

KARADENİZ TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY * THE INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF WESTERN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE

APPLIED LINGUISTICS MASTER'S PROGRAM

**THE INVESTIGATION OF METADISCOURSE MARKERS IN NATIVE AND NON
NATIVE ACADEMIC CORPORA: AUTHORIAL STANCE AND THE USE OF HEDGING**

MASTER'S THESIS

Zehra GÜRSOY

SEPTEMBER - 2023

TRABZON

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Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ali Şükrü ÖZBAY

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APPROVAL

Upon the submission of the dissertation, **Zehra GÜRSOY** has defended the study “**The Investigation of Metadiscourse Markers in Native And Non-Native Academic Corpora: Authorial Stance and the Use of Hedging**” in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics at Karadeniz Technical University, and the study has been found fully adequate in scope and quality as a thesis by **unanimous / majority** on **10.11.2023**.

Committee Member		Decision		Signature
Name and Surname	Mission	Accept	Refuse	
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ali Şükrü ÖZBAY	Supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nazan YILDIZ ÇİÇEKÇİ	Member	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Buğra ZENGİN	Member	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences.

Prof. Dr. Tülay İLHAN NAS

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ÖZET

Bu tez, İngilizceyi yabancı dil (EFL) olarak öğrenen 35 öğrencinin bir dönemlik yazılı verilerinden oluşan boylamsal öğrenen derleminde etkileşimli üstsöylem belirleyicilerinden kaçınma kullanımını incelemeyi araştırmaktadır. Analiz iki yönlüdür: Birincisi, farklı zaman aralıklarında kaçınma kullanımı açısından toplu eğilimleri gözlemek adına grup analizidir. İkincisi, bir dönem boyunca 5 öğrencinin kaçınma kullanımını gözlemlemeye yarayan bireysel analizdir. Frekans yaklaşımına dayalı olarak öğrencilerin en sık kullandığı kaçınma türleri ve kelimeleri belirlenip incelenmiştir. Sonrasında, bu kaçınmaların kullanım benzerliği açısından, anadili İngilizce olan (LOCNESS) ve anadili İngilizce olmayan derlemler (KTUCALE) arasında karşılaştırma yapılmıştır. Bu analiz, iki grubun da toplu olarak kaçınma kullanımı eğilimindeki benzerlik ve farklılıkları ortaya koymuştur. Sonuç olarak, EFL öğrencilerinin en sık kullandığı kaçınma aracının kip belirteçleri olduğu ve bu türde de *should* ifadesinin en çok kullanıldığı belirlenmiştir. Bununla birlikte öğrencilerin isim tamlamalarını tartışmacı yazılarında hiç kullanmadığı görülmüştür. Öğrencilerin kullanma eğiliminde olduğu kaçınma ifadelerinden yazar olarak ortaya koydukları duruşlar yorumlanmıştır. Ayrıca loglikelihood değerlerinden yola çıkarak yapılan karşılaştırma analizinde anadili İngilizce olan derlem ile İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrenciler arasında kullanım açısından benzerlik olduğu görülmüştür. Kullanılan kaçınma ifadelerinin türlerinin kullanım yoğunluğu birbirlerine benzerlik gösterirken, en çok kullanılan ortak kaçınma ifadesi *should* anadili İngilizce olmayan derleminde aşırı kullanılmıştır. Son olarak, öğrencilerin kaçınma kullanımları ile dönem boyunca aldıkları sınav notları arasında bir paralellik olup olmadığı değerlendirilmiş ve toplu sonuçlarda doğru orantılı bir etkileşim olduğu görülmüştür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Üst söylem belirleyicileri, Kaçınmalar, Öğrenen Derlemi, Akademik Yazma

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the use of hedges of interactive metadiscourse markers in a longitudinal learner corpus, consisting of one semester of written data from 35 students learning English as a foreign language (EFL). The analysis is twofold: First, a group analysis was conducted to observe collective trends in hedge use across different periods. Then, an individual analysis was conducted to observe the hedges used by 5 students over the course of a semester. Based on the frequency approach, the types of hedges and words most frequently used by students were determined and examined. Afterwards, a comparison was made between the native speaker (LOCNESS) and non-native English corpora (KTUCALE) in terms of the similarity of usage of these hedges. This analysis revealed similarities and differences in the two groups' collective tendency to use hedges. As a result, it was determined that the most frequently used hedge marker by EFL students was modal auxiliaries and *should* was the most used expression in this type. Moreover, it was observed that students never used noun phrases in their argumentative writings. The stances they put forward as writers were interpreted from the hedge expressions that students tend to use. Furthermore, in the comparison analysis based on loglikelihood values between native speakers and EFL students, it was seen that there was a similarity in terms of hedge use. When the most frequently used common hedges were compared, the results showed that only the hedge *should* was overused in the non-native corpus. Finally, it was observed whether there was a parallelism between students' use of hedges and their exam scores throughout the semester, and a positive interaction was obtained in the collective results.

Keywords: Metadiscourse Markers, Hedges, Learner Corpus, Academic Writing

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EFL	: English as a Foreign Language
LOCNESS	: Louvain Corpus of Native English Essays
L1	: First Language
L2	: Second Language
MDMs	: Metadiscourse Markers



INTRODUCTION

The main goal of the EFL community has been interacting effectively in English since it has become the lingua franca. The skills required for effective communication in the target language involved practices in speaking, reading, listening, and writing. Learning English through these skills introduced new research areas in Linguistics. To this end, competence and quality of academic writing have been some of the research themes of linguistics studies for decades. The development of technology and software tools has made it simpler to compile and conduct analyses on academic writings. In this aspect, corpus linguistics guides the researchers into an examination of given any authentic language material and emphasizes all the necessary grammar and discourse elements to make the learners of the language-aware while learning the language.

Researchers displayed increased interest in the social aspect of academic writing. For instance, Hyland (2005: 65) states that “Academic writing has gradually lost its traditional tag as an objective, faceless and impersonal form of discourse and come to be seen as a persuasive endeavour involving interaction between writers and readers”. Accordingly, writing competence is associated with the establishment of communication, a writer’s ability to express their ideas and provide a stance is up to their linguistic awareness. In this respect, *metadiscourse* is one of the key terms that describe the relationship between an author and reader in a text. It is defined as “the linguistic and interpersonal devices which explicitly refer to the organization of the discourse or the writer’s stance towards either its content or the reader” (Hyland, 1998: 438). Moreover, the term indicates the transfer of the intended meaning and its display to the text’s receiver (Vande Kopple, 1985; Crismore et al., 1993). Thus, one way to examine how writers create their ideas is through the use of metadiscourse. This allows one to see how writers organize their ideas in accordance with the expectations of their audience and structure their thoughts, knowledge, and beliefs using the rhetoric of the language that they use (Hyland, 2005).

Metadiscourse is a widely studied subject in the language studies. The frame of the subject allows researchers to conduct studies in different disciplines such as literature, applied linguistics, and discourse. Moreover, studies conducted in the theme of metadiscourse mostly focused on the comparison between native and non-native writing with different themes. In non-native academic writing, along with several other key themes, awareness of metadiscourse markers has been explored with different contexts i.e., cross-cultural (e.g., Kobayashi, 2016; Lee & Casal, 2014; Mauranen, 1993; Özdemir & Longo, 2014; Tarrayo & Duque, 2011; Akbaş, 2012; Akbaş & Hardman, 2018) and cross-disciplinary (Hyland, 1998; Bruce, 2009; Li & Wharton, 2012; Hu & Cao, 2015; Akbaş &

Hatipođlu, 2018) studies on metadiscourse. Moreover, instruction on metadiscourse markers has not been the primary focus of many courses (Williams, 1981; Steffensen & Cheng, 1996; Bogdanovic & Mirovic, 2018; iek Tmer, 2021) which would suggest a need for specific metadiscourse marker instruction and material development research (Algı, 2012; Uluay, 2014; Dařkın & Hatipođlu, 2019; Sancak, 2019). To add and contribute to the literature, this study aims to explore the metadiscourse marker usage in argumentative essays and the effect of explicit metadiscourse marker instruction on Turkish non-native academic writing in tertiary-level EFL students.



CHAPTER ONE

1. FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

1.1. Background of the Study

In the last decade, the compilation of naturally occurring texts has become simpler and more accurate with the development of technology. Various available tools and software that are used for corpus analysis have shifted the focus to corpus studies in the literature. Researchers are able to explore, process and analyse data thoroughly in different ways and studies with the help of corpus tools (Aijmer & Altenberg, 2004). Moreover, corpus tools enable researchers to achieve quantitative data through frequencies, distributions, and contextual data. Corpus data, on the other hand, has been used in the instruction and learning of the English language and discussed by different scholars in the field (Hunston, 2002; Flowerdew, 2011; O'Keeffe et al., 2007; Granger, 2002; Johns, 1991). For example, learner corpora, a type of corpora used in corpus linguistics, can be used for the mentioned aim to develop materials, or understand the needs of English learners to meet them (Breyer, 2011; Granger, 2002).

Studies regarding the use of metadiscourse markers in academic writing have revealed the importance of sociocultural norms and expectations in the written discourse. As Uysal and Güven (2018) suggest, a lack of understatement and competence might appear when a writer's native language rhetoric language use and strategies do not meet the requirements of the target language. Additionally, Hatipoğlu and Algı (2017: 86) indicate the importance of acquiring necessary writing strategies for EFL learners because L2 writing contains "learning, organizing knowledge and thinking within the limits of the specific discourse genre". Therefore, for a writing to be considered as an argumentative one, it should contain elements such as suggesting different perspectives, using words to change the degree of certainty, and indicate commitment or distance to a thought presented (Wentzel, 2018). In this regard, Hyland (2005) proposes an interpersonal model of metadiscourse considering an interaction between the target of the writing and the writer of the text: interactive metadiscourse and interactional metadiscourse. Interactional metadiscourse markers are used to express the writer's evaluation and feelings. It is the personal engagement of writers with readers. Moreover, the interactional metadiscourse markers include stance markers (Hyland, 2005: 176) which "refer to the ways writers present themselves and convey their judgements, opinions, and commitments". In literature, many studies conducted in terms of investigating the usage of interactional metadiscourse markers (Crismore, et al., 1993; Ädel, 2006; Bayyurt & Akbaş, 2014;

Hatipoğlu & Algi, 2017; Hatipoğlu & Algi, 2018; Can, 2006; Yüksel & Kavanoz, 2018). Despite the numbers, corpus-based studies utilized in metadiscourse research are growing, and approaching the subject from a longitudinal aspect in the Turkish EFL context is a gap that should be filled. Thus, the study explores the use of hedges in argumentative essays of Turkish EFL learners with a longitudinal methodology.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the use of hedges in academic argumentative writings of tertiary-level Turkish EFL learners in terms of authorial stance and frequency while considering student scores. To provide a better observation of the development of the writers, a longitudinal research design was preferred. The longitudinal learner corpus was collected from the students during one semester in an academic writing course. For the identification of hedges, Hyland's (2005) taxonomy of metadiscourse markers was utilized. The analysis was conducted by using several corpus tools such as #LancsBox and SketcEngine. Since analysing metadiscourse data depends on the context of the words investigated, more than one tools used to examine the data. Moreover, to avoid categorization errors, a manual check was performed by the researcher. The findings discussed in terms of group and individual analysis of students and expected to reveal a positive effect of explicit teaching, teacher feedback, and developed use of hedges in argumentative writings of the students. Focusing on metadiscourse markers in academic writing classes could be beneficial for the students who have a hard time expressing their opinions in their writings. The explicit teaching and feedback aspects of the study shed light to the development in language use, namely authorial stance, which results in academic success. Overall, this study's results are expected to serve for the improvement of language teaching in academic writing classes.

1.3. Significance of the Study

Research on authorial stance in argumentative writing has been gaining attraction in the last decades. Although many of the previous corpus-based studies concerning the use of metadiscourse markers varied in disciplines and cultures, they were mostly descriptive in nature (Akbaş, 2012; Dafouz-Milne, 2008; Hyland, 2005; Hyland, 1998). Thus, there is still room for the investigation of how Turkish EFL learners use hedges in the long-term considering the effects of explicit teaching and teacher feedback. Argumentative essay writing can be difficult for native and non-native English speakers, particularly for novice writers because developing an argument can be difficult (Wentzel, 2018). Authorial stance and how it is performed via stance markers, in this case, *hedges*, indicates detachment from the text they write. In this regard, with an explicit teaching method and teacher feedback, to what extent Turkish EFL students use hedges is still a context that needs improvement so that suggestions on material and teacher development can be obtained. Consequently, the fundamental value of this study stems from the fact that it is considered one of the first longitudinal

corpus-based studies to examine the use and development of hedges over time through both group and individual analysis in Türkiye.

1.4. Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the frequencies and types of hedges used in their argumentative writings of Turkish EFL students at the tertiary level?
2. How do the students' use of hedges change throughout the academic year?
3. Is there a mutual difference between the use of hedges and the scores students receive at the beginning and end of the academic year?
4. How does the use of hedges differ between native and non-native corpora?

1.5. Hypothesis

From the standpoint of language learning, metadiscourse markers should improve the clarity, coherence, and ultimately the general writing quality of texts if EFL authors learn how to use them properly. In the light of previous studies based on the instruction of metadiscourse markers, the following hypothesis was formulated:

“If the linguistic awareness of the EFL learners regarding the use of hedges is increased via explicit teaching and feedback from their previous language instruction onward, this will be a positive contributing factor to their academic development.”

1.6. Assumptions

Considering the fact that the learners were exposed to the explicit teaching of interactional metadiscourse markers and received weekly feedback on their writings during the data collection period, it can be assumed that argumentative essays of L2 Turkish learners contain a considerable number of interactional metadiscourse markers with certain but limited markers as a result of the previous instruction, feedback and proficiency. Moreover, an increase in student scores is expected.

1.7. Organization of the Thesis

The current thesis aims to investigate the use of hedges in argumentative writings of Turkish L2 learners and seeks to find whether there is a positive effect of explicit teaching on student scores. Thus, this thesis consists of five chapters.

Chapter 1, Framework of the Study: This chapter states the purpose and significance of the study while presenting background information on the topic chosen.

Chapter 2, Literature Review: This chapter reviews the associated literature of the research.

Chapter 3, Methodology: This chapter outlines the research procedure. This chapter provides a detailed description of the research design and tools.

Chapter 4, Findings and Discussion: This chapter reveals the data analyses. The quantitative data are presented through tables and figures.

Chapter 5, Conclusion and Recommendation: This chapter remarks the conclusion and emphasizes the significance and contribution of the thesis. This chapter also includes how the findings can contribute to implications, limitations, and suggestions for future studies.

CHAPTER TWO

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the required background information for the understatement of the study is given in detail. The theoretical framework of this thesis contains the corpus linguistics approach to the linguistic awareness of using interactional metadiscourse markers -hedging- in the EFL learner context.

The following sections first describe the term *metadiscourse* focusing on Ken Hyland's (2005) definitions. Second, the categorization of metadiscourse markers was explored in detail. Third, hedges and authorial stance will be discussed. Later, corpus linguistics and corpus tools which were utilized in this thesis will be defined. Finally, the studies conducted in the related field -authorial stance through hedges and corpus linguistics- will be examined.

2.2. Definitions of Metadiscourse

In communication, it is crucial to comprehend conveyed meanings through language. The transfer between a sender and receiver could be done in various ways. Metadiscourse could be simply explained as those different ways of directing content using words or phrases with specific purposes to an audience by an author. However, it is considered a fuzzy term because it does not have a precise definition. *Metadiscourse* was first coined by Zellig Harris (1959), as a way of directing a language receiver's understanding of a text. Moreover, it is the certain meaning a reader or listener is expected to understand from a language production. In time, the definition has been further developed. For example, Halliday (1973), defines metadiscourse as the act of showing the relation of the different text segments to each other and readers how to interpret it. A few years later Lautamatti (1978), described metadiscourse as a form of non-topical linguistic features.

In the 1980s, studies related to metadiscourse gained significant attention and many linguists developed the term from their own point of view. Williams (1981: 226) described the term as "discourse about discourse, writing about writing, or whatever does not refer to the subject matter being addressed". Metadiscourse elements linguistically displayed the following features: "connecting different parts of writing, presenting the writer's attitude, indicating the writer's

confidence in his assertion, and referring to the readers” (Williams, 1981: 212). Therefore, Williams proposed that a writer can produce more direct and easier-to-comprehend texts if they can include metadiscourse elements in their writings. Vande Kopple (1985: 83) defines metadiscourse as the second level of transporting meaning to the readers by the author. While the author’s first step is to produce the content, their second step is dealing with linguistic elements such as metadiscourse markers to convey that content to the readers. He explained the concept as follows:

(...) as we write, we usually have to write on two levels. On one level we supply information about the subject of our text. On this level we expand propositional content. On the other level, the level of metadiscourse, we do not add propositional material but help our readers organize, classify, interpret, evaluate, and react to such material. Metadiscourse, therefore, is discourse about discourse or communication about communication.

Similar to Vande Kopple, Crismore et al. (1993: 2) define metadiscourse as “an author’s discoursing about the discourse, it is the author’s intrusion into the discourse either explicitly or non-explicitly”. His description indicates linguistic elements utilised to guide the readers to understand the text the means of the writer’s propositional content. Furthermore, Hyland (1998: 437) first describes metadiscourse as the “aspects of a text which explicitly organise the discourse, engage the audience and signal the writer’s attitude”. Later, Hyland proposes another definition by developing the previous definitions of the term and says metadiscourse is a “social and communicative process” between writers and receivers (2005: 14). The term is referred to as the self-reflecting linguistic devices authors use to unite their texts considering readers, texts, and authors. Therefore, metadiscourse allows writers to organize their text and readers to interpret what they understand from the texts which support the further explanation of the term by Hyland (2005: 17): “the writer’s awareness of the reader and his or her need for elaboration, clarification, guidance and interaction (...) and this only happens when he or she has a clear, reader-oriented reason for doing so”. Consequently, Hyland (2017: 17) indicates that metadiscourse is “how we use language out of consideration for our readers or hearers based on our estimation of how best we can help them process and comprehend what we are saying”. Nevertheless, Hyland (2005: 37) refers that such comprehensions could be valid only when it is conducted in context. His following definition about metadiscourse leads to new concepts such as “evaluation”, “stance” and “engagement”: “the cover term for the self-reflective expressions used to negotiate interactional meanings in a text, assisting the writer (or speaker) to express a viewpoint and engage with readers as members of a particular community”. The terms will be elaborated on the upcoming section of the thesis.

