Interactional Strategies in L2 Writing: An Exploration of Hedging and Boosting Strategies in Applied Linguistics Research Articles

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Abstract: *Academic writing has been established as a persuasive endeavor which involves various interactional strategies including hedging and boosting. Nevertheless, there exists variation of hedging and boosting preferences across cultures. The purpose of this study is to explore the use of hedges and boosters, as interactional metadiscourse (MD) strategies, in Yemeni L2 academic writing. Using Hyland (2005), the study was conducted on a text of 34 applied linguistics research articles (RAs) produced by L2 writers. Based on Hyland's model, a textual soft waretool was employed to search the instances of hedges and boosters in the corpus. The findings demonstrate that interactional MD strategies were utilized in relatively small proportions. Contrary to the assumption in the literature, hedges were used more than booster especially in the conclusion section of RAs. However, the findings suggest that Yemeni L2 writers tend to present argument like an established fact i.e. making assertive and unqualified statements. Given the limited use of hedging and boosting and the tendency to make unhedged statements, limited rhetorical functions were detected. The study has useful implications for academic writing instruction especially in EFL context.*

Keywords: Genre analysis, academic writing, Hedges, boosters, L2 writers

1. Introduction

It has been generally attested that academic writing does not only involve propositional content but has also been established as interactional and persuasive (Swales 1990; Lee and Deakin 2016; Hyland 2005; Ho and Li 2018). Academic writers; therefore, do not only take account of the subject matter but also consider the rhetorical strategies which mark their stance to get their views ratified by the particular discourse community for whom the text is produced. Metadiscourse (MD) strategies are established to play a rhetorical role that contributes to the acceptability and persuasiveness of the propositional content. This might be justified since the writer's ability to employ MD strategies in a way that presents

credible representation of themselves and their material is considered essential in academic writing(Hyland 2005). MD is referred to as a rhetorical and interpersonal strategy that guides readers to interpret texts, expresses authorial stance and engages readers as discourse participants in an unfolding dialogue. Two categories are subsumed under the major category of MD, labelled by some theorists as textual and interpersonal MD(cf. Crismore, Markannen, & Steffensen, 1993; Vande Kopple, 1985) and interactive and interactional MD by some others (cf.Hyland, 2010). Hedging and boosting are characterized as interpersonal or interactional MD strategies which help writers to express authorial stance about the truth value of the propositional content presented.

Accordingly, hedges and boosters are used to indicate the writer's commitment about the propositions presented. While hedges are used to reduce authorial commitment, boosters indicate writers' full commitment towards the propositional content put forth. Nevertheless, hedges and boosters are not simply used to comment on the truth value of propositions by either reducing or boosting authorial commitment; they are also deployed to reflect the writer's relationship with members of discourse community(Hyland 2005; Vassileva 2001). Hedges and boosters are conceived as epistemic expressions that help writers modulate claims by anticipating readers' responses to the writer's statements and so their manipulation is considered essential in academic writing (Hyland 2017). Hedges are linguistically realized by expressions such as *might, perhaps, possible, generally, to a certain extent, etc.* whereas boosters include such expressions as *definitely, in fact, it is clear that, etc.* The use of these interactional strategies in academic writing has been established as pivotal as they convey credibility and build writer-reader relationship (Crismore, Markannen, and Steffensen 1993; Hyland 2005). Hyland (2005) cite a number of studies by expert writers showing that hedges and boosters are the most frequent interactional MD strategies in academic discourse.

Nevertheless, there exists cultural rhetorical variation of hedging preferences across cultures since hedging and culture are interrelated (Bloor and Bloor 1991). Hedging, for instance, is perceived as persuasive in Anglo-American context(Hinkel 2003)and thereby its use may be considered essential in this context. However, it may or may not be viewed to have such a rhetorical value in other cultural-rhetorical contexts. In classical Arabic, for instance, persuasion may not be generally pursued by hedging but rather by amplification(Hyland 2005). Hinkel(2005)suggests that exaggeration and assertion are characteristics of Arabic rhetoric. According to this view, Arab L2 writers may attempt to persuade audience utilizing less hedges and more emphatic expressions (Connor 1996), and this could lead to "cross-cultural misunderstanding" (Vassileva, 2001:84). This paper investigates this claim and examines the use of hedging and boosting in advanced Arab L2 writing.

