

**“One could assume... But it should be kept in mind that...”:
Hedges & boosters in L2 writing**

Ekaterina Zaytseva

University of Bremen

One of the chief academic writing skills is the ability to anticipate readers' objections to the claim and respond to those with an appropriate degree of respect and conviction by employing hedging and boosting strategies (cf. Barton 1995, Booth et al. 2008). Proper balance between hedges and boosters is an important feature of academic prose and serves to indicate author's willingness to sound polite, as well as persuasive (e.g. Myers 1989, Hyland 1996, 1998). Learners were found to use a more limited set of hedging and boosting devices than English native speakers, and to experience particular difficulties in adding an appropriate degree of tentativeness to their claims (e.g. Hinkel 2005, Hyland & Milton 1997, McEnery & Kifle 2002). However, learner corpus studies investigating hedging in L2 writing are still scarce and tend to focus on individual genres (e.g. argumentative essays), rather than provide a comparative analysis of the phenomenon across various text types.

This study focuses on the use of hedging and boosting devices by German learners in acknowledging and responding to readers' objections to a claim in structures such as “[*One could assume/Of course/This may be...*]. *But [it should be kept in mind that/I think/sometimes...*]”. The structures will be analysed in two text types: argumentative essays and term papers. The contribution addresses the following research questions:

1. Which hedging strategies are employed by German L2 writers when acknowledging and responding to readers' objections in their writing?
2. Are there genre-induced differences as to the use of hedges & boosters by German learners?

The analysis draws on two types of learner corpora: the *International Corpus of Learner English* (ICLE; Granger et al. 2009) and the *Corpus of Academic Learner English* (CALE; Callies & Zaytseva 2013).

References

Barton, E. L. (1995). Contrastive and non-contrastive connectives: Metadiscourse functions in argumentation. *Written Communication*, **12**(2), 219–239.

Booth, W. C., Colomb, G. G., & Williams, J. M. (2008). *The Craft of Research*, 3rd ed. Chicago & London: The Univ. of Chicago Press.

- Callies, M. & Zaytseva, E. (2013). The Corpus of Academic Learner English (CALE) – A new resource for the assessment of writing proficiency in the academic register. *Dutch Journal of Applied Linguistics* **2**(1), 126–132.
- Granger, S., Dagneaux, E., Meunier, F. & Paquot, M. (2009). *The International Corpus of Learner English. Version 2*. Handbook and CD-ROM. Louvain-la-Neuve: Presses Universitaires de Louvain.
- Hinkel, E. (2005). Hedging, inflating, and persuading in L2 academic writing. *Applied Language Learning*, **15**, 29–53.
- Hyland, K. (1996). Talking to the academy: forms of hedging in science research articles. *Written Communication*, **13**(2): 251–281.
- Hyland, K. (1998). Boosting, hedging and the negotiation of academic knowledge. *TEXT*, 18(3), 349–382.
- Hyland, K. & Milton, J. (1997). Qualification and certainty in L1 and L2 students' writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, **16**(2), 183–205.
- McEnery, T. & Kifle, N. A. (2002). Epistemic modality in the argumentative essays of second language writers. In J. Flowerdew (Ed.), *Academic Discourse*, (pp 182–195). London: Longman.
- Myers, G. (1989). The pragmatics of politeness in scientific articles. *Applied Linguistics* **10**(1), 1–35.