2.3. Categorizations of Metadiscourse

What counts as a metadiscourse has brought up another subject to investigate among linguists. Metadiscourse markers became a classification guide since the functions of the markers are important to interpret what linguistic expressions matter in the case of metadiscourse analysis in written

discourse. Therefore, different models and taxonomies were discussed in the literature (e.g., Vande Kopple, 1985; Crismore et al, 1993; Hyland, 2005; Ädel, 2006). As mentioned previously, metadiscursal functions of words or word groups depend on the usage of organizing and/or guiding the reader and presenting the author’s attitude towards the subject and making their stance present in the text for the readers to interpret. Vande Kopple (1985) developed a metadiscourse taxonomy consisting of two main categories as *textual metadiscourse* and *interpersonal metadiscourse*. Those categories included seven sub-categories which can be seen in Table 1 below. This taxonomy is considered fundamental and developed later by many linguists.

Table 1: Vande Kopple’s Taxonomy of Metadiscourse

Textual Metadiscourse
Text connectives – “used to help show how parts of a text are connected to one another. Includes sequencers (<i>first, next, in the second place</i>), reminders (<i>as / mentioned in Chapter 2</i>), and topicalizers, which focus attention on the topic of a text segment (<i>with regard to, in connection with</i>)”.
Code glosses – “used to help readers to grasp the writer's intended meaning. Based on the writer's assessment of the reader's knowledge, these devices reword, explain, define or clarify the sense of a usage, sometimes putting the reformulation in parentheses or marking it as an example, etc.”
Validity markers – “used to express the writer's commitment to the probability or truth of a statement. These include hedges (<i>perhaps, might, may</i>), emphatics (<i>clearly, undoubtedly</i>), and attributors which enhance a position by claiming the support of a credible other (<i>according to Einstein</i>)”.
Narrators – “used to inform readers of the source of the information presented - who said or wrote something (<i>according to Smith, the Prime Minister announced that</i>)”.
Interpersonal metadiscourse
Illocution markers – “used to make explicit the discourse act the writer is performing at certain points (<i>to conclude, I hypothesize, to sum up, we predict</i>)”.
Attitude markers – “used to express the writer's attitudes to the prepositional material he or she presents” (<i>unfortunately, interestingly, I wish that, how awful that</i>).
Commentaries – “used to address readers directly, drawing them into an implicit dialogue by commenting on the reader's probable mood or possible reaction to the text” (<i>you will certainly agree that, you might want to read the third chapter first</i>).

Source: Vande Kopple, 1985: 82-82

Furthermore, Crismore (1983) first categorized metadiscourse into two types as *informational metadiscourse* and *attitudinal metadiscourse* according to their functions: while *informational metadiscourse* leads to comprehend author’s purpose and the content structure by guiding the readers, *attitudinal metadiscourse* helps readers to comprehend author’s perception regarding the

topic discussed. Later, Crismore et al. (1993) adapted their categories of metadiscourse as textual markers and interpersonal markers while the functions of the markers stayed the same. The textual metadiscourse consisted of two sub-categories which are textual markers and interpretive markers, in which both had their sub-categories. When compared with Vande Koppler's (1985) taxonomy, Crismore et al. (1993) expanded the textual metadiscourse category and changed illocution under the new category of 'interpretive markers'. The textual metadiscourse category is explained as "help readers interpret and better understand the writer's meaning and writing strategies" by Crismore et al. (1993: 47).

Table 2: Crismore et al.'s Categorization of Metadiscourse (1993)

Category	Function	Examples
Textual Metadiscourse		
1. Textual Markers		
Logical Connectives	Show connections between ideas	therefore; so; in addition; and
Sequencers	Indicate sequence/ordering of material	first; next; finally; 1, 2, 3
Reminders	Refer to earlier text material	as we saw in Chapter one
Topicalizers	Indicate a shift in topic	well; now I will discuss ...
2. Interpretive Markers		
Code glosses	Explain text material	for example; that is
Illocution markers	Name the act performed	to conclude; in sum; I predict
Announcements	Announce upcoming material	in the next section ...
Interpersonal Metadiscourse		
Hedges	Show uncertainty to truth of assertion	might; possible; likely
Certainty markers	Express full commitment to assertion	certainly; know; shows
Attributors	Give source/support of information	Smith claims that ...
Attitude markers	Display writer's affective values	I hope/agree; surprisingly
Commentary	Build relationship with reader	you may not agree that ..

In addition to these classifications, Hyland (2005: 26) proposed the interpersonal model of metadiscourse: "the interpersonal function is the use of language to encode interaction, allowing us to engage with others, to take on roles and to express and understand evaluations and feelings. The textual function is the use of language to organize the text itself, coherently relating what is said to the world and to others". Similar to Vande Kopple (1985) and Crismore et al. (1993), Hyland (2005) introduced two main sources of metadiscourse as interactive and interactional metadiscourse. Based on Thompson and Thetela's (1995) division between interactive and interactional resources and his earlier models of metadiscourse (Hyland, 1998; 2000), Hyland developed his interpersonal model of metadiscourse. Hyland (2005) added stance and engagement features to his division of metadiscourse markers. Moreover, in the present study, Hyland's (2005) taxonomy of metadiscourse markers as seen in Table 3 will be used to interpret data gathered from two corpora of L2 expository and academic writing.

Table 3: Interpersonal Model of Metadiscourse by Hyland (2005:49)

Category	Function	Examples
Interactive	Help to guide the reader through the text	Resources
Transitions	Express relations between main clauses	In addition; but; thus; and
Frame markers	Refer to discourse acts, sequences and stages	Finally; to conclude; my purpose is
Endophoric markers	Refer to information in other parts of the text	Noted above; see figure; in section 2
Evidentials	Refer to information from other texts	According to X; Z states;
Code glosses	Elaborate propositional meaning	namely; e.g.; such as; in other words
Interactional	Involve the reader in the text	Resources
Hedges	Withhold commitment and open dialogue	Might; perhaps; possible; about
Boosters	Emphasize certainty and close dialogue	in fact; definitely; it is clear that
Attitude markers	Express writer's attitude to proposition	Unfortunately; I agree; surprisingly
Self-mentions	Explicit reference to authors	I; we; my; me; our
Engagement markers	Explicitly build relationship with reader	Consider; note; you can see that

Source: Hyland, 2005: 49

Detailed descriptions of the terms above can be found in Table 4 below according to Hyland's (2005: 51-53) taxonomy of metadiscourse markers.

Table 4: Descriptions of Metadiscourse Markers by Hyland (2005: 51-53)

<i>Transitions</i> “are conjunctions and adverbial phrases which show additive, causative, contrastive and consequential relations ‘in the writer’s thinking’ and aid the reader to interpret the connections between ideas”
<i>Frame markers</i> “make references to text boundaries or elements of schematic text structure. Items that are used to sequence, label text stages, announce discourse goals and signal topic shifts are included in this sub-category of interactive metadiscourse”
<i>Endophoric markers</i> “are expressions which refer to other sections of the text. They are important in the sense that they make the extra information available to readers so that they can comprehend and interpret the discourse more easily”.
<i>Evidentials</i> “are tools that help the writer to indicate that the forthcoming information is from another resource and therefore inform the reader about the main resource of the information” (according to X, X states that etc.)
<i>Code Glosses</i> “help the reader to grasp the intended meaning that the writer tries to achieve by rewriting, explaining and exemplifying” (this is called, in other words, such as, for example, etc.)
<i>Hedges</i> “are the tools that writers use to signal their subjectivity about their proposition. They contain words such as ‘possible’, ‘might’, ‘perhaps’”
<i>Boosters</i> “guide the writers to indicate their certainty about their position on the context. They include words such as ‘clearly’, ‘obviously’, ‘demonstrate’”

Table 4: (Continue)

<i>Attitude Markers</i> “are tools used by the writers to convey their emotions towards their proposition. They comprise words such as ‘unfortunately’, ‘hopefully’, ‘logically’, ‘agree’ etc.”
<i>Self-mentions</i> “are the degree in which the writer makes him/her presence explicit. Therefore, first person pronouns and possessive adjectives such as ‘I’, ‘my’, ‘we’, ‘our’ etc. in a text is counted as self-mention”
<i>Engagement markers</i> “are the tools such as, ‘as you see’, ‘you may notice’ etc. with which the writes include their readers in their proposition”

Hyland’s interpersonal model of metadiscourse (2005) enables writers to organize their texts so that the target audience will find them meaningful and convincing with the help of interactive and interactional metadiscourse markers. The author-reader interaction can be examined over the use of interactional metadiscourse markers in texts because it involves “the writer’s efforts to control the level of personality in a text and establish a suitable relationship to his or her data, arguments and audience” (Hyland, 2004: 139). Overall, Hyland’s (2005) interpersonal model of metadiscourse qualifies as the most detailed taxonomy proposed when taking into account his definition of metadiscourse, improvement of the earlier categorizations of metadiscourse, and list of metadiscourse devices. For this reason, Hyland’s (2005) taxonomy is adopted to conduct the metadiscourse analysis.

2.4. Hedging and Author Stance

This thesis explores the ways novice academic writers employ hedges, a category of the interactional metadiscourse markers. Lakoff (1973: 471) introduced the term hedge with the following words:

For me, 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. I will refer to such words as ‘hedges’.

In the simplest sense, hedges could be defined as the writer’s limited commitment to the statements they make. After its first introduction to the literature, the linguistic element caught the attention of the popular linguists i.e., Brown and Levinson (1978). Hedges took place in their *Politeness Theory* as a face-saving act and were analysed in spoken (Iida, 2007) and written products. The term is later defined by Hyland (2005: 52) as devices:

which indicate the writer’s decision to recognize alternative voices and viewpoints and so withhold complete commitment to a proposition. Hedges emphasize the subjectivity of a position by allowing information to be presented as an opinion rather than a fact and therefore open that position to negotiation.

Hedges can be considered markers of epistemic stance, i.e., “meanings of certainty, doubt, actuality, precision or limitation, as well as (...) the source or perspective of knowledge” (Gray & Biber, 2012: 17). Because it also indicates clarity in discussion, as it involves the presentation of an idea rather than a fact. In the literature, there is a distinction between “Hedging” and “hedge”. According to Hyland (1998), hedging is considered as a traditional academic rhetoric since it can be defined as a complete lack of commitment to the truth value, or a yearning not to show a category of commitment which is not a strategy for disguise. Hedging signals hesitance and possibilities in communication, and its appropriate use in scientific discourse can be considered one of the characteristics of the genre. As it can be understood from these explanations, while hedging is limited to linguistic expressions, hedging is the situation of creating doubt in the correctness of the proposition that is not limited to linguistic units. Moreover, the term “hedge” is described as a linguistic tool that helps authors soften their certain positions and consider other possibilities while stating an opinion in writing (Bayyurt & Akbaş, 2014; Şenöz-Ayata, 2014). Hedges can be utilized in texts with many different word structures. Crismore, Markkanen and Steffensen (1993), Hyland (1998) and Hatipoğlu and Algı (2017) argue that hedge is associated and can be coded with different linguistic units such as verbs, adverbs, adjectives, modals, and nouns that provide a withhold from commitment. According to Hyland (1998: 178):

Hedges are devices like possible, might and perhaps, that indicate the writer’s decision to withhold complete commitment to a proposition, allowing information to be presented as an opinion rather than accredited fact. Because all statements are evaluated and interpreted through a prism of disciplinary assumptions, writers must calculate what weight to give to an assertion, attesting to the degree of precision or reliability that they want it to carry and perhaps claiming protection in the event of its eventual overthrow.

Because of the fact that academic writing, argumentative writing in particular, requires an effective authorial stance (position) to have strong argument points, a specific point of view, and convincing readers; writers use interactional metadiscourse markers in order to fulfil those functions in writing. Hedges suggests that a stance is subjective, making it negotiable. A balanced use of metadiscourse markers plays an essential role in academic writing. Hedging is widely used in academic writing and is seen as being particularly important in works that make claims and/or express personal opinions or points of view. In the examples below, taken from the longitudinal corpus used in this thesis, the use of hedges and their coding can be seen.

- (1) *Thus, it is **possible** to say that 46 percent of global consumers are ready to ...*
- (2) *... that they treated **unequally** **might** be right because ...*
- (3) *Even though fast food **seems** to be the main cause of obesity ...*
- (4) *Until recently **maybe** it would have been achievable to ...*

When the sentences above are examined, author stance can be detected immediately because of the use of rhetorical devices such as hedges. Authors’ commitment to the opinions they present is

reduced by the hedging devices i.e., *possible*, *might*, *seem*, and *maybe*. Depending on the distribution and frequency of the hedges in a writing, those stance implications can strengthen the persuasive power on audiences or create suspicions about the reliability of the statements (Demir, 2018). It should be noted that there is a relation between an author's first language and their use of rhetorical devices. Therefore, research topics can be expanded from language to cultural studies while analysing hedges. Accordingly, relevant studies present a distinction between the non-native speakers' English usage of hedges varies on the genre and argumentative papers they produce depending on their first language and culture. Generally, the concept of authorial stance has been claimed as challenging for new and non-native writers at tertiary and post-graduate levels. Therefore, this study aims to contribute to the literature with new data on the utilization of hedges by non-native speakers of English.

2.5. Corpus Linguistics and Corpus Tools

The term *corpus* has been used to refer to the compilation of written and spoken forms of language on a computer. Those forms of language could vary in genre i.e., news, interviews, articles, student papers etc. However, today in a linguistics aspect, the term broadly means “systematically collected, naturally occurring categories of texts” (Friginal, 2018: 11). Before the computers, the systematic collection of texts, which consists of all spoken and written data, was completed laboriously by hand. Considering the lack of technological developments in the day, the term *corpus* is defined by Sinclair as “a collection of naturally occurring language text, chosen to characterize a state or variety of a language, typically contains many millions of words” (1991: 171). Similarly, Biber et al. (1998: 12) also defined corpus as a “large and principled collection of natural texts” focusing on its size, authenticity and systematicity. Technological development of computers and their accessibility changed the way data forms are collected and analysed in research. With the digitization of the compiled data and its analysis option, corpus linguistics research became popular in the linguistics field and developed the definition of the term. This time, Sinclair (2005) adds to his definition of corpus as “a collection of language texts in electronic form”. The compiled data on computers enable researchers to carry out analysis in linguistic forms and functions within authentic contexts.

Corpus linguistics has been a popular research approach in the linguistics field since the 2010s. It is commonly used in the empirical exploration of language use, specifically in themes such as text analysis, discourse analysis, data-driven learning etc. Conrad (2000: 548) defines corpus linguistics as “the empirical study of language relying on computer-assisted techniques to analyse large, principled databases of naturally occurring language”. Additionally, Lewis (2000) indicates the close relationship between computer corpora and corpus linguistics, and their contribution to the description of English will always develop and be useful. Consequently, the quantitative outcome of the analysed data in corpus linguistics shifted the focus of language use to ‘performance’ rather than

'competence' because of its significance (Bonelli, 2010). Özbay (2015: 1) summarizes the development of corpus linguistics as follows: "corpus linguistics presents us with profound changes in the way that we study, teach and learn languages all over the world due to its huge potential to present entirely authentic, genuine, qualitative and quantitative findings related to the nature of language".

The concerns regarding the corpus research mainly stem from the criteria of representativeness, corpus size and corpus type. Biber (1993: 243) highlights the importance of the representativeness of a corpus as it should be "in order to be appropriately used as the basis for generalizations concerning a language as a whole". However, the concern of representativeness of a corpus might depend on the type of the corpus as Özbay (2015: 68) states that learner corpora "is almost always much more restricted in size as well as the type of texts providing their database". Moreover, Biber et al. (1998: 12) explain the importance of corpus size with its representativeness: "the greater the size of corpora, the more representative their nature, the more thorough and more complex analyses" could be conducted. Contrarily, Hunston (2012: 25) draws attention to the fact that "the feasible size of a corpus is not limited so much by the capacity of a computer to store it, as by the speed and efficiency of the access software". Thus, indicating that it is about quality not only quantity of corpus. Researchers with specific purposes can choose to use different types of corpora in their studies. Corpus types vary in terms of their use of purpose but generally can be listed as generalized corpora, specialized corpora, learner corpora, pedagogic corpora, and diachronic corpora. Aligning with the purpose of the study conducted in this thesis, learner corpus was the most suitable type of corpora to carry out aimed analyses because it "can be used to identify characteristic patterns in student's writing" (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001: 9).

Corpus linguistics as a method requires assistance tools to store and analyse compiled data on computers. Since it is supposed as one of the most employed methods that examines language (Anthony, 2013), the development of corpus tools has become inevitable in recent years. Today, there are many software and applications specially designed for corpus research as corpus tools on the internet. Their functions range from annotation to statistics and concordance. Some of the most popular corpus tools used in the field can be listed as WordSmith, SketchEngine, AntConc, #LancsBox, SKELL, and UAM Corpus Tool. All those tools have common features such as a keyword in context, concordance, n-grams, collocation, wordlist, frequency etc. While some of them are free to use and available online, some require payment or instalment. Moreover, there are numerous programming languages and software programs such as Python, Visual Basic, Perl or R. SketchEngine's creator Kilgarriff (2005) states, "language is not random because we speak or write with purposes. We do not, indeed, without computational help are not capable of, producing words or sounds or sentences or documents randomly". Therefore, a need for systematic analysis of corpus data arises as its systematic nature requires. In this thesis, #LancsBox and SketchEngine corpus tools are used and explained respectively to serve the purpose of the research.

2.6. Corpus Research on Metadiscourse Markers

In recent years, the investigation of interactional metadiscourse markers used in the academic genre has gained attention from researchers in linguistics. Studies conducted in metadiscourse analysis vary in genre and investigated metadiscourse markers. Corpus linguistics contributed to the analysis of metadiscourse markers by allowing the examination of different rhetoric devices in both written and spoken forms of language. Corpus analyses in metadiscourse studies are very common and feasible because of their nature in analysis functions. Furthermore, Conrad (1996: 300) explains the characteristics of corpus-based investigations as follows: (1) “they are based on principled collections of naturally occurring texts (the corpus)”, (2) “they use computers for both automatic and interactive analyses”, and (3) “they include both quantitative analyses and functional interpretations in order to describe patterns in language features”.