Due to their importance, hedges and boosters have attracted a widely remarkable interest in the literature such as the use of hedges and boosters across cultures (Mu et al. 2015; Mur-Dueñas 2011), academic disciplines (Hyland 1998a;

Youssef 2016), undergraduate students' essays (Ho and Li 2018; Lee and Deakin 2016), post-graduate writing (Hyland 2004; Risda,Asfina, A. Effendi Kadarisman 2018; Hyland 2010), non-native writing (Abdollahzadeh 2011; Loi, Lim, and Wharton 2016; Vassileva 2001; Yagız and Demir 2014). These studies do not only underscore the significance of hedges and boosters but have established that these strategies are essential conventions in academic writing – being important rhetorical means for attending to readers' needs and assessing their reactions.

Despite the wide range of interest in the literature on hedging and boosting, many issues related to these strategies including the use of these strategies in advanced L2 writing may deserve further investigation although a few studies in L2 writing have so far been conducted (Abdollahzadeh 2011; Vassileva 2001; Vold 2006; Yagız and Demir 2014).Vassileva (2001) examined commitment (which is realized by boosters) and detachment (which is realized by hedges) in English and Bulgarian academic writing. She compared three sets of corpora namely, English research article written in Bulgarian, research articles in English by Bulgarian writers and research articles written by Anglo-American writers. Her findings revealed that Bulgarian L2 writers utilized a fewer range of hedging to express detachment than L1 writers. The researcher explained that lack of qualification in Bulgarian L2 writing indicates that they could be unaware of the role of hedging in L2 academic writing and hence they are unlikely to meet the expectations of the discourse community.

In a similar vein, Abdullahzadeh (2011) compared the use of hedges and emphatics in the conclusion sections of research papers by Iranian applied linguistics writers and their American counterparts. His study revealed similarities and differences in the use of these features by the two different groups. While the two groups used similar instances of hedging expressions, the American writers used more instances of boosters and attitude markers. Similarly, Yagız & Demir (2014), examined the use of hedges across different sections of research papers by Turkish applied linguistic writers and their American counterparts. The study shows that American writers employed more hedging strategies in the introduction and discussion sections whereas the conclusion section presents no remarkable differences between the two groups.

Based on the literature reviewed above, it seems clear that the study of hedging and boosting on Arab L2 advanced writing merits investigation. Firstly, research on the use of hedges and boosters in the Arabic context is scarce and so research on these features in this context would yield fruitful pedagogical implications (Yagız and Demir 2014). Secondly, it would probably contribute to the study of contrastive rhetoric as it would highlight the salient hedging and boosting strategies Arab L2 writers employ in L2 writing. Moreover, the study is likely to reveal some findings that would be of usefulness to teaching academic writing in EFL context. The study's purpose is two-fold: exploring the use and variation of hedges and boosters in RAs by Arab L2 writers and examining the way in which L2 writers modulate claims across different rhetorical sections of RAs. Based on these objectives, two questions are posed: 1) what are the hedging and boosting strategies employed in RAs by Yemeni Arab L2 writers; 2) What is

the distribution pattern of hedging and boosting strategies across the introduction and conclusion sections of RAs written by Yemeni L2 writers?

2. The Corpus

The corpus used in this paper is based on applied linguistics research articles produced by Yemeni academic writers. The selection of the corpus is based on a set of criteria proposed by Paltridge(1996), which include genre, ESP and text type. Research articles were established as a genre which has its unique conventions shared by members of a discourse community(Swales 1990; Mauranen 1993; Hyland 2005). The selection was focused on one single discipline (namely, applied linguistics) to satisfy the second criterion. Moreover, the selection was further refined to focus only on the introductory and concluding sections of RAs to examine the ways in which writers project themselves when they commence and wrap up their argument and thereby meets the third criterion.

