logged long hours and brought *a string of* high-profile cases against mobsters, corrupt public officials and Wall Street insider traders. (ibid.)
- i. Moreover, during the past four years, China has been responsible for *about 50 percent* of the cumulative growth in economically sensitive commodities such as oil and *a variety* of base metals... (from "China Exports Trouble, Too" in *Newsweek*, March 19, 2007)

As has been shown in the above examples, the use of *about*, *nearly*, *some* and non-numerical vague quantifiers in Channell's terms, that is *a variety of*, *a string of* above, springs up in news reporting. Although in Channell's research (2000:45), *about* occurs more

frequently in her spoken examples, and *around* more frequently in the written examples, English news in this respect is just the opposite on data. There is almost no use of *around*, whilst *about* recurs. This rounder word appears as modifier to a number and the non-numerical Rounders occur as representing the large quantity or small quantity. In this case, writer just put the approximate numbers and the small or large quantity of objects with no exactitude for being defensive. For some reports, the exact numbers may be too long to concentrate the readers' attention on reading and also in return, readers would give up reading as a protest to the writer, while the superficially exact figures may lead to future retort for the non-accurate source or inaccessibility of exact numbers. To escape such responsibilities in writing, news writers take hedges as a tool. Just as *some* used in example g, the unanimous agreement with the attitude towards Mayor's past has never been confirmatively achieved, so *some* is used to demonstrate a moderate quantity to avoid being too many to arouse dissatisfaction among conservatives or being too small in quantity to be devoid of propositional force. And this is in accordance with Channell (2000:114)'s explanation of *some* as a vague quantifier, that is, its use entails quantifiers which are less than some, and implicates "not quantifiers which are greater". In a word, *some* is semantically neutral for quantity. Followingly, *seem*, working as an epistemic verb, suggests the writer's own judgment with great uncertain. As a consequence, the successive appearance of Rounders and Epistemic verbs fully conceal the judgments of the writers to a superficially modest and open to negotiation position to be free of taking the responsibility entirely.

5.2.2 Used to Cater for Readers' Requirements

Except for the first point, hedges have another interpersonal function. They help the writers to maintain good atmosphere in communication and to develop a good relation with the readers.

Though precise and accurate language usage is traditionally considered as the norm or standard, the hedges, a member of vagueness, are not bad things in themselves, for not only a great many terms are vague in natural languages without any serious impediment to communication, but they also perform the positive functions, not included in those superficially precise expressions.

Therefore, normally, some people may think that the more detailed and comprehensive the news is, the more readers would like it. However, the case is just the opposite, which can be elucidated by the well-known Economy Principle in psychology.

George Kingsley Zipf (qtd. Zhu Yongsheng, 2005)'s Principle of Least Effort applied in linguistics includes two principles, that is "principle of speaker's economy" and "principle of auditor's economy". The essence of the Economy Principle is a kind of relative "least effort", not absolute economy, referring to both speaker and auditor in communication with a view of achieving communicative purposes. In a sense, Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson's Relevance Theory has touched on the essence of this principle, which stresses on the search of optimal-relevance, so the little the effort is performed, the more it is relevant. This effort-consuming has effected as the standard of measuring the degree of success in communication. In interaction, "if hearer can afford the least effort to achieve the most contextual effect, the words have gained the optimal relevance" (He Zhaoxiong, 1999: 210).

Therefore, in daily life, people have been used to and satisfied with some vague concepts because they have the vague thinking ability, so they can make a judgment according to their experience (Zhang Jingshu, 1999:23). When it comes to news reading, it has been evidenced that most readers just don't want to grasp all the detailed information in it; however, they are interested in the information that meets their certain needs most of the time (Zhang Jian, 2004: 165).

Generally speaking, news readers just want to have a brief knowledge about the latest events occurring at home or abroad. And if the news contents are not their penchants, the readers will not explore the details for every piece. On the other hand, a superficially expatiated and precise piece of news can not only disinterest the readers, but it may frighten them away. Just as Channell has picked out the liabilities shown by too much precise information she saw, that is (Channell, 2000:175)

on the whole I don't think it's a good idea to put an awful lot of figures in the text and it makes terribly uninteresting reading—if they're not important the danger is ...people focus on the figures and miss the gist of the argument whereas if you simply describe and say 'it's large, it's small', you get you point across without putting a smokescreen

round what you're trying to say.

Seeing from this perspective, the hedges perform the function of tailoring the amount of information to an acceptable extent, to orientate readers' attention towards what is considered as the most important in an utterance. Still, the multifarious levels of literacy among the readers and their special fields have determined that the news to fit them must be relatively simple and the use of relatively inaccurate expressions to decrease the degree of difficulties of understanding for news is quite necessary.