In the literature, hedges and boosters are usually investigated together as they yield supportive results in each other, and the perspective of the author becomes easier to interpret. Studies discussing hedges in academic texts are somewhat significant in results-wise to determine the authors’ perspectives, as several studies remarks. One of the main goals of employing metadiscourse markers is to signal the organization and position of the text so that they make it easier for readers to comprehend and evaluate the text's ideas (Hyland, 2005). Below, an overview of selected corpus-based studies on interactional metadiscourse markers with different corpora and studies which focused on instruction of metadiscourse markers will be summarized.

Hyland and Milton (1997) found out that, Cantonese writers used a smaller variety of hedges, emphatics, and other metadiscoursal characteristics in their writing than British writers did, and they had trouble expressing certainty. The findings of Hyland and Milton's (1997) study are further supported by a more recent investigation by Hinkel (2005). Hinkel (2005) examined the types and frequency of intensifiers and hedges employed in academic writings written in both native and non-native languages. Her findings show that L2 writers use a relatively small number of hedges, the majority of which denote conversational and informal spoken communication. In the Turkish context, Bayyurt (2010) emphasises the significance of thoroughly analysing the use of hedges and intensifiers in Turkish to improve L2 learners’ understanding of the value of clearly articulating their arguments in both Turkish and English.

Dastjerdi and Shirzad (2010), investigated the contribution of explicit metadiscourse marker instruction on the writings of different level English Literature students. A 6-week instruction plan was implemented for all students. Pre- and post-test writings were collected and analysed over quantitative methods. The findings suggested that explicit instruction of metadiscourse markers

usage had in fact positive effect on all learners, intermediate-level students being the most improved group.

Yaghoubi and Ardestani (2014), designed a study to investigate the effect of implicit versus explicit instruction of metadiscourse markers on the overall writing skill improvement of learners. The advanced level of English learners was divided evenly into three groups as control, implicit and explicit learners. During the 8-week instruction, researchers collected data via compositions (pre- and post-tests) and analysed them quantitatively. Learners were graded based on a rubric created specifically to evaluate metadiscourse markers in their writings. The results indicated that both teaching methods had significantly positive effects on learners' writing scores. Moreover, there were no significant differences between the methods that would make one better to implicate.

According to Kim Loi and Lim (2015), hedges can be introduced to the L2 learners first so that the pragmatic awareness required for the use of hedges can be achieved. The study included randomly selected thirty research article discussions from the *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*. The findings show that using hedges in academic writing by L2 students is often necessary to demonstrate that claims have been correctly managed for correctness and claim negotiation.

Dontcheva-Navratilova (2016) conducted a comparative study between Czech and English linguists and found out that English linguists use more hedges and boosters in their research articles than Czech linguists. The researcher indicated that the difference stemmed from the fact that while English linguists involved in a larger and culturally diversified community Czech linguists have smaller and less diversified academic community. This difference reflects upon the authorial stances the researchers acquire while stating their opinion.

In the area of Applied Linguistics, Farahani (2017) conducted a quantitative corpus-based study on how English native writers and Iranian non-native writers utilised metadiscourse elements. According to the study, authors of both corpora used interactive metadiscourse features more frequently than interactional metadiscourse ones, while texts authored by Iranian non-native speakers of English exhibited more metadiscourse markers.

Akbaş and Hardman (2018), examined hedges and boosters usage in the corpus of postgraduate academic writing by Turkish, English, and Turkish speakers of English postgraduates. The corpus was investigated both quantitatively and qualitatively by the researchers. The study implicated that the level of commitment and detachment differed in three groups despite two of them sharing common cultural backgrounds. Moreover, the writings of Turkish postgraduates showed less interpersonal and a higher authoritative stance than the rest of the groups. However, the writings of Turkish speakers of English showed more similarity to English postgraduates' writings in terms of cautious presentation of claims.

Demir (2018) examined the academic ELT texts of native and non-native writers of English to compare the different hedging strategies they use in their writings. The results revealed that Turkish writers used hedges greatly in their writings which may be an outcome of their proficiency level because of the discipline examined. Moreover, native and non-native writers' use of hedges showed significant differences in terms of hedge categories except for the category of adjectives. Overall use of hedges between the writers did not show any statistically significant difference. In the case of total hedge usage, the study showed parallel results with Hamamcı's (2017) and Özdemir and Longo's (2014) investigations.

Similarly, in a study implemented for Iranian intermediate-level EFL learners (Fatahipour et al., 2020), explicit teaching of metadiscourse markers usage was investigated. The results indicated that between the control and experimental groups, explicit instruction improved learner writing significantly in the experimental group. Consequently, Sofu and Kaya (2020) remarked the same conclusion in the Turkish context.

Taymaz (2021) in a corpus-based study compared the use of hedges and boosters in the discussion parts of MA and PhD theses written by Turkish ELT students. The findings showed that in PhD theses, booster frequency of occurrences was higher. MA theses, on the other hand, included more hedges than boosters in them. Since the theses were written by the same authors, the results indicated a shift in authorial stance which could be an implication of an increase in self-confidence.

Çiçek Tümer (2021), investigated the use of metadiscourse markers by English pre-service teachers in their argumentative writings. The study analysed the variety, frequency, and functions of metadiscourse markers with a focus on data driven learning method. The results of the study showed that data driven learning method increased the variety and accuracy of the use of metadiscourse markers in non-native writings.

Hu (2023) conducted a corpus-based comparative study examining the use of authorial stance markers in dissertation abstracts between native and non-native speakers of Chinese. One of the most significant results of the study was that Chinese international students used hedges more than native Chinese language speakers to achieve different rhetorical moves. The two different academic corpora had similar distributions of stance markers usage in texts following hedges being the most frequently occurred in writings. Therefore, the author commitment in Chinese academic writing might be an area of pedagogical development for the students.

CHAPTER THREE

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the data and the methodological approach used in the thesis are described in detail. The longitudinal study was conducted with a mixed methodology. First, the data collection procedure is presented with the learner corpus generated. Afterwards, analytical procedures conducted such as identification of the metadiscourse markers and their sample texts are presented along with the research design of the study. Later, the tools used to analyse data quantitatively are elucidated. Finally, the chapter ends with the raters' profiles.

3.2. Participants

The study was conducted in the northeastern region of Türkiye with selected freshmen students of English Language and Literature Department from Karadeniz Technical University. Out of 85 freshmen students, only 35 of them were chosen as participants in this study in terms of the purposive sampling method. The study consisted of 69% female (n=24) and 31% (n=11) male participants. The ages of the participants ranged between 18-30 and all of them were native speakers of the Turkish language. The purposive sampling procedure depended on the proficiency levels of the students in English. At the beginning of the fall term, all the freshmen year students were evaluated based on their untimed essay project and rated by 3 expert independent instructors. The students who got a 15-point score interval between the 3 independent scores were selected as participants in the study. The medium of instruction in the preparatory year was English and all the participants enrolled on the grammar and writing lessons 4 times a week. Since the course syllabi did not include explicit teaching of metadiscourse markers, it was anticipated that participants' awareness of how or when to use metadiscourse markers was possibly problematic. Therefore, the students were suitable for the current research. The demographic information of the participants can be seen in the table below (Table 5).

Table 5: Demographic Information of Participants

Gender	Number	Percent (%)
Female	24	69%
Male	11	31%

3.3. Data Collection Procedure

The data for this longitudinal study was gathered in the 2018-2019 academic year fall term, during the Academic Writing course which lasted for 16 weeks. The participants received 4 hours of classroom instruction per week, 4 times a month. The course conducted primary features and extent of academic writing along with feedback sessions focused on metadiscourse markers' usage in students' academic writing. During the year, the students were asked to write untimed argumentative essays according to a topic the instructor determined, and 9 essays were collected from 85 students in a 16-week period. Between the essays, for every other week, the instructor and researcher gave content feedback which included: visibility issues, power, and authorial presence in their writings. For this study, the purposive sampling method was used to choose 307 academic argumentative essays written by 35 students on particular academic topics at certain time intervals following teacher feedback. Three expert graders from 2 different universities with PhDs obtained in Applied linguistics were given a rubric to grade the first essays of the selected students. A selected rubric (see Appendix 1) was used to evaluate 5 aspects of the writings respectively. Those are being: content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics. To standardize the scoring rubric, the students who got similar scores from 3 expert graders were selected for the research process. For each essay, the students' hedging use is tracked. After each week of instruction, students are exposed to the metadiscoursal content and advised to improve their writing accordingly. The instructor implemented the following course schedule on a weekly basis (Table 6).

Table 6: Weekly Further Training Table

Course Overview	
Period 1 - Essay 1	An introduction lesson was organized to learn about parts of an essay and the process of writing an essay. The following steps were introduced; topic limitation, thesis statement writing, producing ideas and organization of them for the body part. The use of metadiscourse was explained and provided examples of the various types of metadiscourse markers. After a sample argumentative essay was examined during the course, the first homework was assigned. The course instructor submitted content and laid out design criteria for assignments for writing students. The following week, students' essays received teacher feedback.
Period 2 - Essay 2	An Outline and detailed plan of argumentation was introduced in a sample essay to the students as follows: First, introduction of the thesis/claim. Second, presentation of first point with supporting evidence for body paragraph 1. Third, presentation of second point with supporting evidence for body paragraph 2. Forth, presentation of third point with supporting evidence for body paragraph 3. Lastly, conclusion/result. The second homework was assigned, and the course instructor submitted content and laid out design criteria for assignments to writing students. The following week, students' essays received teacher feedback.

Table 6: (Continue)

Course Overview	
Period 3 - Essay 3	English academic style and language were clarified which covered the following topics: Formal Style, Cautious Writing, Academic Vocabulary, Metadiscourse Markers, and Logical Connectors. The third homework was assigned, and the course instructor submitted content and laid out design criteria for assignments to writing students. The following week, students' essays received teacher feedback.
Period 4 - Essay 4	The lists of useful essay words and phrases were delivered at the beginning of the lesson. Meanwhile, word choice in an essay as academic words was emphasized. The fourth homework was assigned, and the course instructor submitted content and laid out design criteria for assignments for writing students. The following week, students' essays received teacher feedback.
Period 5 - Essay 5	Grammar features in writing such as the use of adjective clauses, the use of noun clauses, adverbial clauses, reduction, and sentence starters were underlined during the lesson. Mechanics such as punctuation, spelling, etc. were followed. The fifth homework was assigned, and the course instructor submitted content and laid out design criteria for assignments for writing students. The following week, students' essays received teacher feedback.
Period 6 - Essay 6	The list of hedging words was presented at the beginning of the lesson; meanwhile, coherence and cohesion were pivotal subjects. After sample argumentative essays were examined during the course, the sixth homework was assigned. The course instructor submitted content and laid out design criteria for assignments for writing students. The following week, students' essays received teacher feedback.
Period 7 - Essay 7	The use of interactional metadiscourse markers was emphasized by examining the contexts in sample essays. The seventh homework was assigned, and the course instructor submitted content and laid out design criteria for assignments for writing students. The following week, students' essays received teacher feedback.
Period 8 - Essay 8	The use of hedging was emphasized by giving some hints about stages and techniques of them. The eighth homework was assigned, and the course instructor submitted content and laid out design criteria for assignments for writing students. The following week, students' essays received teacher feedback.
Period 9 - Essay 9	Focusing on hedging usage, sample essays were examined in the classroom. The ninth homework was assigned, and the course instructor submitted content and laid out design criteria for assignments for writing students. The following week, students' essays received teacher feedback.

3.4. Longitudinal Learner Corpus (KTUCALE)

The longitudinal learner corpus for the current thesis is compiled from the argumentative essays of the selected EFL writers (n=35) in the academic writing course in the 2018-2019 fall term. The corpus consists of 307 texts and 203,434 tokens from the weekly writings of the 35 tertiary-level participants. The length of the essays was ranged between 16,526 to 26,860. The participants delivered their writings via Microsoft Word documents and handouts. The instructor used the hard copies to give face-to-face feedback to the students. The researcher analysed the essays on corpus software programs e.g., AntConc and Sketch Engine, using the electronic versions of the writings.

The researcher divided each week's products into separate groups to analyse. The essays were analysed weekly as seen in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Token Numbers of the Essays

Essays	Tokens
Week 1	16,526
Week 2	19,044
Week 3	18,584
Week 4	22,122
Week 5	23,946
Week 6	23,664
Week 7	26,860
Week 8	26,423
Week 9	26,265

3.5. Native Written Corpus: LOCNESS

To conduct a comparative analysis between native and non-native corpora, LOCNESS (The Louvain Corpus of Native English Essays) was selected as a control native corpus to form a norm of native speaker. The corpus currently includes 322 argumentative essays produced by British pupils, British and American university students aged between 17 and 23. It was important to select a control corpus which had similar text types, sizes, participants, and topics to the learner corpus used in the study. According to Granger and Tyson (1996), it is required to select a reference corpus in the exact same type of writing. The detailed comparison of the two corpora is presented in Table 8 below.

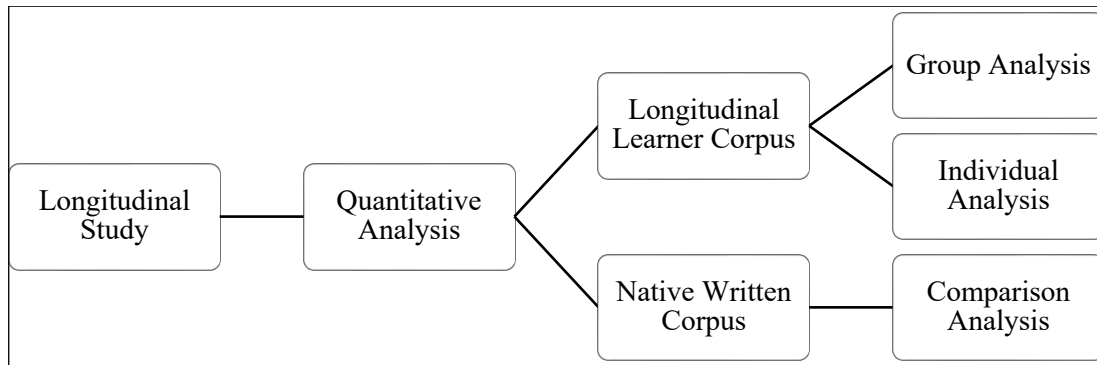
Table 8: The profiles of KTUCALE and LOCNESS

	KTUCALE	LOCNESS
Tokens	203,434	360,577
Texts	307	322
L1	Turkish	American English, British English
Genre	Argumentative	Argumentative

3.6. Analytical Procedures and Raters' Profile

The longitudinal process of the data collection stage acquired a quantitative analysis regarding its collection procedure. For the analysis, two different corpus software tools were used to conduct an accurate interpretation of the data. The analysis contained an overall group findings and individual analysis of selected participants. Figure 1 below presents the design of the study.

Figure 1: Research Design



The participants of the study wrote an untimed essay at the beginning of the 2018-2019 academic year for their Academic Writing lesson. Three instructors with expertise in the field scored the untimed essays according to a rating criterion adapted from Brooks (2013) which focused on the use of hedges in the essays as well as grammar, spelling, and organization.

In order to determine the level of consistency over scores to the same set of scripts among multiple raters, IBM SPSS version 26, which was released in 2019, was used to calculate interrater reliability. As previously noted, the intraclass correlation coefficient was used to calculate interrater reliability, which was used to determine consistency among three raters. The three raters' fair agreement was indicated by the interrater reliability coefficient, which was 0.70.

Shrout and Fleiss (1979) proposed that an interclass correlation would be useful to quantify interrater reliability for quantitative data due to its considerable flexibility. An interclass correlation would be useful in the current study because all participants have the same number of scores and the same instructors, both of which are necessary conditions for using the interclass correlation to assess interactor reliability. The interrater reliability was calculated via version 26 of IBM SPSS and resulted with a score of 0.70 intraclass correlation coefficient meaning fair agreement between the raters in the study.

Three raters participated in the study to construct a fair grading system between the students. All the raters were second-language learners of English and were English teachers in Türkiye. They all had experience in academic writing teaching, along with 11, 12 and 22 years of teaching experience in different grade levels respectively. Two of the raters obtained a PhD in Applied Linguistics and one of them held a Certificate of English Language Teaching for Adults (CELTA). Lastly, one of the raters was from a foundation university whereas the other two were from state universities in Türkiye. See the Table 9 below for the raters' profiles.

Table 9: Demographic Information of Raters

Variables	Categories	Total
Gender	Female	2
	Male	1
Degree	PhD	2
	MA	1
Teaching Experience	Lower 15 years	2
	Above 15 years	1
Teaching Experience in Academic Writing	Lower 15 years	2
	Above 15 years	1

3.6.1. Identification of Hedges

In the study, Hyland's (2005) taxonomy of metadiscourse markers was used to identify hedges found in the learner corpus. According to the taxonomy, hedges are categorized into six groups as adverbs, verbs, adjectives, modal auxiliaries, noun phrases and adverbial phrases. Each category is analysed respectively in a sub-corpora of essays from 1 to 9. To identify all the hedges, two different corpus software were used. First, the essays were uploaded to the #LancsBox corpus programme to the KWIC investigation of hedges. One by one, each sentence that contained a hedging word was reviewed to make sure that the words were used appropriately for their function in the sentences. The usage of hedging was noted and divided into categories by their function. To avoid any mistakes in categorization, the data was uploaded to Sketch Engine, an online corpus tool, to double-check the hedge use in context. For each participant, their use of hedging was noted for each essay they wrote along with how many times they used a hedge. Since the hedge list contained one-word hedges only, the tools did a good job of finding all of the hedges used in the essays. Overall, 307 essays were examined by the researcher one by one to categorize hedges correctly. (See Appendix 2).

3.6.2. Individual EFLs' Inventories of Hedges

The study mainly focused on the development of hedge usage by individuals as well as the group over a period of one semester. To gather details on the usage of hedges, 5 students were selected to analyse the essays thoroughly. Each participant's essays were examined in terms of frequency and hedge type. The corpus tools #LancsBox and Sketch Engine were used to extract the hedges list from the essays. In Table 10 below, the demographic information of each 5 participants is shown.