The selection of the research articles had undergone a set of explicit criteria to ensure reliability of the results. As the study was conducted on Yemeni applied linguistics academics, it was ensured that all the articles were written by Yemeni L2 writers. As for the journals, the selection was only limited to peer-reviewed journals. As far as the articles are concerned, a set of selection criteria were developed. These include the topic, the type and the time constraints. As the topic of research articles may influence the frequency of interactional MD used(Hyland 1998b), we selected all the articles that mostly discuss more or less the same topic. Due to the fact that applied linguistics is an inter-disciplinary field encompassing various sub-disciplines, we have chosen to limit the scope to one single sub-discipline. Of all the collected articles within applied linguistics, research articles on language teaching were the most frequent and so the selection was confined to research articles within this sub-discipline. In addition, the selection was refined to include one sub-genre of research articles i.e. data-based research articles, which unlike other sub-genres of RAs, mostly consists of Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion (IMRD) structure. Finally, since the diachronic variation may affect the genre conventions (Bazerman, 1994), we also refined the selection to those articles published between 2010-2017. Based on the above-mentioned criteria, only 34 research articles were selected from 11 journals within the field of applied linguistics.

3. Methodology

In this paper, we follow a corpus-based analysis approach to examine the use of hedges and boosters in the text of research articles under investigation. The text-linguistic approach seems to be more useful in discourse studies as it yields better result about the linguistic features employed in writing. It has been proven useful in a wide range of studies on MD strategies as it reveals the way in which MD strategies are utilized in context. Mauranen (1993)convincingly argues that the text-linguistic approach is more valuable as "writers are not consciously aware of using textual strategies in terms of the kinds of variables investigated" (Mauranen,

1993:56). This does not imply that we use corpus analysis while overlooking taxonomies of hedging and boosting strategies in the literature. We employed both corpus as well as theoretically-based approaches for the analysis of hedges and boosters in the corpus scrutinized. In other words, we have employed corpus as well as theoretically-based approaches. Below we discuss the model we used for the analysis of hedges and boosters in the corpus. Since hedges and booster are considered as interactional or interpersonal MD strategies, we used an MD model for the identification and analysis of hedges boosters in the corpus.

There are mainly two major approaches to the study of MD, namely, the broad approach and the narrow approach. The broad approach views MD to encompass all the non-content features that writers utilize to express their purpose and attitude towards the content and audience. Advocates of this approach mainly divide MD into two major categories, namely, textual and interpersonal (Crismore et al. 1993; Vande Kopple 1985) or interactive and interactional (Hyland 2005). The narrow approach, on the other hand, restricts MD expressions to those reflexive features which refer to the ongoing discourse(Ädel 2006; Mauranen 1993). Although Mauranen and Ädel maintain that MD is interpersonal, they regard MD to be only restricted to metatextual resources such as *I will discuss, as we mentioned above, to conclude, to return to the first point etc*. However, they do not consider the other interpersonal features such as hedges and boosters as MD. Therefore, we adopt the broad perspective to the analysis of hedging and boosting strategies.

Nevertheless, various MD models exist within the broad approach including Vande Kopple, (1985), Crismore et al. (1993), Hyland, (1998b) and Hyland (2005). Vande Kopple and Crismore view MD as comprising two major categories i.e. textual and interpersonal. Hyland (2005), on the other hand, views all aspect of MD as interpersonal. He holds that MD is an interpersonal aspect of discourse consisting of two dimensions: interactive and interactional. He argues that both of these dimensions are inherently interpersonal including the interactive features which are used to refer to the textual material. What distinguishes Hyland's model from earlier models within the broad approach is that he has set some principles for what expressions should count as MD and thereby performs metadiscursive function and what should only be considered part of the content. Thus, Hyland adopts a functional perspective to the analysis of MD features. According to Hyland (2005) hedges can be categorized as:

Modal Auxiliaries (e.g. may, could, would)
Modal Adjuncts (e.g. probably, may be, perhaps)
Modal Adjectives (e.g. likely, it is likely/possible that)
Epistemic verbs (e.g. seem, suggest)
Circumstances (e.g. in my view, to some extent)
Boosters, on the other hand, can be categorized according to Hyland (2005) as:
Emphatics (e.g. of course, in fact)
Amplifying adverbs (e.g. certainly, definitely)
Emphatic verbs(e.g. show, demonstrate)

Emphatic adjectives (e.g. it is clear/evident that ….)