In accordance with these aspects, the writers use hedges to express themselves more agreeably and clearly and make things not too exact or faraway to readers. Besides, because of the psychological motivation and practical effect, the reporters would have to take measures to deal with this dilemma with hedges as a best choice. Since hedges can adjust the writers' description to readers' presumably needs and limitations.

5.2.3 Used to Safeguard the *Third Party's* Interests

As is the case with the use of hedges in news reporting, the reported party, which can be interpreted as the *third party* in Xu's New Politeness principle, is rarely referred to in the pragmatic analysis. Since to be polite in communication, one should take the *third party* into account, there is no exception to English news reports in the application of hedges.

It is obvious that the reported contents are usually concerned with complex social background, especially in political and business news. News is a kind of construction of social facts, as Fowler (1991) argues news as a practice, a product of the social and political world on which it reports. Subsequently, Fairclough (1992) suggests that discursive practice, especially news discourse is ideological since it is made up to sustain or restructure power relations. And according to Verschueren's Adaptation Theory, language use should be adapted to the physical, social and mental world, and vice versa. Meanwhile, politeness itself is socially prescribed (Wardhaugh, 2000:272). Therefore, how to use hedges, a universal linguistic feature in news, to adapt to the social contexts politely is also an attentive aspect in news writing.

Considering the complicatedly interwoven relationships in the society, news writers should keep some information-providers' identity secrecy, guarding their faces from being

massively assailed afterwards for the information-providing action, for some information may belong to the confidentiality for a government or business company. Hence, to not intrude into the *third party*'s interests or power, they chose the following hedged expressions:

- a. But, *according to insiders*, the talks were tentative. (from "Road War Riots" in *Newsweek* March 19, 2007)
- b. So on Valentine's Day, Zetsche went public with Dailer's desire to unload Chrysler as away to attract additional suitors, *says a source familiar with the situation who didn't wanted to be identified because of the sensitivity of the negotiations.*(Neither GM nor Daimler-Chrysler will comment on or confirm the talks.) (from "Road War Riots" in *Newsweek* March 19, 2007)
- c. *Some* fear further delay will incite violence *of the sort* witnessed in 2004, setting Kosovo back yet again. (from "Time to Decide" in *Newsweek* March 19, 2007)

When reading these sentences, readers may wonder about whom the *insiders* are, to which *the source* refers. These explicit answers can never be divulged in the openly published articles, as news writers should take the responsibility of hiding either the *insiders*' or the *source*'s real identities because of the sensitivity of the reported issues mentioned in sample *b* in the ensuing causative adjunct.

And in sample *c*, the writer did not express the detailed violence that has happened in 2004; instead, the Vague category identifier *of the sort* has worked as the substituent. Violence may have left deleterious impression on Kosovo people and touching this, in a sense, the so-called taboo event, can surely threaten their face wants (Brown & Levinson, 1978). Still, in further study of politeness, Brown & Levinson have proposed the "model person" (MP) that is the one who has the necessity of pursuing face with rationality (qtd. He Zhaoxiong, 1999: 225-226). To gain the public self-image, these model persons aim to get either the "negative face" or "positive face". At the same time, lots of linguistic expressions are inborn with face-threatening elements in English, so the indifference to others' speaking, speaking of the taboos to parties or putting forward divergent opinions and subjects can all be attributed to threatening the parties' positive face wants. Considering these, the writer has made use of the *of the sort* serving the purpose of eschewing putting them into the embarrassing situation. Thus, as a way to protect the concerned party's face from threatening,

hedges are highly thought of.

In sum, the *third party*, which may be the directly referred-to people or the potentially inferable one(s), should be paid sufficient attention in news communication. On the basis of Politeness Theory and Face-Wants principles, the proper use of hedges can aptly function to secure the *third party* in obtaining their negative face wants.

Chapter Six Conclusion

6.1 Summary of the Study

In communication, people need not only the precise language, but also the fuzzy feature of languages. Fuzziness, with hedges working as an important member in it, has been observed to occur widely in language use, and some investigators have shown the tendency to maintain that all language use is fuzzy in some way. For some time, only by virtue of fuzzy languages can we accomplish the communicative purposes. So the flexible use of hedges in serving as a powerful communicative strategy is of great concern to scholars' study.

By analyzing the flexible use of hedges in English news within the pertinent and new theoretical models, the author has concluded the tentatively suggested functional framework of hedges in English news. What's more, the concrete description of these functions and sub-functions of hedges in adapting to the versatile contexts has been soundly evidenced by concrete and recent example news reports.