Table 10: Individual Analysis of Participants' Demographic Information

Participant*	Gender	Age	Grades of First Essay	Grades of Last Essay
Aycan	Female	19	67	90
Beril	Female	19	65	95

Table 10: (Continue)

Participant*	Gender	Age	Grades of First Essay	Grades of Last Essay
Didem	Female	20	72	90
Erol	Male	18	65	62
Fatih	Male	19	57	95

* All the participants in the individual analysis are given pseudonyms.

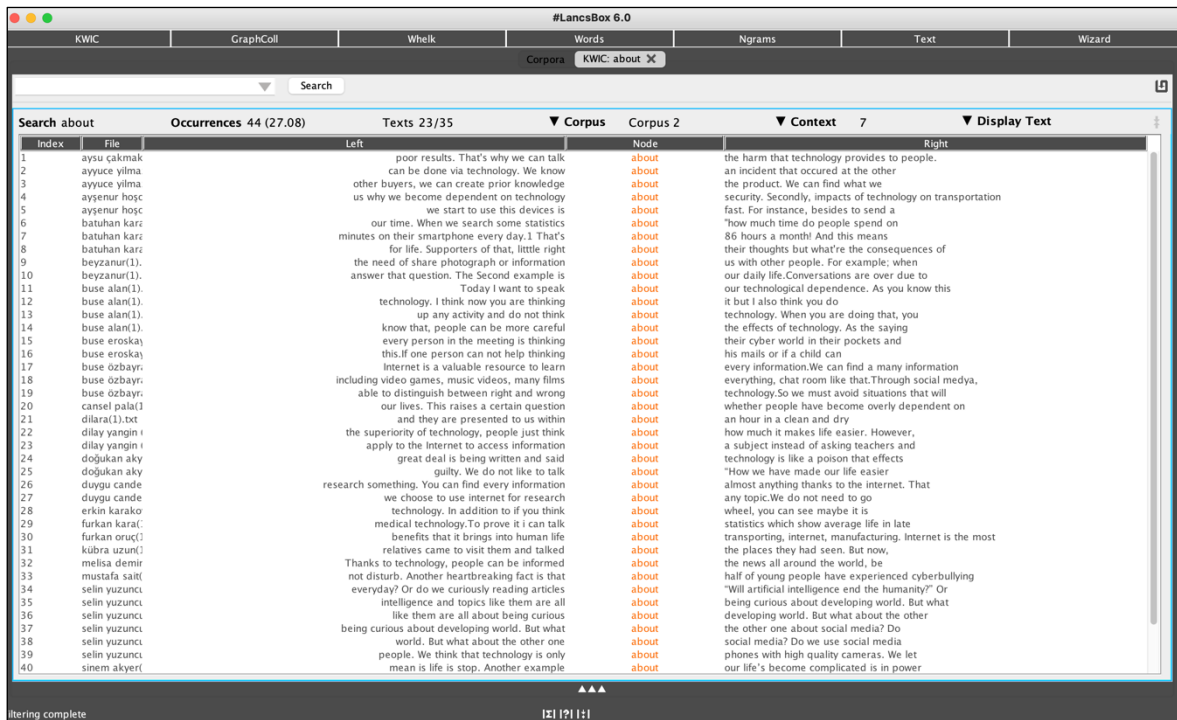
3.7. Data Analysis Tools

The corpus data constructed for the thesis were affirmed and examined in two different steps. First, the data was examined through two corpus software: #LancsBox and Sketch Engine. Then, considering the structural and functional use of the metadiscourse markers, the researcher studied the whole set of data by herself to crosscheck the quantitative data.

3.7.1. #LancsBox

A corpus analysis tool developed at Lancaster University called #LancsBox was used to obtain the quantitative data in this thesis. With the help of the software, a user can evaluate data from their own or existing corpora using the KWIC, Whelk, Words, GraphColl, Text, Ngrams, and Wizard functions. The tool's linguistic data visualization sets it apart from comparable corpus technologies. In this thesis, the software's KWIC function was utilized to display all instances of hedging in concordance lines (Figure 2). The function gave the researcher the contextual data she required to categorize the hedges in use correctly. An example search completed for the study is shown in Figure 2 below.

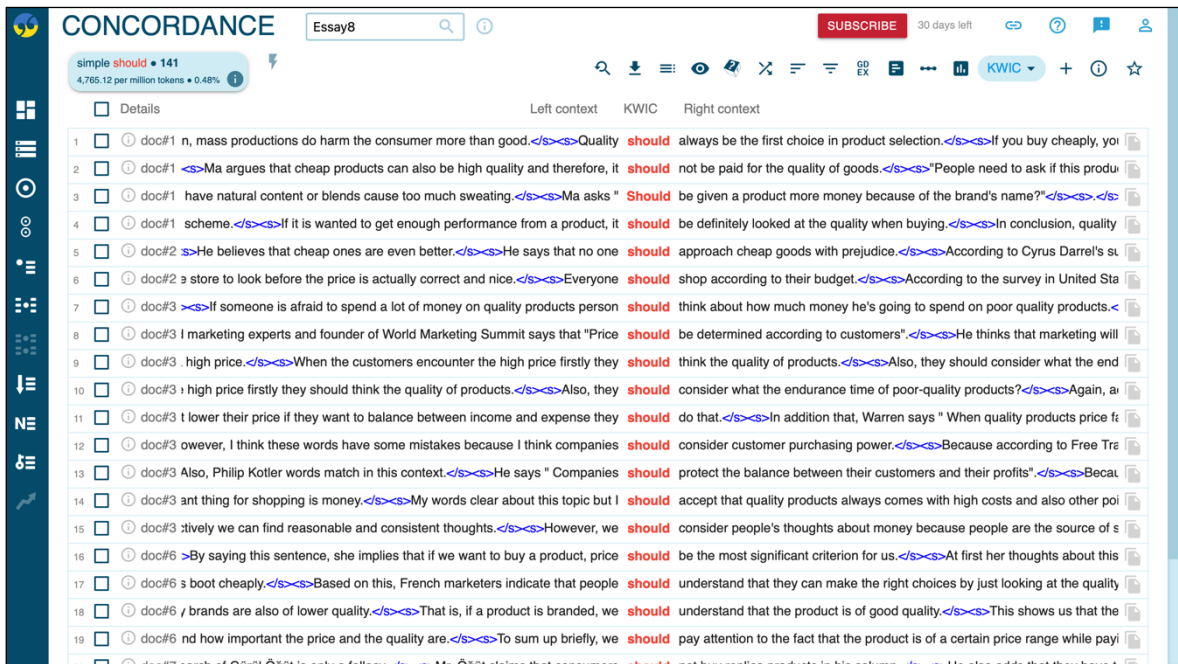
Figure 2: Screenshot of the KWIC function in #LancsBox



3.7.2. Sketch Engine

Sketch Engine is a specialised online corpus tool to conduct language studies for free. The tool offers different functions to conduct detailed research on language use such as word sketch, word sketch difference, thesaurus, concordance, wordlist, n-grams, keywords, and text type analysis. In this thesis, the tool was used to double-check the data obtained previously from #Lancsbox and examine the learner corpora in terms of hedge use. After the compilation of each essay group, the concordance function of the tool was utilized to see the functional usage of hedges in context. To crosscheck, line by line each usage of hedges was checked by the researcher in all 9 essays to avoid misclassification of the markers. An example search completed for the study is shown in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Screenshot of the KWIC function in SketchEngine



3.7.3. Manual Check

After running the collected data on the corpus tool and software, the researcher inspected each line one by one to avoid categorization errors. Since hedging devices can differ in terms of context usage, Hyland's (2005) wordlist of hedges compared functionally with the learner corpus outputs. Below, there is a snippet of the manual check table created by the researcher. For further information see Appendix 2.

Figure 4: Screenshot of the Manuel Check

About		1 x1								
		2 x2								
		3 x1								
		4 x1				1 x1				1 x1
		5 x1				4 x1				4 x1
		6 x3	4 x1			7 x2				7 x2
		7 x2	6 x1		1 x2	8 x1		6 x1		8 x1
		8 x5	8 x3		8 x1	-		8 x1	2 x1	8 x1
	7 x1				9 x1		9 x2	4 x1	9 x1	
Almost					2 x1					
					7 x1			1 x2		
				1 x2	8 x1	1 x1		2 x1		
				4 x1	9 x1	2 x2		3 x1		
		2 x1	-	6 x1		5 x1		5 x1		
							7 x1	7 x1	7 x2	1 x2

CHAPTER FOUR

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

Emphasizing longitudinal learner corpora and native corpora, the goal of this study was to contribute to the current knowledge of hedges usage in EFL learners. As a result, both the Group and individual analyses were conducted throughout the analytical procedure. In this section, the findings of Group and individual analyses are presented within the frame of research questions of the study. First, the findings of the group analysis will be presented and compared with the Native corpus LOCNESS. Second, individual analysis of randomly selected students' progress will be revealed. Lastly, all the findings will be discussed accordingly with the literature while answering the research questions designated for the current study.

4.2. Group Analysis

The quantitative information of the essays compiled throughout the 2018-2019 academic year fall term is given in Table 11 below to introduce the answers to the first research question. In Tables 12, 13, and 14 the most frequently used top 5 hedges in the essays were given. The findings of which and how frequently a hedge is used will be given in Tables 12, 13 and 14 essay by essay respectively to inspect the variation between the use of hedges as a group during the academic year.

Table 11: Total Number of Tokens and Types of Learner Corpus

Essays	Tokens	Types
Essay 1	18,580	2,551
Essay 2	21,283	2,548
Essay 3	20,872	2,578
Essay 4	24,966	3,313
Essay 5	26,750	3,498
Essay 6	26,523	3,857
Essay 7	30,171	3,808
Essay 8	29,590	3,268
Essay 9	29,389	3,632

Table 12, 13 and 14 below demonstrates the top 5 frequent hedges over time in the learner corpus, and they are listed in order, depending on their normalized frequency.

Table 12: Top 5 Hedges Over Time in Essays 1, 2 and 3

Essay 1			Essay 2			Essay 3		
Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq	Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq	Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq
Should	24	1,291	Should	127	5,967	Should	90	4,312
Would	19	1,022	May	29	1,362	May	19	910.31
Feel	18	968.78	Would	18	845.74	Would	16	766.57
May	15	807.32	About	16	751.77	Feel	13	622.84
Almost	10	538.21	Feel	11	516.84	Could	12	574.93

As it is seen in Table 12 above, EFL learners' use of the top 5 hedges differed in terms of frequency and type for the first 3 essays they wrote. The most frequently used hedge in the first 3 essays was *should* with frequencies of 24, 127, and 90. When the normalized frequencies are calculated, the distinct use of hedges in the essays can be seen clearly. In the first essay, the most frequently used hedge types are modal auxiliaries (i.e., *should*, *would*, and *may*), verbs (i.e., *feel*), and adverbs (i.e., *almost*) with the following frequencies: 1,291, 1,022, 968.78, 807.32 and 538.21 respectively. In the second essay, while the types of the most frequently used hedges (i.e., *modal auxiliaries*, *adverbs*, and *verbs*) did not change, the list of the words and frequencies changed. The learners used *should* the most with a significant frequency of 5,967. *May* and *would* follow the list as modal auxiliaries with frequencies of 1,362, and 845.74 respectively. Unlike the first essay, learners used *about* more frequently as an adverb hedge and similar to the first essay, they used *feel* as a verb hedge mostly in their essays with frequencies of 751.77 and 516.84 respectively. In the third essay, the types of hedges increased to two i.e., modal auxiliaries and verbs. *Should*, *may*, and *would* were the most frequently occurred hedges with the frequencies of 4,312, 910.31, and 766.57. *Feel* as a verb hedge was used the most in the essays with a frequency of 622.84. Lastly, *could* was the fifth most occurred hedge in the essays with a frequency of 574.93.

Table 13: Top 5 Hedges Over Time in Essays 4, 5 and 6

Essay 4			Essay 5			Essay 6		
Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq	Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq	Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq
Should	105	4,205	Should	105	3,925	Should	133	5,014
May	36	1,441	Would	20	1,046	Would	33	1,244
Would	24	961.3	Feel	19	710.28	May	19	716.35
About	13	520.7	May	18	672.9	Possible	14	527.84
Almost	9	360.49	Could	11	411.21	About	12	452.43

Similar to the findings of essays 1, 2 and 3, *should* was the most frequently used hedge in essays 4, 5, and 6 as seen in Table 13 above. In essay 4, the most frequently used hedges were *should*, *may*, *would*, *about*, and *almost* with the frequencies of 4,205, 1,441, 961.3, 520.7 and 360.49 respectively. In the fifth essay, *should* was the most frequently used hedge as the previous essays with a frequency of 3,925. The hedges *would*, *feel*, *may*, and *could* follow the list with the frequencies

of 1,046, 710.28, 672.9, and 411.21 respectively. In essay 6, a new hedge, *possible*, gets on to the top five list of the most frequently used essays as the fourth with the frequency of 527.84. *Should*, *would*, and *may* listed before possible with the respective frequencies of 5,014, 1,244, and 716.35. Lastly, the most frequently used fifth hedge in essay 6 is about with the frequency of 452.43.

Table 14: Top 5 Hedges over Time in Essays 7, 8 and 9

Essay 7			Essay 8			Essay 9		
Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq	Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq	Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq
May	53	1,756	Should	141	4,765	Should	92	3,130
Should	51	1,690	May	37	1,250	May	38	1,293
Would	44	1,458	About	22	743.49	Feel	25	850.66
About	26	861.75	Feel	19	642.11	About	19	646.5
Feel	20	662.89	Rather	18	608.31	Mostly	15	510.4

In Table 14 above, the last three essays' top 5 hedges are listed. In essay 7, different from the other essays, *may* was used the most as hedges with a frequency of 1,756. *Should*, *would*, *about*, and *feel* followed the list with the frequencies of 1,690, 1,458, 861.75, and 662.89 respectively. In essay 8, *should* was used significantly more than the following hedges *may*, *about*, *feel*, and *rather*. The hedges had frequencies of 4,765, 1,250, 743.49, 642.11, and 608.31 respectively; *rather* being the first time in the top 5 hedges lists. In the last essay of the term, despite the decrease in the use of raw frequencies, *should* was the most frequently used hedge in essay 9 with a frequency of 3,130. *May*, *feel*, *about*, and *mostly* followed it with the frequencies of 1,293, 850.66, 646.5, and 510.4. *Mostly* being the first on the list of top 5 hedges.

Table 15: Top 10 Hedges Used by Non-native writers

Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq
Should	866	4.256
May	264	1.297
Would	198	937.2
Feel	144	707.8
About	141	693.09
Could	80	393.24
Rather	63	309.68
Almost	61	299.85
Mostly	60	294.93

As seen in Table 15 above, the top 10 hedges used in the learner corpora can be seen. In the list, the most frequently used hedges included 4 modal auxiliaries (i.e., *should*, *may*, *would*, and *could*), 1 verb (i.e., *feel*), and 4 adverbs (i.e., *about*, *rather*, *almost*, and *mostly*).

Furthermore, the findings of the hedge-type usages in essays over time showed similarities. As mentioned in the methodology section, in terms of hedge types, the present study used Hyland's (2005) taxonomy of hedges. In Table 16 below, which type of hedges and what they are in each essay are presented.



Table 16: Hedge Types and Forms Used in Essays

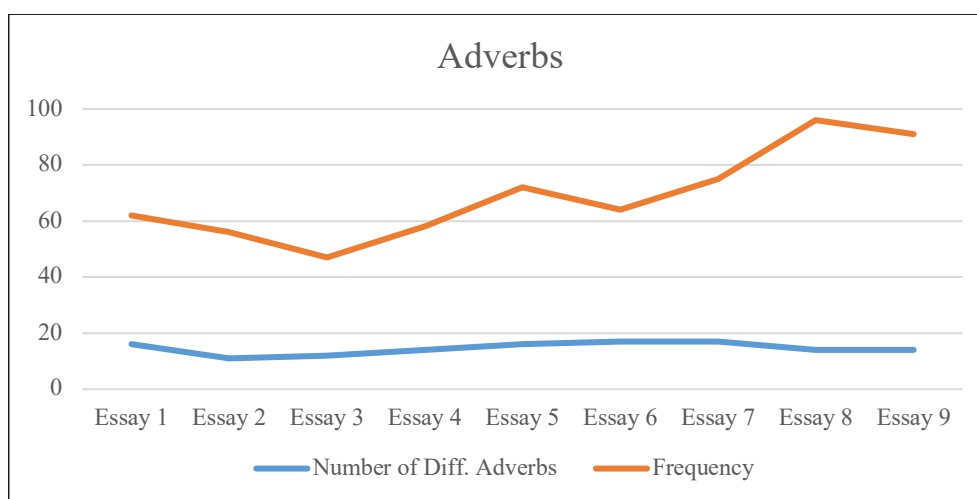
Hedge Types	Essay 1	Essay 2	Essay 3	Essay 4	Essay 5	Essay 6	Essay 7	Essay 8	Essay 9
Adverb	<i>almost, maybe, about, mostly, rather, sometimes, usually, generally, often, quite, probably, frequently, mainly, largely, perhaps, relatively</i>	<i>about, almost, frequently, maybe, mostly, often, probably, quite, rather, sometimes, usually</i>	<i>about, maybe, rather, quite, sometimes, almost, mostly, frequently, usually, probably, generally, fairly</i>	<i>about, almost, apparently, approximately, generally, mainly, maybe, mostly, often, probably, quite, rather, sometimes, usually</i>	<i>about, almost, maybe, quite, rather, mostly, generally, sometimes, often, usually, probably, likely, frequently, largely, around</i>	<i>about, almost, fairly, frequently, generally, largely, likely, maybe, mostly, often, probably, quite, rather, sometimes, somewhat, typically, usually</i>	<i>about, almost, maybe, mostly, rather, generally, quite, sometimes, perhaps, usually, around, broadly, probably, largely, often, roughly, apparently</i>	<i>about, rather, mostly, usually, sometimes, generally, quite, maybe, probably, often, perhaps, broadly, almost, apparently</i>	<i>about, mostly, often, quite, rather, usually, sometimes, generally, almost, maybe, frequently, largely, approximately, around</i>
Verb	<i>feel, claim, suggest, tend to, guess, assume, argue</i>	<i>appear, argue, assume, claim, claims, feel, indicate, indicates, seems, suggests, supposed, tend to</i>	<i>feel, assume, felt, indicate, supposed, tend to</i>	<i>appears, assume, assumed, claims, claimed, estimated, feel, felt, indicate, indicates, seems, suggest, tend to</i>	<i>feel, argue, appear, tend to, guess, indicate, claim, felt, argued, argues, appeared</i>	<i>appeared, argue, argues, assume, assumed, claim, claimed, estimated, feel, guess, indicate, seems, suggest, suppose</i>	<i>feel, argues, claims, claim, argued, indicates, appeared, claimed, guess, indicated, suggest, appear, appears, argue, indicate, suggested</i>	<i>feel, claim, argues, tend to, claims, indicates, suppose, argue, argued, appear, indicate, suggest, assume, guess, estimated, assumed, indicated, claimed, appeared, supposed, tends to</i>	<i>feel, argued, claims, argues, claim, seems, indicate, tend to, argue, indicates, suggest, assume, assumed, claimed, appeared, supposed</i>
Adjective	<i>possible</i>	<i>possible</i>	<i>possible</i>	<i>possible</i>	<i>possible, uncertain</i>	<i>possible</i>	<i>possible</i>	<i>possible</i>	<i>possible</i>
Modal Auxiliaries	<i>should, would, may, could, might</i>	<i>could, couldn't, may, might, ought, should, would, wouldn't</i>	<i>should, may, would, could, couldn't, might</i>	<i>could, couldn't, may, might, should, would, wouldn't</i>	<i>should, would, may, could, wouldn't, couldn't, might</i>	<i>could, couldn't, may, might, should, would, wouldn't</i>	<i>may, should, would, could, might, couldn't, wouldn't</i>	<i>should, may, would, could, might, wouldn't, couldn't, ought</i>	<i>should, may, could, would, couldn't, might, wouldn't</i>
Noun Phrases	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Adverbial Phrases	-	<i>in my opinion</i>	<i>in my opinion, in general, from my perspective</i>	<i>in my opinion</i>	<i>in my opinion, in general, from my perspective, from this perspective</i>	<i>in general, in my opinion</i>	<i>in my opinion, from my perspective, on the whole</i>	<i>in my opinion, from my perspective, from this perspective, in most cases</i>	<i>in my opinion, in general, from my perspective</i>