Based on Hyland's (2005) list of potential MD expressions, we used Antconc, (a software analytical tool) to search for the instances of hedges and boosters in the corpus. However, we did not totally depend on this list as it is by no means complete. We extracted all the features and examined all the occurrences in context. In this way, a substantial number of expressions was excluded as they turned to function as propositional rather than performing metadiscursive function. Consider the examples below:

B) It has been argued that PCK refers to the understanding of subject matter and how it **could** be transformed into a comprehensible content.
A) Thus, providing students with the appropriate PSI techniques and applying these techniques in delivering speeches in the classroom **could** enable students to improve their communication performance.

The item 'could' in A) is not coded as a hedge in this context since it does not signal authorial purpose whereas the same item in B) was labelled as a hedge because it expresses the author's epistemic opinion. Having identified the instances of hedges and boosters, we then examined the functions of hedging and boosting expressions in their context of use across the introduction and conclusion sections of RAs.

4. Findings
4.1 Overall findings

The overall findings indicate that Arab L2 writers tend to focus more on the subject matter than on interaction in writing. The findings demonstrate that there is a low frequency of both hedges and boosters in the corpus. Table 1 overviews the normalized frequencies of hedges and boosters. It was found that writers deployed fairly limited proportions of both strategies i.e. hedges and boosters. As table 1 shows, the overall instances of both hedges and boosters in the corpus are 959 items i.e. only 7.33 per thousand words. This frequency seems to be significantly low compared to similar research on hedges and boosters in research articles as we will see below
.

Table 1: Overall frequency of hedges and boosters

Categories	Freq.	Freq. per 1000 words	%
Hedges	738	5.64	76.96
Boosters	221	1.69	23.04
Total	959	7.33	100

Nevertheless, hedges were found more frequent than boosters. However, there were no statistically significant differences between hedging and boosting realizations in the corpus (P=0.5416, P > 0.05). Having overviewed the overall frequency of both hedges and boosters, we will now consider each category along

with its sub-types in turn. Table 2 shows the sub-types of hedges detected in the corpus and table 3 summarizes the sub-types of boosters.

Table 2: Hedges Subcategories

Subcategories	Freq.	Freq. per 1000 words	%
Modal Aux.	286	2.19	38.75
Modal Adjuncts	173	1.32	23.44
Modal Attributes	30	0.23	4.07
Epistemic verbs	200	1.53	27.10
Circumstances	49	0.37	6.64
Total	738	5.64	100

Although hedges were found slightly more frequent than boosters, we can see that there is only one single sub-type of hedges that occurs quite more frequently whereas the rest of hedges subtypes seem to be either low frequent or fairly underrepresented. We can easily observe that modal auxiliaries (2.19 per thousand words) are the most frequent hedging sub-type in the corpus, with a percentage of 38.75%. The second most frequent hedging category is 'modal adjuncts' (1.32 per thousand words) followed by epistemic verbs (1.53 per thousand words). The least frequent hedges sub-type is "circumstances" which includes expressions such as *in general, in some cases, to some extent* etc. (0.37 per thousand words) and modal attributes such as *probable, possible* etc. (0.23 per thousand words).

We will now turn to 'boosters' and see how its sub-types are represented in the corpus. Like hedges types, we can observe from Table 3 that there are considerably great variations among the categories of boosters.

Table 3. Boosters Subcategories

Subcategories	Freq.	Freq. per 1000 words	%
Emphatics	38	0.29	17.19
Amplifying adverbs	30	0.24	13.57
Emphatic verbs	137	1.05	61.99
emphatic adjectives	16	0.12	7.24
Total	221	1.69	100

Curiously, there is only one type of boosters that seem to occur more frequently amongst all the other boosters' subtypes. We can clearly see that the most frequent type of boosters are emphatic verbs such as *show, demonstrate etc.*Compared to the frequency of boosters (1.72 per thousand words), emphatic verbs are the most frequent type of boosters (1.08 per thousand words). It is also interesting to note that the most frequent emphatic verb in the corpus was the verb 'show'. 'Emphatics' such as *in fact, no doubt,etc*. is the second most frequent sub-

type of boosters (0.29 per thousand words) followed by amplifying adverbs (0.24) whereas "Emphatic adjectives" isthe least frequent boosters' sub-category in the corpus.