On the whole, two major functions of hedges in English news are derived. The one is to fulfill the characteristics of the news style; the other is to coordinate the involved intra-personal relationships in news writing. To be literally sub-divided, four sub-functions of hedges are included in the fulfillment of the characteristics of news style context, and the details are that they serve the purpose of improving news objectiveness, elevating news appropriateness, bringing news brevity and integrating the sense of humor into news; and the three parties' mutual association gets involved in news writing with the help of hedges in harmonizing their intra-personal relationships, so the three sub-functions of hedges in smoothing personal relationships are deduced, namely, self-protection for the writers, satisfaction of the needs for the readers and safeguard for the *third party's* interests.

6.2 Implications

Partial analysis of hedges used in English news has been carried out but remain to be substantiated. Further studies are still necessary in this field to better our mastering of English and understanding of English news. There are two points that can still be pursued further about hedges.

Firstly, the study of sub-styles of English news taking the use of hedges as an analyzed point is pragmatically important. Although some studies have taken hedges as a communicative strategy based on context, the study on news sub-styles is rare. Particularly, the elaborated analysis of hedges from the perspective of sub-styles of English news is meaningful, now that news style is actually a set of collective styles categorized by different standards. And in terms of the reported contents, news can be classified into ten sub-styles, that is, political news, economic news, technological news, cultural news, sports news, violence and crime news, disaster news, weather news, obituary, entertainment and miscellanies (Zhang Jian, 2004:34). Thus, it is certain that the study of English news' hedges under its sub-styles context is pragmatically significant, since context is so important in understanding the utterance meaning. Being relevant and adapted to versatile contexts is a decisive factor for communicators' mutual understanding. What's more, the various sub-styles of English news throw great emphasis on people's choice and interpretation of hedges in written news report. In return, the appropriate choice of hedges helps to create the ideal communicative context in news report.

Secondly, when it comes to daily communication, the appropriate use of hedges usually works as a kind of lubricant to facilitate communicative success. So the further study on this practical usage of hedges will be of great significance for language learners with English as a second language. Since based on Hymes (1972)' Communicative competence, the aim of language learning is to gain the ability to perform a repertoire of speech acts so as to take part in speech events. This is another way of saying that the practical performance with the target language is language learners' crucial aim in the acquisition process. So, in the acquisition of English, both teachers and learners should pay particular attention to English hedges, which is a common phenomenon in the language, trying to reach the goal of correct understanding and flexible employment of them in real communication. Especially, the middle school students should be taken as the research subjects because they are under the condition of nascent period of English learning and the more they drill in the practically flexible application of the second language, the better they will do in the future study. Thus, the empirical research on middle school students' daily use of English hedges could be performed by virtue of various tools like questionnaire, tests and etc, with a view of getting the first-hand data to instantly

and comprehensively know the situation about these students' second language acquisition, and at last, to propose constructive suggestions to better our second language educational status quo and eliminate certain shortcomings in second language learning and teaching.

6.3 Limitations

Notwithstanding this dissertation has initially touched upon the analysis of hedges in English news sub-styles superficially, the collected material is inadequate and the analyzing method is not sound. Admittedly, the received data are not so persuasive as to be resistant to challenge. As a result, the study should be carried out empirically with the substantial data as the analyzing starting-point derived from an established corpus. With the aid of computer science, the statistical analysis would be more convincing on the research findings about the sub-stylistic variation of hedges' distributive frequency.

In addition, since both time and energy are limited in this study, the materials selected are written news reports, but the real interaction is mostly oral. Therefore, the incorporation of visual, broadcasting and even the net news reporting will enrich this research; consequently, it's to give a more comprehensive mastering of hedges' usage in English news.

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Acknowledgements

Firstly, I am extremely indebted to my dear supervisor, Professor Tian, for his academic guidance and patient instructions through all the stages of this study. It is his insightful thoughts and constructive suggestions that help me complete this thesis.

I also thank Mr. Pan and Miss Tang, who have spared much time and attention in helping my thesis writing. My thanks also go to all the other professors whose teaching of M.A. courses have instilled me with inspiring linguistic and literary knowledge during the past three years. Their profound knowledge and generous instructions have stimulates me so much in my study.

Lastly, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to my parents, my close friends and roommates for their helps and encouragement when I come into difficulties all through my years of studying.

Academic Achievements

文章名称	发表刊物(出版社)	刊发时间	刊物级别	署名次序
《英语一词多义现象内部语义结构的认知理据》	《保定师范专科学校学报》	2006年10月	全国优秀社科学报	独立完成
“Study on Chinese-English Transliteration”	《语文学刊》(高教外语版)	2007年8月	中国社会科学精品期刊	独立完成