As can be seen in Table 16 above, the types of hedges and which ones from that specific type of hedge have differed in each essay. In essay 1, out of 32 adverbs in Hyland's hedge list, 16 of them (i.e., *almost, maybe, about, mostly, rather, sometimes, usually, generally, often, quite, probably, frequently, mainly, largely, perhaps, and relatively*), out of 34 verbs 7 of them (i.e., *feel, claim, suggest, tend to, guess, assume, argue*), out of 9 adjectives only 1 of them (i.e., *possible*), and out of 8 modal auxiliaries 5 of them (i.e., *should, would, may, could, might*) were used. Noun phrases and adverbial phrases were not used in essay 1. In essay 2, only 11 of the adverbs were used (i.e., *about, almost, frequently, maybe, mostly, often, probably, quite, rather, sometimes, usually*). The use of different verbs, modal auxiliaries and adverbial phrases increased in the second essays: out of 34 verbs 12 of them (i.e., *appear, argue, assume, claim, claims, feel, indicate, indicates, seems, suggests, supposed, tend to*), out of 8 modal auxiliaries all of them (i.e., *could, couldn't, may, might, ought, should, would, wouldn't*), and out of 13 adverbial phrases 1 one of them (i.e. *in my opinion*) were used. The kind of adjective use was the same as the first essay with hedge *possible* and none of the noun phrases were used in the essays. In essay 3, similar to essay 2 only 12 of the adverbs were used (i.e., *about, maybe, rather, quite, sometimes, almost, mostly, frequently, usually, probably, generally, fairly*). However, the number of different hedges used in verbs and modal auxiliaries decreased. While out of 34 verbs and 8 modal auxiliaries only 6 of them were used (i.e., *feel, assume, felt, indicate, supposed, tend to, should, may, would, could, couldn't, and might*). Like in essays 1 and 2, *possible* was the only adjective type of hedge used in essay 3. Moreover, while none of the noun phrases were used in essay 3, adverbial phrases *in my opinion, in general, and from my perspective* were used. In essay 4, 14 of the adverbs (i.e., *about, almost, apparently, approximately, generally, mainly, maybe, mostly, often, probably, quite, rather, sometimes, usually*), 13 of the verbs (i.e., *appears, assume, assumed, claims, claimed, estimated, feel, felt, indicate, indicates, seems, suggest, tend to*), 7 of the modal auxiliaries (i.e., *could, couldn't, may, might, should, would, wouldn't*), 1 of the adjectives (i.e., *possible*) and adverbial phrases (i.e., *in my opinion*) were used. Again, none of the noun phrases were used in essay 4. Essay 5 contained 16 different adverbs (i.e., *about, almost, maybe, quite, rather, mostly, generally, sometimes, often, usually, probably, likely, frequently, largely, broadly, around*), 11 different verbs (i.e., *feel, argue, appear, tend to, guess, indicate, claim, felt, argued, argues, appeared*), 7 different modal auxiliaries (i.e., *should, would, may, could, wouldn't, couldn't, might*), 2 different adjectives (i.e., *possible, uncertain*) and 4 different adverbial phrases (i.e., *in my opinion, in general, from my perspective, from this perspective*) as hedges. In essay 6, 17 of the adverbs (i.e., *about, almost, fairly, frequently, generally, largely, likely, maybe, mostly, often, probably, quite, rather, sometimes, somewhat, typically, usually*), 15 of the verbs (i.e., *appeared, argue, argues, assume, assumed, claim, claimed, estimated, feel, guess, indicate, seems, suggest, suggest, suppose*), 7 of the modal auxiliaries (i.e., *could, couldn't, may, might, should, would, wouldn't*), 1 of the adjectives (i.e., *possible*) and 2 of the adverbial phrases (i.e., *in general, in my opinion*) were used. Similar to essay 6, 17 of the adverbs (i.e., *about, almost, maybe, mostly, rather, generally, quite, sometimes, perhaps, usually, around, broadly, probably, largely, often, roughly, apparently*), 16 of the verbs (i.e., *feel, argues, claims, claim, argued, indicates, appeared,*

claimed, guess, indicated, suggest, appear, appears, argue, indicate, suggested), 7 of the modal auxiliaries (i.e., *may, should, would, could, might, couldn't, wouldn't*), 1 of the adjectives (i.e., *possible*), and 3 of the adverbial phrases (i.e., *in my opinion, from my perspective, on the whole*) were used in essay 7. In essay 8, out of 32 adverbs 14 of them (i.e., *about, rather, mostly, usually, sometimes, generally, quite, maybe, probably, often, perhaps, broadly, almost, apparently*), out of 34 verbs 21 of them (i.e., *feel, claim, argues, tend to, claims, indicates, suppose, argue, argued, appear, indicate, suggest, assume, guess, estimated, assumed, indicated, claimed, appeared, supposed, tends to*), out of 13 adverbial phrases 4 of them (i.e., *in my opinion, from my perspective, from this perspective, in most cases*), out of 9 adjectives 1 of them (i.e., *possible*), and out of 8 modal auxiliaries all of them were used. Finally, in essay 9, 14 adverbs (i.e., *about, mostly, often, quite, rather, usually, sometimes, generally, almost, maybe, frequently, largely, approximately, around*), 17 verbs (i.e., *feel, argued, claims, argues, claim, seems, indicate, tend to, argue, indicates, appear, assume, suggests, assumed, claimed, appeared, supposed*), 1 adjective (i.e., *possible*), 7 modal auxiliaries (i.e., *should, may, could, would, couldn't, might, wouldn't*), and 3 adverbial phrases (i.e., *in my opinion, in general, from my perspective*) were used.

The distribution of hedge types used in essays varied throughout time. In the figures below, each hedge type of distribution of usage is presented. As seen in Figure 5 below, the frequency of use of adverbs as a hedge in the student essays had mostly upward tendency between Essay 1 and Essay 9 with Essay 3 and Essay 6 being exceptions.

Figure 5: Use of Adverbs as Hedge Over Time

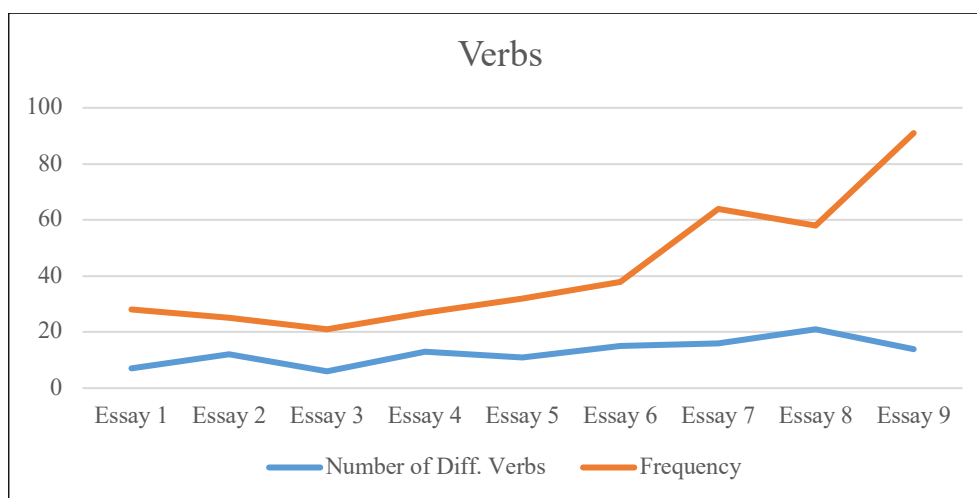


As mentioned before, in Essay 1, out of 32 adverbs in the hedge list 16 of them were used. Those adverbs were: *almost, maybe, about, mostly, rather, sometimes, usually, generally, often, quite, probably, frequently, mainly, largely, perhaps, and relatively*. The adverbs had raw frequencies of 10, 9, 8, 7, 5, 4, 3, 3, 3, 2, 2, 2, 1, 1, 1, and 1 respectively with total frequency of 62. In essay 2,

the number of different adverbs used as hedges decreased to 11. The used adverbs listed as: *about, almost, frequently, maybe, mostly, often, probably, quite, rather, sometimes, and usually*. The raw frequencies of the hedges are 16, 6, 1, 7, 4, 3, 1, 1, 5, 7, and 5 respectively. In the third essay, the number of different adverbs used as hedges was the same as in the second essay. However, some of the adverbs were changed: *about, maybe, rather, quite, sometimes, almost, mostly, frequently, usually, probably, generally, and fairly*. The adverbs have the frequencies of 9, 8, 7, 5, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 1, 1, and 1 with the total frequency of 47. In Essay 4, the total frequency and kind of hedges used started to increase. The adverbs used as hedges are listed as: *about, almost, apparently, approximately, generally, mainly, maybe, mostly, often, probably, quite, rather, sometimes, and usually*. While 14 different adverbs were used as hedges in essay 4, the total frequency of those adverbs was 58. The adverbs have the frequencies of 13, 9, 1, 1, 4, 1, 2, 5, 2, 3, 5, 6, 2, and 4 respectively. In essay 5, out of 32 adverbs 16 of them were used. The adverbs are listed as: *about, almost, maybe, quite, rather, mostly, generally, sometimes, often, usually, probably, likely, frequently, largely, broadly, and around*. They had frequencies of 16, 8, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 4, 4, 3, 2, 1, 1, 1, 1, and 1 with total frequency of 72. In essay 6, 17 different adverbs were used which were *about, almost, fairly, frequently, generally, largely, likely, maybe, mostly, often, probably, quite, rather, sometimes, somewhat, typically, and usually*. The frequencies of the adverbs were 12, 8, 1, 1, 2, 3, 1, 4, 2, 6, 5, 7, 3, 2, 1, 1, and 5 with total frequency of 64. In essay 7, 17 different adverbs were used: *about, almost, maybe, mostly, rather, generally, quite, sometimes, perhaps, usually, around, broadly, probably, largely, often, roughly, and apparently* with the frequencies of 26, 9, 8, 7, 5, 4, 3, 3, 3, 2, 2, 1, 1, 1, 1, and 1. The total frequency was 75. In essay 8, the number of different adverbs used as hedges decreased to 14. The adverbs used as hedges in the essay were *about, rather, mostly, usually, sometimes, generally, quite, maybe, probably, often, perhaps, broadly, almost, and apparently*. The frequencies listed as 22, 18, 12, 7, 7, 6, 5, 5, 4, 3, 2, 2, 2, and 1 with the total frequency of 96. In the last essay, 14 of the adverbs were used. The used adverbs in essay 9 were: *about, mostly, often, quite, rather, usually, sometimes, generally, almost, maybe, frequently, largely, approximately, and around*. The frequencies of the adverbs are listed as follows: 19, 15, 10, 8, 8, 7, 6, 6, 5, 3, 1 with a total frequency of 91.

The verbs used as hedges in the student essays showed similar frequency to the adverbs. Figure 6 below shows the frequency of the verbs used and how many different verbs were used as hedges in the essays between 1 and 9. As seen in Figure 6 below, there is a significant change in terms of the frequencies of the verbs between the essay 1 and 9.

Figure 6: Use of Verbs as Hedge Over Time

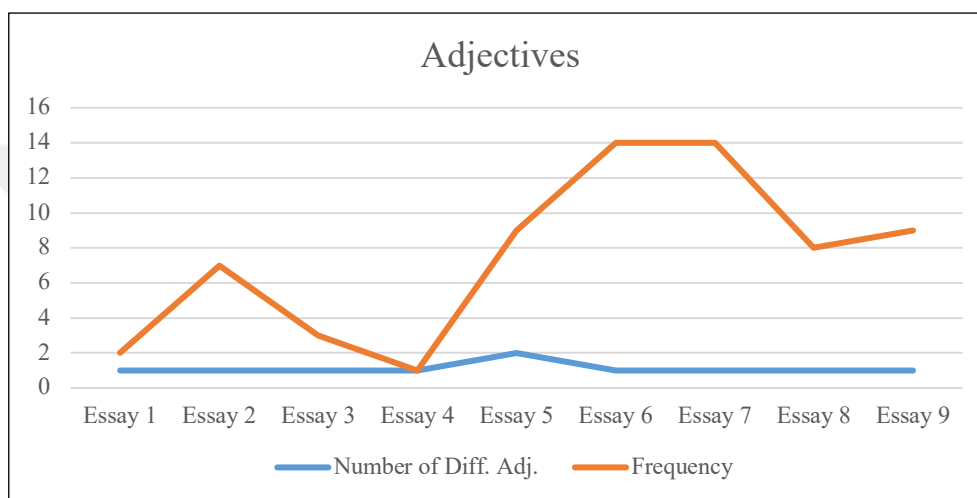


Moreover, in essay 1 out of 34 verbs, 7 of them were used. The verbs used as hedges were *feel*, *claim*, *suggest*, *tend to*, *guess*, *assume*, and *argue* with frequencies of 17, 4, 2, 2, 1, 1, and 1. The total frequency of the verbs was 28. In essay 2, 12 of the verbs were used as hedge: *appear*, *argue*, *assume*, *claim*, *claims*, *feel*, *indicate*, *indicates*, *seems*, *suggests*, *supposed*, and *tend to*. The frequencies of the verbs were 1, 2, 1, 1, 1, 10, 2, 2, 2, 1, 1, and 1 respectively with a total frequency of 25. In the third essay, the number of different verbs used as hedges decreased to 6 with frequencies of 16, and 1 for the rest of the verbs listed: *feel*, *assume*, *felt*, *indicate*, *supposed*, and *tend to*. The total frequency was 21 in essay 3. 13 different verbs were used in essay 4 as a hedge. Those were *appears*, *assume*, *assumed*, *claims*, *claimed*, *estimated*, *feel*, *felt*, *indicate*, *indicates*, *seems*, *suggest*, and *tend to* with frequencies of 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 3, 5, 1, 2, 1, 8, 1, and 1. The total frequency was 27. In essay 5, 11 of the verbs were used as hedges. The verbs listed as *feel*, *argue*, *appear*, *tend to*, *guess*, *indicate*, *claim*, *felt*, *argued*, *argues*, and *appeared* with frequencies of 19, 3, 2, and 1 for the rest of the list. The total frequency was 32. Out of 34 verbs, 15 of them were used in the essay 6. The verbs were listed as follows: *appeared*, *argue*, *argues*, *assume*, *assumed*, *claim*, *claimed*, *estimated*, *feel*, *guess*, *indicate*, *seems*, *suggest*, *suggest*, and *suppose*. The frequencies were 1, 1, 1, 2, 1, 1, 1, 3, 12, 1, 2, 7, 2, 2, and 1 with the total frequency of 38. In essay 7, 16 different verbs were used as a hedge: *feel*, *argues*, *claims*, *claim*, *argued*, *indicates*, *appeared*, *claimed*, *guess*, *indicated*, *suggest*, *appear*, *appears*, *argue*, *indicate*, and *suggested*. The verbs had frequencies of 21, 8, 7, 6, 4, 3, 2, 2, 2, 2, 2, 2, and 1 for the rest of the list with a total frequency of 64. In the 8th essay, the number increased to 21 as the verbs listed as *feel*, *claim*, *argues*, *tend to*, *claims*, *indicates*, *suppose*, *argue*, *argued*, *appear*, *indicate*, *suggest*, *assume*, *guess*, *estimated*, *assumed*, *indicated*, *claimed*, *appeared*, *supposed*, and *tends to*. The frequencies of verbs were 19, 9, 5, 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 for the rest of the list respectively. The total frequency was 58. Finally, essay 9 included 14 of the verbs which were *feel*, *argued*, *claims*, *argues*, *claim*, *seems*, *indicate*, *tend to*, *argue*, *indicates*, *appear*, *assume*, *suggests*, *assumed*, *claimed*, *appeared*, and *supposed* with the frequencies of 19, 15, 10, 8, 8, 7, 6, 6, 5, 3, and 1 for the

rest of the list. The total frequency was 91 and marked as the highest use of verbs as hedges in the essays.