4.2 Distribution of hedges and booster
4.2.1   Distribution of hedges and boosters in the introduction of RAs

As seen earlier, hedges were found more frequent than boosters. Equally, hedges were more frequent in the introduction than boosters (See Table. 4.) This might indicate that Arab L2 writers often express doubt in the introduction as they may be quite uncertain of their claims on the one hand and they tend to show respect to members of discourse community. However, it was found that they mostly tend to initiate their claims assertively using unhedged statement while introducing their claims:

1. It goes without saying that a psycholinguistic analysis probing deeply the sources of errors committed by L2 learners requires us to seek answers to many questions as to why, when, how and where such errors come from.
2. Learning a second language (L2) is a complex process.
3. Teaching English language is very important at secondary education in Yemen because it is a compulsory subject at this stage.

Table4. Distribution of hedges and boosters in the introduction

Category	Freq.	Freq. per 1000 words
Hedges	360	5.04
boosters	93	1.30

Boosters, on the other hand, were scarcely used in the introduction, appearing only 1.30 per thousand words. Although boosters are less represented than boosters, both interactional strategies seem to be fairly underrepresented.

4.2.2 Distribution of hedges and boosters in the conclusion section of RAs

Interestingly, hedges were even far more frequent than boosters than boosters in the conclusion section(See Table 5). While hedges account for 8.65 per thousand words, instances of boosters only account for 1.75 per thousand words. This shows that L2 writers tend to prefer concluding their findings with caution attempting to detach themselves from expressing commitment as they conclude the argument.

Table 5. Distribution of Hedges and boosters in the conclusion

Category	Freq.	Freq. per 1000 words
Hedges	104	8.65
boosters	21	1.75

This indicates that Arab L2 writers are more cautious as they conclude one's argument than they initiate their research (4-5).

4. Thus, it **would be** fruitful to pursue longitudinal research with a greater number of examined words so as to provide a better understanding of the effectiveness of the DDL method in helping EFL learners develop receptive vocabulary knowledge.

5. The use of direct strategy (imperative) by female speakers of Yemeni Arabic in the same gender **could be** attributed to the closeness and the solidarity between the interlocutors.

5. Discussion

As we have seen, the findings indicate that Arab L2 writers tend to give little attention to interactional strategies in writing. The research articles investigated in the present study involve low proportions of both hedges and boosters. The limited use of these strategies might indicate a lack of dialogic stance and voice in discourse. According to Hyland, (2005), scarce use of these features in writing may diminish authorial stance to evaluate the content and appeal to audience. Compared to boosters, hedges were more frequent in the corpus. These findings do not seem to concur with the assumption in the literature claiming that Arab writers tend to employ more emphatic expressions to support one's argument(Connor 1996; Hinkel 2005) in one aspect but they do agree in another. As we have seen, both hedges and boosters are found to be used in small proportions and that hedges are even more frequent than boosters. One possible interpretation to such discrepancies is that the use of hedges and boosters vary across different genres (Hyland, 2005). Arguably, Arab L2 writers may have more emphatic preferences to pursue persuasive goals in non-academic genres. However, these findings seem to agree with the assumption stated above which suggests that Arab L2 writers tend to express their stance using assertion. This is also corroborated by (Lee and Deakin 2016) who reported that L2 writers tend to express claims as established facts.

Compared to the use of hedges and boosters in previous research(Hyland 1998b; Lee and Deakin 2016), hedges and boosters are considered to be infrequent in the present study. Hyland (1998), for instance, found that the frequency of hedges is 15.1 per thousand words i.e. three times higher than the frequency of hedges in the present study. As another example, in their comparison of interactional MD in English by American and another two groups of Chinese ESL learners, Le and Deaken (2016) show that the frequency of hedges were: (11.70, 10.63 and 8.37 per thousand words) respectively. Thus, the present study

shows that Yemeni L2 writers tend to employ hedging less frequently and prefer unhedged claims.