Adjectives used as hedges in the essays display a unique result. As seen in Figure 7 below, out of 9 adjectives only 2 of them were used as hedges in the essays. The adjective *possible* was used 2 times in essay 1, 7 times in essay 2, 3 times in essay 3, once in essay 4 and 5, 14 times in essay 6 and 7, 8 times in essay 8, and 9 times in essay 9. The adjective *uncertain* was used 8 times in essay 5.

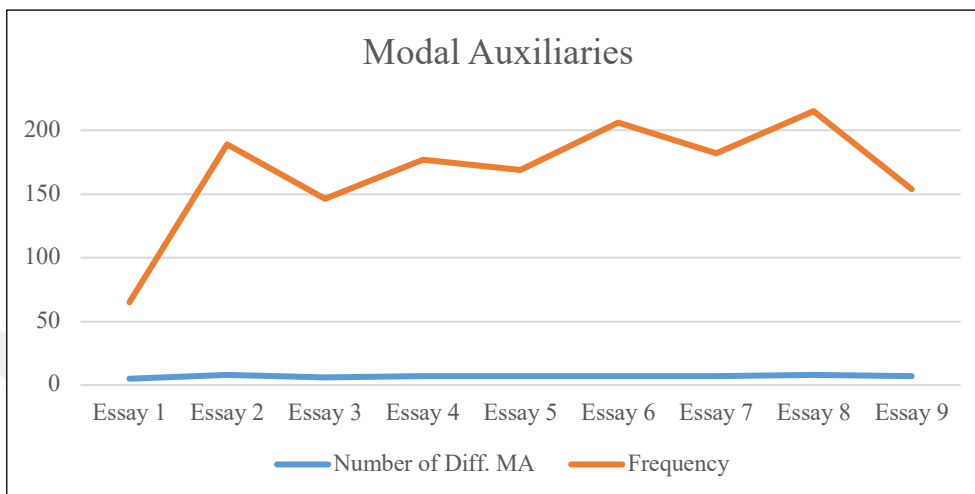
Figure 7: Use of Adjective as Hedge Over Time



In Figure 8 below, modal auxiliaries used as hedges in the essays were presented statistically. In essay 1, out of 8 modal auxiliaries 5 of them were used. The modal auxiliaries used in essay 1 were *should*, *would*, *may*, *could*, and *might* with frequencies of 22, 19, 15, 8, and 1 respectively. The total frequency of them was 65 marking the lowest number use of modal auxiliaries between essays 1 and 9. In essay 2, all the modal auxiliaries were used. *Should* was the most frequently used one in essay 2 with a frequency of 127. *May* followed the list with a frequency of 29. *Would* was used 18 times, *might* was used 6 times, *couldn't* 4 times, *could* 3 times, *ought* and *wouldn't* once respectively in the essays. The total frequency of the modal auxiliaries was 189. In essay 3, 6 of the modal auxiliaries were used as follows: *should* 90 times, *may* 19 times, *would* 16 times, *could* 12 times, *might* 7 times, and *couldn't* 2 times with a total frequency of 146. In essays 4, 5, 6, 7, and 9 except the modal auxiliary *ought* all of them were used. *Should* was used 105, 105, 133, 51, and 92 times in order respectively in each essay. *May* was used 36, 18, 19, 53, and 38 times in each essay. *Would* was used 24, 20, 33, 44, and 7 times in each essay. *Wouldn't* was used once in essay 4. It was used 7, 5, 3, and 2 times in essays 5, 6, 7, and 9 respectively. *Could* was used 6, 11, 5, 19, and 8 times in each essay respectively. *Couldn't* was used 3, 5, 7, 3, and 4 times in each essay. *Might* was used twice in essay 4. It was used 3, 4, 9, and 3 times in each essay respectively. Lastly, in essay 8 all of the modal auxiliaries were used, and their frequencies were listed as follows: *should* 141 times, *may*

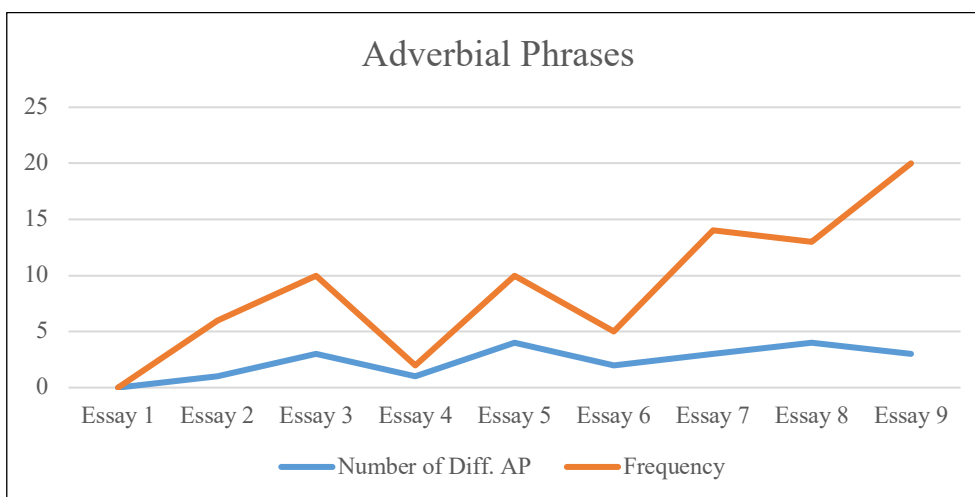
37 times, *would* 17 times, *could* 8 times, *might* 6 times, *wouldn't* 3 times, *couldn't* 2 times and *ought* once with the total frequency of 215. Essays 4, 5, 6, 7, and 9 had total frequencies of 177, 169, 206, 182 and 154 respectively.

Figure 8: Use of Modal Auxiliaries as Hedge Over Time



Since none of the noun phrases in the hedges list were not used in any of the essays, the final figure for the hedge type frequencies will be adverbial phrases. As seen in Figure 9 below, except in essay 1, all the essays included at least one adverbial phrase as a hedge.

Figure 9: Use of Adverbial Phrases as Hedge Over Time



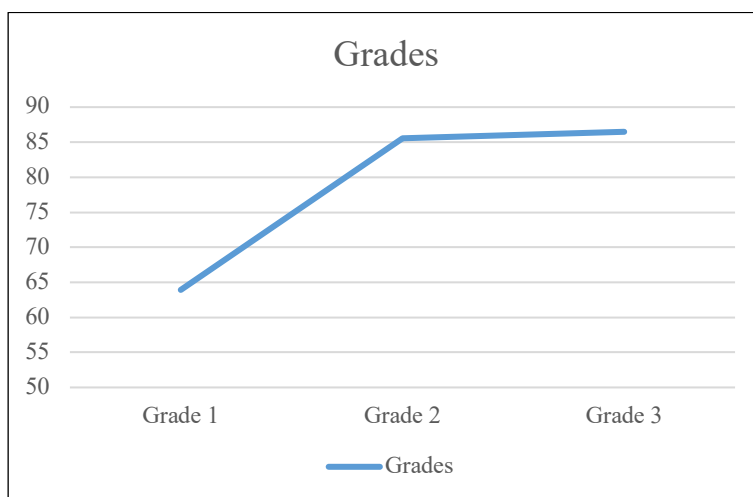
The adverbial phrase *in my opinion* was used in all the essays except the first one and had frequencies of 6, 6, 2, 4, 3, 11, 10, and 14 in order respectively. In essays 2 and 4 it was the only adverbial phrase used as hedge. In essay 3 *in general* was used 3 times and *from my perspective* was used once. The total frequency of adverbial phrases as hedges was 10 in essay 3. In essay 5 while *in*

general was used 4 times, *from my perspective* and *from this perspective* were used once respectively with a total frequency of 10 adverbial phrases as hedges. In essay 6, *in my opinion* was used 6 times and the total frequency of adverbial phrases as hedges was 5. In Essay 7, while *from my perspective* was used twice, *on the whole* was used once. In essay 8 *from my perspective*, *from this perspective*, and *in most cases* were used once respectively. Finally, in essay 9 while *in general* was used 4 times, *from my perspective* adverbial phrase was used twice.

As revealed in the use of hedge types above (see Figures 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9), the students most frequently used hedge type was modal auxiliaries in their writings for each essay. The outcome of the use of modal auxiliaries the most was in line with previous studies such as Bayyurt (2010), who found that freshmen-year students most frequently employ modal auxiliaries as hedges in their writings. Verbs and adverbs as hedges were used the most after modal auxiliaries which showed parallel results to Akbaş and Hardman’s (2018) study. The use of adjectives and adverbial phrases found in this study previews the authorial stance of the students.

In Figure 10 below, the grades students received for their essays 1, 6, and 9 were compared. The mean scores of the grades for each essay were given in the table below to examine the effect of metadiscourse markers usage on academic writing success throughout the academic year. As seen below, similar to the hedge use figures presented before, there is an increased line which indicates higher scores students received towards the end of the year. In line with Yaghoubi and Ardestani’s (2014) study, the results indicated that explicit teaching in fact affects student scores positively.

Figure 10: Mean Scores of the Student Grades for Essays 1, 6, and 9



4.2.1. Comparison of Native and Non-native Use of Hedges

The comparison of native and non-native use of hedges provides information regarding the difference between Turkish EFL learners' argumentative writing and native speakers' argumentative writing. A frequency analysis was conducted by using the raw and normalized frequencies of used hedges and compared to see the difference in terms of frequency and type of hedges. To see whether there is a significant difference between the native and non-native use of hedges in argumentative loglikelihood stats were calculated. In Table 17 below, the top 10 hedges used in argumentative essays of native speakers were presented focusing on the types of hedges.

Table 17: Top 10 Hedges used by Native writers

Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq
Would	1338	3,710
Should	664	1,841
Could	589	1,633
May	474	1,314
Feel	276	765.44
Possible	159	440.96
Rather	151	418.77
Seems	141	391.04
Wouldn't	121	335.57
Might	85	235.73

As seen in the Table 17 above, native writers mostly used modal auxiliaries in their writings as hedges. Modal auxiliaries *would*, *should*, *could*, *may*, *wouldn't*, and *might* were used 1338, 664, 589, 474, 121, and 85 times respectively in the LOCNESS corpus. The list contained 2 types of verbs, 1 adverb, and 1 adjective as hedges. *Feel* was the most frequently used verb in the native corpus with a frequency of 276. Additionally, the verb *seems* was used 141 times as hedges in the corpus. The adjective *possible* was used 159 times, and the adverb *rather* was used 151 times in the essays. Moreover, all the hedges used by native writers in their argumentative essays can be seen in Table 18 below.

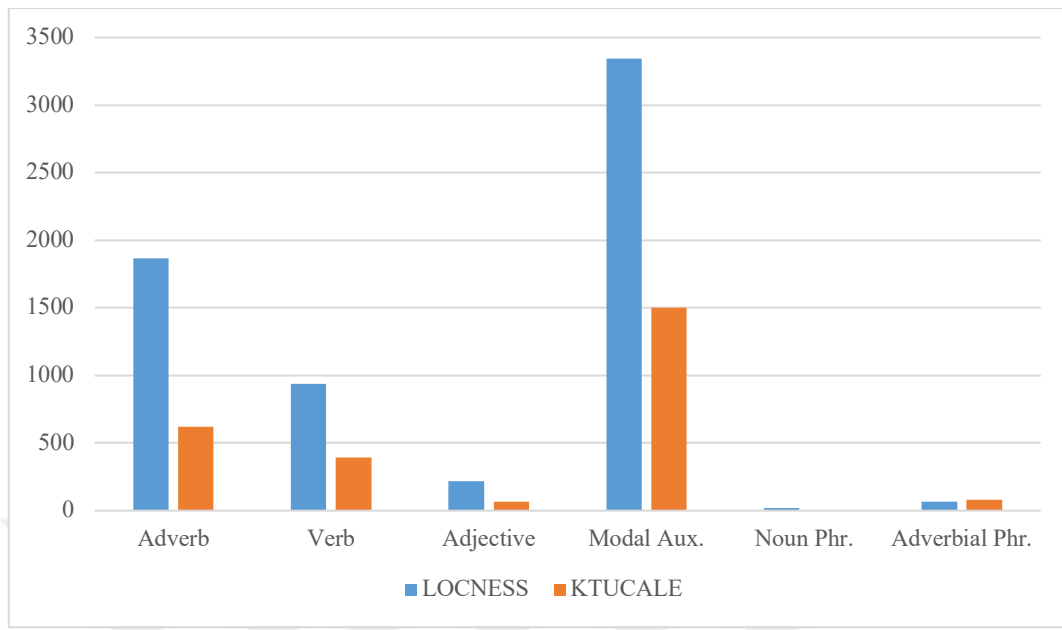
Table 18: Hedge Types and Forms Used in LOCNESS Corpus

Hedge Types	Hedges
Adverb	<i>about, almost, apparently, around, essentially, fairly, frequently, generally, largely, likely, mainly, maybe, mostly, often, perhaps, possibly, presumably, probably, quite, rather, relatively, roughly, sometimes, somewhat, typically, unlikely, usually</i>
Verb	<i>appear, appeared, appears, argue, argued, argues, assume, assumed, claim, claimed, claims, estimated, feel, felt, guess, indicate, indicated, indicates, seems, suggest, suggested, suggests, suppose, supposed, suspect, suspects</i>
Adjective	<i>apparent, doubtful, plausible, possible, probable, typical, uncertain, unclear</i>
Modal Auxiliaries	<i>could, couldn't, may, might, ought, should, would, wouldn't</i>
Noun Phrases	<i>certain amount, certain extent</i>
Adverbial Phrases	<i>in general, in most cases, in my opinion, in my view, on the whole</i>

Out of 32 adverbs, 27 of them were used in the LOCNESS corpus. In the non-native corpus, only 17 different adverbs were used at most. However, when the types of the adverbs compared between the two corpora, adverbs *essentially*, *possibly*, *presumably*, and *unlikely* were never used in the non-native corpus. In the native corpus, the adverbs *unclearly*, *uncertainly*, *plausibly*, *broadly*, and *approximately* were never used. When the use of verbs as hedges examined, it is seen that out of 34 verbs as hedges, 26 of them were used in LOCNESS. The verbs, *estimate*, *postulate*, *postulated*, *postulates*, *supposes*, *tend to*, *tends to* and *tended to* were not used in the native corpus. In the non-native corpus, verbs *estimate*, *postulate*, *postulated*, *postulates*, *supposes*, *suspect*, *suspects*, and *tended to* were not used in the essays. When compared, the verbs *estimate*, *postulate*, *postulated*, *postulates*, *supposes* and *tended to* were mutual verbs that were never used by the writers in both corpora. The difference of adjective use as hedges in the writings become prominently apparent. While *possible* and *uncertain* were the only adjectives used as hedges in the non-native corpus, *apparent*, *doubtful*, *plausible*, *possible*, *probable*, *typical*, *uncertain*, and *unclear* were the adjectives which were used as hedges in the native corpus. This significant difference points to the authorial stance native and non-native writers acquire for the academic writing. Similar to non-native corpus, LOCNESS writers used all of the modal auxiliaries as hedges in their argumentative writings. Another significant difference between the native and non-native writers stems from the fact that while native writers used noun phrases in their writings, non-native writers did not use any of the phrases in their writings. Out of 3 noun phrases, 2 of them (e.g., *certain amount* and *certain extent*) were used in the writings of native writers. Lastly, out of 13 adverbial phrases 5 of them (e.g., *in general*, *in most cases*, *in my opinion*, *in my view*, and *on the whole*) were used in the native corpus. When compared to the non-native corpus, it is seen that adverbial phrases such as *in general*, *in most cases*, *in my opinion*, and *on the whole* were used mutually in both corpora. Moreover, adverbial phrases such as *from my perspective*, *from this perspective* and *in most cases* were also used in non-native corpus which would indicate an authorial standpoint of a writer.

In native corpus, the most frequently used hedge type listed as follow: modal auxiliaries, adverbs, verbs, adjectives, adverbial phrases and noun phrases. As seen in Figure 11 below, modal auxiliaries were used 3343 times, adverbs were used 1868 times, verbs were used 937 times, adjectives were used 220 times, adverbial phrases were used 66 times and noun phrases were used 19 times in the LOCNESS corpus. In the KTUCALE corpus, modal auxiliaries were used 1503 times as hedges in the argumentative writings. Adverbs were used 621 times, verbs were used 394 times, adjectives were used 67 times and adverbial phrases were used 82 times in the essays of Turkish EFL students. The distribution of the hedge types of frequencies in Table 19 below shows that similar to Turkish EFL writers, native writers used modal auxiliaries the most as hedges in their argumentative writings. Adverbs and verbs as hedges followed the most frequently used hedges list in both group of writers. However, adjectives, noun phrases and adverbial phrases as hedges were used more in the native corpus than non-native corpus.

Figure 11: Frequencies of Hedge Types Used in LOCNESS



In Table 19 below, the most frequently used hedges that are mutual (e.g., *should*, *may*, *would*, *feel*, *could*, and *rather*) in both corpora are compared by the loglikelihood stat to display the overuse and underuse of hedges in argumentative writing. The most frequently used hedge *should* in both corpora was the only overused hedge in the non-native corpus compared to the native corpus (LL=266, p-value: <0.0001). The result indicates a significant overuse in the non-native corpus. The hedge *may* (LL=0.03, p-value: <0.05), *would* (LL=420.39, p-value: <0.0001), *feel* (LL=0.58, p-value: <0.05), *could* (LL=200.33, p-value: <0.0001), and *rather* (LL=4.21, p-value: <0.01) were underused in the non-native corpora. As seen in Table 20, their loglikelihood scores showed significant underuse in their writings respectively. Such different use of hedges could stem from the frequent exposure of the word to the writers since the beginning of their language development along with their language level.

Table 19: Log-Likelihood Values and Over/Under Representations of the Common Top 6 Hedges

Hedges	Overuse Underuse	Log-Likelihood
Should	+	266/p<0.0001
May	-	0.03/p<0.05
Would	-	420.39/p<0.0001
Feel	-	0.58/p<0.05
Could	-	200.33/p<0.0001
Rather	-	4.21/p<0.01

4.3. Individual Analyses: EFL Usage of Hedges

This section provides a detailed analysis of hedge usage by individual learners. The investigation of authorial stance and improvement of student scores with hedges will be presented by using five different individual's data (see Table 10 in Chapter 3). The same analytical procedure that was carried out for group analysis will be implicated in the individual learners' analysis. First, the frequency and types of hedges used in the writings of the individuals were presented. Then, the collected data was compared in each essay to see how the authorial stance of the author changed throughout the academic year with examples from their writings. Finally, the grades students received in the academic year were explored with their use of hedges.