Our findings, however, seem to support some studies of hedges and boosters in L2 writing. Hyland & Milton(1997), for example, report that L2 high school students employ a low proportion of hedges and boosters in their writing compared to their L1 counterparts. Nevertheless, given that our study was conducted on applied linguistics writers who are presumably considered to have the highest levels of English among Yemeni EFL writers, the findings reveal that even advanced L2 writers seem to lack the awareness of the pivotal role of interactional MD strategies in L2 academic writing. As far as the sub-types of hedges and boosters are concerned, we also find that some sub-categories were heavily used while others were rarely employed. It was found that modal auxiliaries were considerably used whereas other types were of low proportions. Similarly, emphatic verbs were the boosters sub-type that constitutes almost two thirds of boosters employed in the corpus, and this suggests that all the other types were scarcely employed. This supports some studies findings which indicate that L2 writers tend to employ limited sub-types of hedges and boosters due to lacking sufficient linguistic repertoire(Ho and Li 2018; Lee and Deakin 2016). It may also reinforce the claim we put forward above that L2 writers in general tend to prioritize content over interaction and thereby tend to use less interactional strategies that attend to readers' needs and engage them in the content presented.

Turning to the distribution of hedges and boosters in the introduction and conclusion of RAs, we find that hedges are used more than boosters especially in the conclusion section. This suggests that Arab L2 writers tend to avoid boosters even as they wrap up their research. Similar to Arab L2 writers are the Iranian writers who were found to use less boosters in the conclusion sections of RAs (Abdollahzadeh 2011). Abdollahzadeh found that Iranian applied linguistics L2 writers tend to use fewer boosters in the conclusion of RAs compared to their American counterparts.

At any rate, hedges and boosters were employed for quite limited and different purposes in both the introduction and conclusion sections. Hedges were mostly utilized in the introduction by the writers in the present study for quite limited purposes such as attempting to indicate research gap in the literature (6-7), stating the significance of research with caution (8-9) and introducing research hypotheses (10-11).

6. Some studies have investigated the methodology of teaching grammar and classroom practices in the Yemeni context (e.g. Abduh, M. 2008), but no research has been carried out, *to our knowledge*, on in-service English teachers' beliefs

7. *To the best of our knowledge*, few or no studies have been conducted on the investigation of the PCK of the English as Foreign Language (EFL)teacher candidates through the analysis of their current practice as a source of their PCK.

The use of hedges here was motivated by the need to justify conducting research using a circumstantial hedge to mitigate the claim. Presenting such a claim categorically might render it unacceptable and therefore some L2 writers mostly resort to hedging their bets suggesting that research on a specific area seem to deserve pursuit in order to increase their chances for publication.

The findings also indicate that Arab L2 writers hedge in the introduction to state the significance of their research by expressing their uncertainty to pay respect to the discourse community (8-9)

8. The findings of the present study *may* benefit EFL teachers, EFL teachers' trainers, school administrators, policy-makers, and the Ministry of Education.
9. Moreover, this study is the only study which includes open ended questions which *may* give more insights into the process of the TP.

As regards the conclusion, the writers mostly employed hedges for limited purposes including summarizing (10-11) and interpreting findings (12-13).

10. The findings *indicated* that the students have certain reasons for learning the language
11. Teachers are *likely* to differ in their approach to handling spelling
12. The use of direct strategy (imperative) by female speakers of Yemeni Arabic in the same gender *could* be attributed to the closeness and the solidarity between the interlocutors.
13. Students' lack knowledge of collocations *might* be due to the fact that collocations have differently collocated

Similar to Abdollahzadeh(2011) who reported his study on the use of hedges and emphatics by American and Iranian academic writers, YemeniL2 writers in the present study were found to use boosters for fairly limited purposes in both sections i.e. the introduction and conclusion of RAs. A possible explanation to the lack of boosting could be that writers might believe that there is no need to employ boosting strategies. This, however, could be an erroneous assumption since writers need to deploy boosters to covey positive image, anticipate readers' views and many other purposes. While it could be true that writers need to hedge their claims, they also need to mix their doubts with conviction to get their argument more convincing (Crismore & Farnsworth, 1989; Hyland, 2019). Boosters were found to be mostly used in the introduction to emphasize an existing problem (14-15) and emphasize the principal outcomes of research (16-17).