4.3.1. Aycan's Inventory of Hedges

The hedges used by Aycan and their frequencies in her argumentative writings are presented in the Table 20 below.

Table 20: The Hedges Used by Aycan Between Essays 1-4

Essay 1			Essay 2			Essay 3			Essay 4		
Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq	Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq	Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq	Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq
Sometimes	1	2,212	Should	2	4,518	Should	1	2,183	Indicate	1	1,294
Could	1	2,212	Often	1	1,506	Maybe	1	2,183	Seems	1	1,294
			Sometimes	1	1,506				Would	1	1,294
			Almost	1	1,506						

As seen, Aycan's use of hedges varied and showed inconsistency. In the first four essays, she used adverbs (i.e., *sometimes*, *often*, *almost*, and *maybe*), modal auxiliaries (i.e., *could*, *should*, and *would*) and verbs (i.e., *indicate* and *seems*) as hedges. Example sentences extracted from her first four essays below indicate the distance she puts between herself and the thought she wants to transfer to the reader.

(E1) They spend so much time that **sometimes** they can't even realize how fast the time passes.

(E2) The necessity of assignments vary from teacher to teacher, but it **should** be without overwhelming them in a way that will lead to more research using the power of thought.

(E3) Some people **maybe** think that it's a great idea for children to stay some family members such as grand parents (...)

(E4) Implementation of policies aimed at reducing the population in Turkey **seems** to be necessary for the future.

In Table 21, Aycan’s use of hedges in essays 5, 6, 7, and 8 is presented. As seen, Aycan’s use of hedges increased gradually in terms of frequency and type of hedges. Aycan added hedge types as adjectives (i.e., *possible*) and adverbial phrases (i.e., *on the whole* and *from my perspective*) to her writings.

Table 21: The Hedges Used by Aycan Between Essays 5-8

Essay 5			Essay 6			Essay 7			Essay 8		
Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq	Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq	Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq	Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq
Should	2	2,805	Should	8	8,686	Would	3	3,999	Should	4	4,273
Feel	1	1,402	Couldn't	3	3,257	Possible	2	2,164	Argues	2	2,136
Seems	1	1,402	May	2	3,000	About	1	1,082	Generally	1	1,068
Possible	1	1,402	Wouldn't	1	1,085	Argues	1	1,082	Rather	1	1,068
			Feel	1	1,085	Claim	1	1,082	Claim	1	1,068
						Feel	1	1,082	Claimed	1	1,068
						Indicated	1	1,082	Feel	1	1,068
						Could	1	1,082	Indicated	1	1,068
						May	1	1,082	Possible	1	1,068
						Should	1	1,082	May	1	1,068
						Wouldn't	1	1,082	Wouldn't	1	1,068
						On the whole	1	1,082	From my perspective	1	1,068
									In my opinion	1	1,068

Moreover, in the example sentence 5 below, the author's stance indicates “the speaker’s degree of authority and/or conviction, or the urgency of advice” (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999: 85). In examples 6 and 7, the author presents her stance with uncertain prediction towards the situation she presents. In example 8, the author supports her intention with a different idea which leads her to the use of hedge to reach the audience.

(E5) *We **should** introduce as much nature as possible to children and organize activities in this area.*

(E6) *If it does the opposite, it **may** lead to a worse position.*

(E7) *When such a great information is possessed in any person, it is not **possible** to stop what that person will use for any other evil purposes.*

(E8) *Ma **argues** that cheap products can also be high quality and therefore, it should not be paid for the quality of goods.*

Finally, in Table 22, Aycan’s use of hedges in Essay 9 is presented. The data shows that despite being the last essay of the term, Aycan used hedges most in Essay 8. Moreover, her choice of different hedges for different hedge types did not change. Additionally, an example sentence from essay 9 above indicates the visibility yet distinction of the author in the argumentative text written.

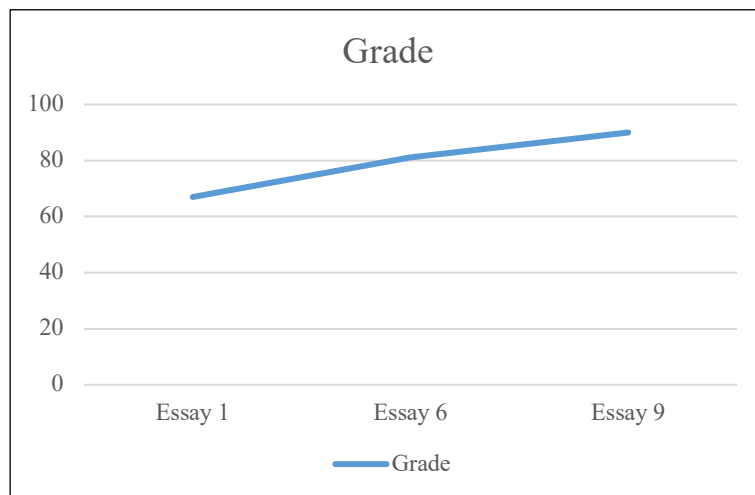
(E9) However, **from my perspective**, when it comes to people's rights, other things need to be less important.

Table 22: The Hedges Used by Aycan in the Essay 9

Essay 9		
Hedges	Raw Frequency	Normed Frequency
Should	2	2,466
May	2	2,466
Often	2	2,466
Maybe	1	1,233
Mostly	1	1,233
Argues	1	1,233
Claimed	1	1,233
Seems	1	1,233
Possible	1	1,233
Wouldn't	1	1,233
From my perspective	1	1,233
In my opinion	1	1,233

Aycan's improvement throughout the academic year in terms of hedge usage can be reflected in her scores in the writing course as well. As seen in Figure 12 below, her grades gradually increased during the term in parallel with her use of hedges.

Figure 12: Aycan's Grade Change Over Time



4.3.2. Beril's Inventory of Hedges

The hedges used by Beril in the Essays 1, 2, 3, and 4 are presented in Table 23. Between the 4 essays, Beril used most hedges in terms of frequency in Essay 4. However, in the case of different hedges, Beril used the most different hedges in Essay 3.

Table 23: The Hedges Used by Beril Between the Essays 1-4

Essay 1			Essay 2			Essay 3			Essay 4		
Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq	Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq	Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq	Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq
Almost	2	3,076	May	4	7,067	Should	3	5,376	Should	5	6,802
Maybe	2	3,076	Should	3	5,300	Maybe	1	1,792	May	3	4,081
Feel	1	1,538	Almost	1	1,766	Almost	1	1,792	Would	3	4,081
Should	1	1,538				Feel	1	1,792	Mostly	1	1,360
						Supposed	1	1,792	Probably	1	1,360
						Could	1	1,792	Assumed	1	1,360
						May	1	1,792			
						Would	1	1,792			

Moreover, her authorial stance is provided with hedges adverbs (i.e., *almost*, *maybe*, and *probably*), modal auxiliaries (i.e., *should*, *may*, *could*, and *would*), and verbs (i.e., *feel*, *supposed*, and *assumed*) in the essays. As seen in the examples below, the uncertainty and prediction strengthen her argumentative ideas in her writings.

(E1) (...) it is **almost** hard to follow all of them but because of this addiction, (...)

(E2) Moreover, it can also help some students to learn information which they **may** miss in class or may not know.

(E3) **Maybe** they should more rely on them than their old family members because of the bad causes of them on children.

(E4) Even it can be **assumed** "unmoral".

Table 24: The Hedges Used by Beril Between Essays 5-8

Essay 5			Essay 6			Essay 7			Essay 8		
Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq	Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq	Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq	Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq
Should	3	3,856	Should	4	5,215	Feel	2	2,059	Should	4	6,000
Maybe	2	2,570	About	1	1,303	Rather	1	1,029	Claims	2	2,127
Almost	1	1,285	Maybe	1	1,303	Almost	1	1,029	About	1	1,063
Feel	1	1,285	Often	1	1,303	Seems	1	1,029	Quite	1	1,063
May	1	1,285	May	1	1,303	Could	1	1,029	Rather	1	1,063
						May	1	1,029	Assume	1	1,063
						Should	1	1,029	Feel	1	1,063
						Wouldn't	1	1,029	Possible	1	1,063

In Table 24, Beril's use of hedges in Essays 5, 6, 7, and 8 are listed. Her use of hedges increases both in frequency and different words of hedges. In Essay 8, she uses the adjective *possible* as a hedge in argumentative writing. Example sentences below may show that Beril is hesitant while providing evidence in her arguments.

(E5) *Playing in nature is **almost** stranger thing for today's children.*

(E6) *In recent times, we **often** hear "cosmopolitan" word (...)*

(E7) *While I do **feel** that Kambhampati has failed to show artificial intelligence's advantages (...)*

(E8) *There are **quite** a few controversies about this question's answer.*

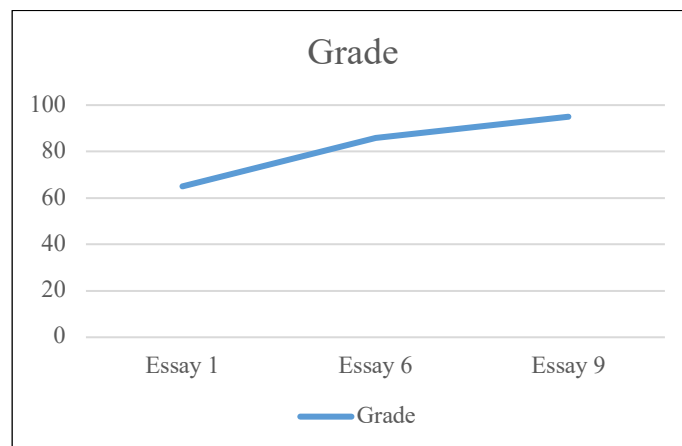
In Table 25 below, Beril's Essay 9 data is presented. The table shows that Beril used hedges the most in her last essay. However, she only used verbs (i.e., *claims, feel* and *argue*), adjectives (i.e., *about* and *sometimes*), and modal auxiliaries (i.e., *should* and *would*) as hedges in her essay.

Table 25: The Hedges used by Beril in the Essay 9

Essay 9		
Hedges	Raw Frequency	Normed Frequency
Claims	5	5,364
Should	3	3,218
Feel	2	2,145
About	1	1,233
Sometimes	1	1,233
Argue	1	1,233
Would	1	1,233

Grades Beril received during the year are presented in Figure 13 below. Similar to Aycan, her grades gradually increased during the term in parallel with her use of hedges.

Figure 13: Beril's Grade Change Over Time



4.3.3. Didem's Inventory of Hedges

Didem's use of hedges over the essays are presented in Table 26, 27, and 28 below. In Table 26, it is seen that she mostly used adverbs (i.e., *maybe, usually, possible, about, sometimes, and probably*) as hedges in her Essay 1, 2, 3, and 4. Modal auxiliaries (i.e., *would, should, and may*) and adverbial phrase (i.e., *in my opinion*) as hedges were also present in her first four essays.

Table 26: The Hedges used by Didem Between the Essays 1-4

Essay 1			Essay 2			Essay 3			Essay 4		
Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq	Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq	Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq	Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq
Would	4	7,259	Should	2	3,333	Would	1	1,841	Should	2	2,677
Maybe	1	1,814	About	1	1,666	In my opinion	1	1,841	About	2	2,677
Usually	1	1,814	Mostly	1	1,666				Almost	1	1,338
Possible	1	1,814	Probably	1	1,666						
			Sometimes	1	1,666						
			May	1	1,666						

Examples from her first four essays are seen below. Didem's authorial stance is provided by probability (e.g., E1, E2) and her emphasis on distancing her ideas from general assumptions as seen in E3.

(E1) Until recently maybe it **would** have been possible to completely abolish technology (...)

(E2) So they **probably** will try their best.

(E3) **In my opinion** for such a young kid it is the best with his/her family members.

(E4) (...) the houses are built very close to each other so that one has **almost** no privacy (...)

Table 27: The Hedges Used by Didem Between Essays 5-8

Essay 5			Essay 6			Essay 7			Essay 8		
Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq	Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq	Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq	Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq
Feel	2	2,583	Feel	3	3,886	Feel	2	2,312	Should	10	11,198
About	1	1,291	Should	2	2,590	In my opinion	2	2,312	Generally	2	2,239
Around	1	1,291	About	1	1,295	Appear	1	1,156	Mostly	2	2,239
Mostly	1	1,291	Almost	1	1,295	Claim	1	1,156	Would	2	2,239
Felt	1	1,291	Mostly	1	1,295				Sometimes	1	1,119
Possible	1	1,291	Possible	1	1,295				In my opinion	1	1,119
Uncertain	1	1,291	Could	1	1,295						
			Might	1	1,295						

In Table 27, Didem’s use of hedges in Essays 5, 6, 7, and 8 is shown. She added verbs (i.e., *feel, felt, appear, and claim*) as hedges to her argumentative writings. Moreover, she added different hedges as modal auxiliaries (i.e., *could and might*), adverbs (*around and generally*), and adjectives (i.e., *uncertain*) to her essays. Example sentences below show the authorial stance Didem takes, in which she secures her thoughts by not unambivalently conveying her ideas.

(E5) Children are **mostly** in closed rooms like school, clubs or at home.

(E6) Because it **might** be that the society draws attention to problem like a disease that goes around.

(E7) While I do **feel** like that Max Tegmark failed to present conclusive evidence (...)

(E8) (...) because no matter what the price is one **generally** starts thinking whether it is really needed (...)

Didem used hedges the most in Essay 9 as seen in Table 28 below. As hedge types, she used modal auxiliaries (i.e., *should and could*), adverbs (i.e., *about, mostly, usually, generally, and often*), verbs (*tend to and argued*), adjectives (i.e., *possible*), and adverbial phrases (i.e., *in my opinion*) in her last essay. Her authorial stance shows her hesitant writing as seen in E9 below.

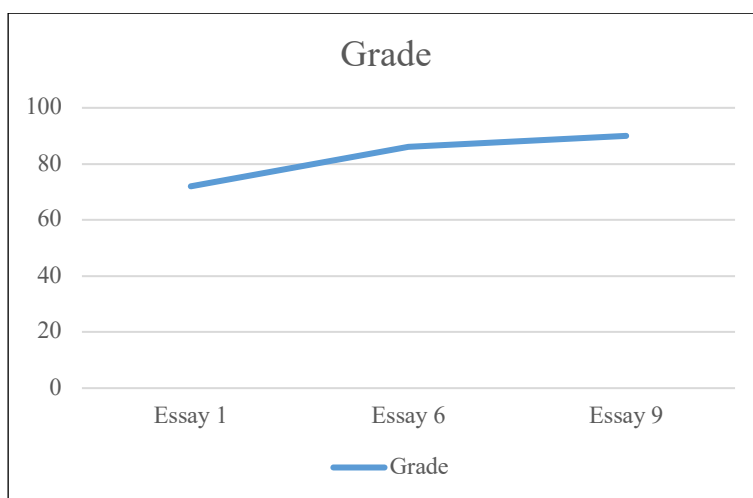
(E9) She said that if woman work in a field of manufacturing technology, where **usually** mostly only men work (...)

Table 28: The Hedges used by Didem in the Essay 9

Essay 9		
Hedges	Raw Frequency	Normed Frequency
Should	5	5,186
About	5	5,186
Mostly	2	2,074
Usually	2	2,074
Tend to	2	2,074
Generally	1	1,037
Often	1	1,037
Argued	1	1,037
Possible	1	1,037
Could	1	1,037
In my opinion	1	1,037

In Figure 14 below, Didem’s grades are presented. Similar to previous individuals, Didem’s grades increased gradually in parallel with her use of hedges in her essays.

Figure 14: Didem's Grade Change Over Time



4.3.4. Erol's Inventory of Hedges

Erol used modal auxiliaries (i.e., wouldn't, couldn't, should, may, and would), adverbs (i.e., mostly, about, maybe, generally, frequently, and sometimes), verbs (i.e., feel and suggest), and an adverbial phrase (i.e., in my opinion) in his Essays 1, 2, 3, and 4 (See Table 29).

Table 29: The Hedges Used by Erol Between Essays 1-4

Essay 1			Essay 2			Essay 3			Essay 4		
Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq	Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq	Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq	Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq
Wouldn't	2	3,883	Should	2	3,460	Should	8	12,50	May	2	2,894
About	1	1,941	May	1	1,730	About	3	4,687	Generally	1	1,447
Maybe	1	1,941				Frequently	1	1,562	Mostly	1	1,447
Feel	1	1,941				Sometimes	1	1,562	Suggest	1	1,447
Couldn't	1	1,941				May	1	1,562			
Should	1	1,941				Would	1	1,562			
						In my opinion	1	1,562			

His authorial stance as seen below presented through uncertainty.

(E1) *But although technology is a advantageous thing, people **could** not fully understand how to use it solubrious.*

(E2) *To give daily homework students **may** be useful in long term.*

(E3) *Thus, my sister sent Defne to a child center for **about** 4 months.*

(E4) *On the other hand, if patient have had fertility they **suggest** all the methods (...)*

In essays 5, 6, 7, and 8 Erol kept using the same hedge types, adding an adjective (i.e., possible) to his writing as seen below in Table 30.

Table 30: The Hedges Used by Erol Between Essays 5-8

Essay 5			Essay 6			Essay 7			Essay 8		
Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq	Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq	Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq	Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq
Should	8	11,049	Almost	1	1,390	May	4	4,545	Mostly	1	1,048
Often	2	2,762	Possible	1	1,390	Might	2	2,272	Should	1	1,048
Probably	1	1,381	Should	1	1,390	About	1	1,136	Would	1	1,048
Rather	1	1,381				Appeared	1	1,136			
Feel	1	1,381				Argued	1	1,136			
Possible	1	1,381				Seems	1	1,136			
In my opinion	1	1,381				Possible	1	1,136			
						Should	1	1,136			
						In my opinion	1	1,136			

Examples of the authorial stance Erol presented in his writings are seen below. Probability is how he distances himself from his way of argumentation.

(E5) **Rather** than letting them playing mobile games, you should play games with them that you can spend time with.