14. *In fact*, many studies state that in several educational contexts, teachers increasingly leave the profession after a few years in service.
15. Deficiencies in vocabulary knowledge that *undoubtedly* impede comprehension contribute to EFL learners\x92 major difficulties in reading.
16. Such results *prove* that Edmodo, having a high level of acceptance, can be used not only as a tool to create an additional online classroom community for students but can benefit the teacher community as well
17. The importance of motivation in enhancing second/foreign language learning is *undeniable*.

Given the lack of boosters used as shown in the examples above, we can see that YemeniL2 writers utilize these strategies for limited functions in the introduction. Surprisingly, the writers were found to use boosters for even scarcer functions in the conclusion section of RAs. It was found that boosters were mostly utilized in the conclusion for the purpose of emphasizing findings that support research hypotheses (18-19).

18. In short, the study provides a ***clear*** evidence of the wash back effect of the exam on the components of the language teaching-learning process in its influence on what and how the teachers teach, and on what and how the learners learn.

19. The results in this study ***showed*** that using holistic rubric can give reliable scores and using analytic rubric gives even more reliable scores.

Generally speaking, the study shows that Yemeni L2 writers tend to use hedging and boosting for limited communicative functions as they probably focus more on the content than on the audience. While it is true that the content is the core of the issue(s) presented in research, hedging and boosting have been established as essential features for acknowledging other alternative views, anticipating readers' reactions, presenting statement as hypotheses and many other functions which render the content tangible, reader-oriented and persuasive (Hyland, 2005).

6. Conclusion

This paper endeavored to explore the extent to which Yemeni L2 writers deploy hedges and boosters as interactional MD strategies to mark one's authorial stance in the genre of research articles. It also attempted to investigate the distribution pattern as well as communicative functions of these strategies across the introduction and conclusion sections of RAs. Given the limited proportions of hedging and boosting strategies used, it seems clear that there is a lack of authorial stance in Yemeni L2 academic writing. Another interesting finding of the study indicates that Yemini L2 writers utilized slightly more hedges than boosters especially in the conclusion section of RAs. Such a finding does not seem to resonate with the assumption that Arab L2 writers tend to utilize more emphatic expressions than hedges in writing. Although both hedges and boosters were generally of relatively small proportion, hedges were more frequent than boosters. As stated above, this discrepancy of findings could be associated with the variation of interactional strategies across genres. Nevertheless, it is important to note that despite the lack of boosters which indicate certainty of argument, it was found that writers occasionally tend to make bare assertion using unhedged statements i.e. almost presenting their claims as established facts.

On the whole, the study has some useful implications for the teaching of academic writing in the Arabic context. The study highlights important implications for the enhancement of academic writing skills in the Arabic EFL context. The lack of interactional MD strategies in Arab L2 writing suggests that there is a lack of authorial stance in the academic writing. This could probably be

attributed to the erroneous assumption that academic writing is objective and faceless (Hyland, 2005) and thereby subjective evaluation is unnecessary. While this assumption has been abandoned, many L2 writers still believe that interaction in writing may not be essentially pivotal. Thus, policy makers and syllabus designers need to reconsider the goals and content of EFL academic writing syllabus as well as the pedagogical approaches used in the teaching of academic writing in the Arabic context. Academic writing courses may well be reconsidered to ensure that they involve the conventions of English academic writing including the effective use of hedges and boosters as effective interactional MD strategies in writing.

To conclude, it is important to point out that the study has been subject to some limitations. Firstly, the corpus of the study may be considered as small since only 34 research articles were analyzed. Therefore, a forthcoming research may be conducted on a larger corpus focusing on the use of interactional MD strategies across all the sections. Secondly, the researchers conducted the analysis of interactional MD strategies as well as their functions by adopting a corpus-based analysis. The analysis of the functions of hedges and boosters would have resulted in better results had the perceptions of L2 writers been taken into account. Thus, a forthcoming research may examine the use of hedges and boosters by conducting discourse-based interviews with L2 writers to gain better results. Third, the analysis of these features was conducted on L2 writers as NNES writers without comparing these strategies with NES academic writers. Thus, a comparative study of the use of these features by native and non-native speakers of English would be more valuable.

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