(E6) In another saying, it's **almost** definitely independent in internal affairs.

(E7) At first, it **may** sound absurd and unusual but (...)

(E8) (...) Arçelik and Beko **would** have products of poor quality, (...)

In Table 31 below, hedges used by Erol in his last essay are presented. He used hedges the most in his essays 3 and 9. However, he used more different hedges in Essay 9. Moreover, he used adverbs (i.e., *almost*, *often*, *largely* and *sometimes*) the most to convey his ideas to the reader as seen in E9 below.

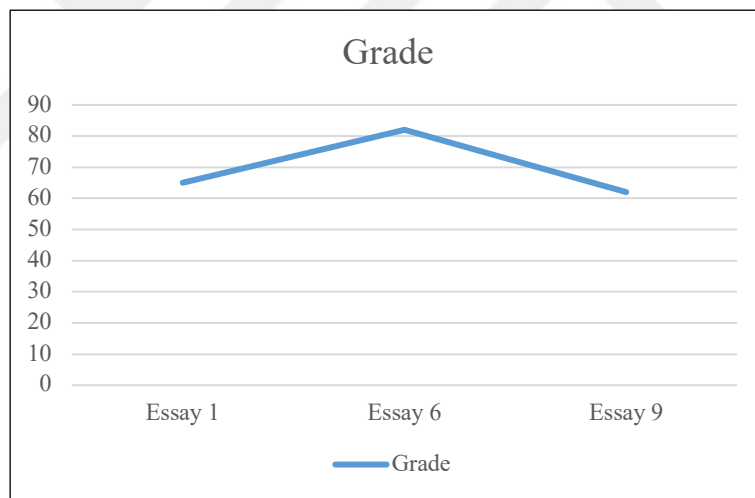
(E9) So, this is **largely** influenced employers to concentrate on their job.

Table 31: The Hedges used by Erol in the Essay 9

Essay 9		
Hedges	Raw Frequency	Normed Frequency
Should	6	6,764
May	2	2,254
Almost	1	1,127
Often	1	1,127
Largely	1	1,127
Sometimes	1	1,127
Argues	1	1,127
Feel	1	1,127
Possible	1	1,127
In my opinion	1	1,127

Erol's score change over the essays is presented in Figure 15 below. Despite the fact that he used the most hedges in Essay 9 and the least hedges in Essay 6, his grades were the opposite of expected which might indicate the other factors of the rubric used affected the drastic change.

Figure 15: Erol's Grade Change Over Time



4.3.5. Fatih's Inventory of Hedges

Fatih's use of hedges in Essays 1, 2, 3, and 4 is presented in Table 32 below. He used modal auxiliaries the most in the first four essays (i.e., *may*, *should*, *might*, *may*, and *would*). Moreover, he used adverbs (i.e., *mostly*, *generally*, *about*, *maybe*, *quite*, and *usually*), and verbs (i.e., *tend to* and *appears*) in his writings as hedges.

Table 32: The Hedges Used by Fatih Between the Essays 1-4

Essay 1			Essay 2			Essay 3			Essay 4		
Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq	Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq	Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq	Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq
May	3	5,190	Should	6	7,731	Should	2	2,724	Should	5	6,289
Mostly	2	3,460	Might	2	2,577	Usually	1	1,362	Would	2	2,515
Generally	1	1,730	About	1	1,288	Tend to	1	1,362	About	1	1,257
Should	1	1,730	Maybe	1	1,288	May	1	1,362	Appears	1	1,257
			Quite	1	1,288				May	1	1,257

Fatih's authorial stance is presented with examples from his essays below. As seen, he shows visibility with no factual statements which indicates his distance from the readers.

(E1) *We may be dependent on technology but **mostly** , we need technology.*

(E2) *Students **might** not see the fact that they'll graduate as an ignorant people due to this.*

(E3) *(...) kids growing up with grandparents %67 **tend to** sport branches instead of art,music or theatre.*

(E4) *(...) it **appears** that birth controls are like precaution in case things go wrong.*

In Table 33, it is seen that Fatih kept using modal auxiliaries, adverbs, verbs, adjectives, and in his essays. Moreover, he started using an adverbial phrase (i.e., in my opinion) and added one more modal auxiliary to his writing which makes his writing in that sense, *ought*.

Table 33: The Hedges Used by Fatih Between Essays 5-8

Essay 5			Essay 6			Essay 7			Essay 8		
Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq	Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq	Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq	Hedges	Raw Freq	Normed Freq
Should	8	8,528	Should	3	3,250	May	4	3,960	Generally	1	955.11
About	3	3,198	Largely	1	1,083	Generally	3	2,970	Maybe	1	955.11
Almost	1	1,066	Mostly	1	1,083	Should	2	1,980	Ought	1	955.11
Generally	1	1,066	Probably	1	1,083	In my opinion	1	990.1			
May	1	1,066	May	1	1,083						
Possible	1	1,066									
Would	1	1,066									

Fatih's authorial stance can be seen in the examples below. Uncertainty is his way of distancing himself from his ideas and readers.

(E5) Parents are **generally** idol for their children.

(E6) (...) and this **largely** connected with exchange programmes that create a connection between countries.

(E7) Developed machines, technological devices etc. show us that AI **may** be both perilious and useful in future.

(E8) There are some other facts **ought** to be uncover which I tried to above.

In his last essay, Fatih used only 6 hedges which are modal auxiliaries (i.e., *should* and *wouldn't*), adverbs (*generally*, *mostly*, and *frequently*), and a verb (i.e., *claim*) (See Table 34). His authorial stance can be examined by the sentence below. Probability is another way he expressed himself in his writings.

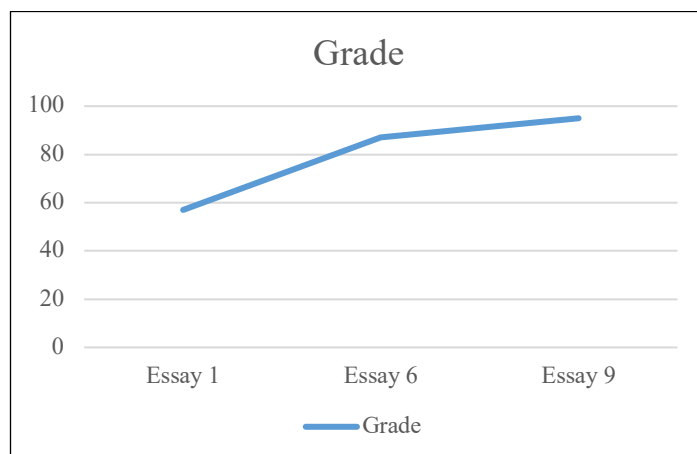
(E9) That is so wrong that if I had chance, I **wouldn't** even make an effort to prove that she isn't right.

Table 34: The Hedges used by Fatih in the Essay 9

Essay 9		
Hedges	Raw Frequency	Normed Frequency
Should	3	2,780
Generally	3	2,780
Mostly	2	1,853
Frequently	1	926.78
Claim	1	926.78
Wouldn't	1	926.78

Fatih's gradual increase in grades is presented in Figure 16. Despite the fact that he did not use the most hedges in his last essay, he received the highest score overall. Those findings might relate to the rubrics' other factors such as grammar and punctuation used in writing.

Figure 16: Fatih's Grade Change Over Time



4.4. Discussion

The current study was conducted to find answers regarding the use of hedges in the argumentative essays of tertiary-level Turkish EFL students. A quantitative analysis was carried out first as a group analysis. 35 participants' writings were analysed by the researcher manually and automatically with an online corpus tool. Then, a native and non-native comparison analysis was conducted to see the difference between Turkish and native English language users. Finally, individual analyses were carried out to understand the use and effects of hedges in the writings of students. The results are discussed within the scope of the research questions in the upcoming section of this title.

Regarding the first research question, Turkish EFL students used all the hedge types except noun phrases in their argumentative essays. The most frequently used hedge type was modal auxiliaries in the learner corpus. This finding was consistent with Akbaş's (2014) and Demir's (2018) studies. *Should* was the most used hedge in the overall analysis of the 9 essays with a total frequency of 868. *May* and *would* follow the list with frequencies of 264 and 198 respectively. The students used mostly adverbs as hedges after modal auxiliaries, 621 times in their essays. The top 3 adverbs used in the essays were *about* with a frequency of 141 times, *almost* with a frequency of 61, and *maybe* with a frequency of 54 times. Verbs were the third most used hedges in the essays with a total frequency of 384. *Feel* was the verb that was used the most as a hedge in the essays with a frequency of 144. *Claim* and *claims* follow *feel* with the frequencies of 28 and 21 respectively. Only 2 of the adjectives were used as hedges 67 times in the essays. *Possible* and *uncertain* with the frequencies of 59 and 8 respectively. Adverbial phrases as hedges were used 80 times in the essays. *In my opinion* was the most frequently used adverbial phrase in the essays with a frequency of 56. *In general* and *from my perspective* hedges follow with frequencies of 13 and 7 respectively. Overall, the results of the frequent use of hedges were in line with the studies conducted in the Turkish context (Fidan, 2002; Can, 2006; Bayyurt, 2010). However, no use of noun phrases in the argumentative writings of Turkish EFL writers is an outcome should be noted for its significance. Further analysis regarding the disuse of noun phrases as hedges in academic writing.

Regarding the second research question, at the beginning of the term in Essay 1 adverbs, verbs, modal auxiliaries and one adjective were used by at least one student in the group. None of the adverbial phrases were used in the first essay. Since on the weekly further training table, the subject of the training was an introduction to the metadiscourse markers in general, the frequency of the hedges was lower than the upcoming essays. Adverbs were used 62 times, verbs were used 29 times, adjectives twice, and modal auxiliaries were used 65 times as hedges in the first essay. *Should*, *would*, and *may* were the most frequently used hedge in Essay 1 as the authors try to down-tone their statements. *Feel* was the third most used hedge in the essay following *should* and *would*, indicating the writers' language use is more tentative. *Almost* was the fifth most used hedge as an adverb in

Essay 1, to indicate the balance between the detachment and commitment of the author from their ideas. In Essay 2, with previous feedback received from the course instructor, students are expected to get familiar with metadiscourse markers. Therefore, development in the use of MDMs is expected. When compared to the first essay, students' use of MDMs increased in every hedge type except verbs, noun phrases, and adverbs. The students also had a change in words used as adverbs in their second essay. For instance, while the students used the adverb generally in essay 1, they did not use it at all in the second essay which might be related to the topics of the essays. Similar to Essay 1, modal auxiliaries are the most frequently used hedges in their writings. In Essay 2 *should* was used 127 times, which is one of the highest frequencies over all essays. For Essay 3, students received more instruction on MDMs and were told about the criteria for assignments. However, students' use of hedges decreased in the third essay. 4 of the modal auxiliaries were on the top 5 hedges used in Essay 3 which might be related to the essay topic. In Essay 4, students are expected to include more MDMs because they were instructed with specific academic words which would indicate their authorial stance. Consequently, students started to use more hedges in their argumentative writings. In essay 5, the use of adverbs, verbs, adjectives, and adverbial phrases as hedges increased. On the contrary, the number of modal auxiliaries as hedges decreased. In Period 6, hedge-focused lesson plans were introduced. Until the last essay, explicit hedge teaching and feedback were exposed to the EFL learners. In Essay 6, while the number of adverbial phrases and adverbs as hedges decreases, modal auxiliaries, adjectives, and verbs as hedges increase. In Essay 7, except for the number of modal auxiliaries and noun phrases, every type of hedge use was increased. In essay 8, adverbial phrases, adjectives and verbs were used less as hedges. On the other hand, modal auxiliaries and adverbs were used more as hedges in the essay. Lastly, in Essay 9, on the contrary to Essay 8 modal auxiliaries and adverbs as hedges were used less than adverbial phrases, adjectives, and verbs. The results of the second research question regarding the most frequently used hedge type in the Turkish corpus being modal auxiliaries were in line with other studies conducted in the same context, i.e., Türkiye (Doyuran, 2009; Algı, 2012; Kan, 2016; Hatipoğlu & Algı, 2018). Moreover, despite the fact that hedges are an important part of academic writing, the frequent use of hedges in argumentative writings implicates the detachment of the author from the opinions of discussed topics. The detachment could be related factors such as author's experience, cultural background or language level. However, correct use or misuse of hedges in academic writings is out of scope of the present study. Further analysis could be carried out to determine the proper use of hedges in academic writing.

Regarding the third research question, the students received higher scores at the end of the year than at the beginning of the year as a group. However, there were some exceptions in the group as the contrary situation. Furthermore, our hypothesis at the beginning of the study was "If the linguistic awareness of the EFL learners regarding the use of hedges is increased via explicit teaching and feedback from their previous language instruction onward, this will be a positive contributing factor to their language development". The discussions presented so far in the study partially confirm this

hypothesis. The more explicit teaching students received, the more hedges they used in their writings. Additionally, they also benefitted from the development by receiving higher scores in their evaluation. As Kim and Lin (2015) state, hedges can be introduced to the L2 learners first so that the pragmatic awareness required for the use of hedges can be achieved. Moreover, the positive relation between the use of metadiscourse markers and academic success was in line with Erarslan's (2021) study in the Turkish context. Similarly, Tavakoli et al. (2010) and Cristina and Martinez (2004) also presented complimentary results to the current study regarding student scores.

Regarding the fourth research question, the frequencies and types of hedges used in both corpora showed similarities and differences. For example, in both corpora the writers used modal auxiliaries the most as hedges in their argumentative essays. Same results were obtained in earlier studies (Bayyurt, 2010; Li & Wharton, 2012; Lee & Deakin, 2019). However, native writers used more modal auxiliaries than the non-native writers. While *would* was the most frequently used hedge in native writers' essays, *should* was the most frequently used hedge in the non-native corpus. *Should* was significantly overused in the Turkish corpus. *May*, *would*, and *could* were the most frequently used common modal auxiliaries in both corpora with underuse in the non-native corpus. Moreover, in both corpora following the modal auxiliaries, adverbs were the second most frequently used hedge type in the writings. Adverbs were used 3 times more in the native corpus. *Rather* was the most frequently used adverb as hedges in both corpora and it was underused in the non-native corpus. Although verbs were the most frequently used third hedge type in both corpora, *feel* was the third hedge in the most frequently used common hedges list (see Table 20). Similar to the other hedges, it was underused in the non-native corpus by Turkish novice writers. The differences between the 2 corpora were that adjectives and noun phrases as hedges were used more in native corpus. On the contrary, adverbial phrases were used more in non-native corpus as hedges. Reflecting the overall results of the present analysis, the notion of using less various metadiscourse markers in second language writing were complimentary to the earlier studies in the literature in the same Turkish context (Algı, 2012; Uluçay, 2014; Yüksel & Kavanoz, 2018; Beyazyıldırım, 2022). Moreover, authorial stance of Turkish EFL writers could be interpreted as hesitant and self-conscious considering the frequent yet somewhat various use of hedges in their argumentative writings.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this thesis, the use of hedging and authorial stance in non-native academic writing was investigated longitudinally. Additionally, a comparison of hedge use between a native corpus and longitudinal learner corpus was presented. The longitudinal learner corpus was collected on the 2018-2019 academic year fall term, from the freshmen year Turkish EFL learners' argumentative essays. The students received explicit teaching regarding metadiscourse markers usage in academic writing. The lesson plans focused on hedge use mostly towards the end of the term. 9 essays were collected from the students throughout the term. The students received feedback for each essay and got graded for 3 of them focusing on their use of hedges. The researcher examined all the essays by using Ken Hyland's (2005) Taxonomy of Hedges. The data was investigated both manually and automatically via online corpus tools Sketch Engine and #LancsBox. A group and individual analysis were carried out. Moreover, a native and non-native comparison was made to see if there was a similarity in the use of hedges between the Turkish EFL learners and American and British university students.

The thesis answered four questions regarding the use of hedges in the Turkish context. First, the students' use of hedges was analyzed focusing on their frequencies and types in the Turkish corpus. The results indicated that native writers used every hedge type except noun phrases in their writings. They used modal auxiliaries as hedges the most in their writings. Respectively, adverbs, verbs, adjectives, and adverbial phrases were used the most as hedges in the non-native corpus. Noun phrases were never used in the corpus as hedges. *Should, may, would, feel, about, could, rather, almost, and mostly* were the top 10 hedges used in the non-native corpus. Regarding the change of hedge use between the essays, most of the weeks, students used more and more hedges than the previous essays which might be related to the fact that they became aware of their positions in writing, or the topics discussed required more hedge use. Similar increase in the use of adverbs and verbs as hedges were observed during the academic year. However, a drastic decrease in the use of adjectives and adverbial phrases were observed during the Essay 4 which might be related to the topic discussed in the essay. The increase of hedge use continued the rest of the essays. It can be concluded that explicit teaching in fact provided them with language awareness which resulted in language development. Language development of a writer presents itself on the stance they obtain while expressing their opinions to an audience. In this regard, Turkish EFL students presented hesitant and rather self-conscious positions in their argumentations by using hedges frequently in their writings. When this language developments reflects on the students' academic scores, it is seen that the use of metadiscourse markers had mostly positive affect on the student success in the field of academic writing. Finally, native and non-native writers showed similarities and differences in

argumentative writing. While both groups used modal auxiliaries the most as hedges in their writings, they used noun phrases the least in both corpora. Moreover, every hedge type was used more in the native corpus except the adverbial phrases. Commonly and the most frequently used hedges in both corpora showed significant underuse in the non-native corpus except the hedge *should*. The differences might stem from the fact that in second language writing, it is expected to see distance between the author and their expressions because of self-consciousness. Regardless, the use of hedges in argumentative writings of native and non-native corpora showed significant similarities rather than differences.

To sum up, Turkish EFL students used hedges in their argumentative writings frequently in various types which contributed to their authorial presence. The language development was also seen on the academic success of the students. Therefore, the hypothesis of the study “If the linguistic awareness of the EFL learners regarding the use of hedges is increased via explicit teaching and feedback from their previous language instruction onward, this will be a positive contributing factor to their language development” was complimentary to the literature.

Limitations of the Study

Hedges as metadiscourse markers are not definite wordlists created by certain linguists. The development of languages reflects on those lists; therefore, this study is limited to certain words considered as hedges in the field. Additionally, finding quantitative data and analysing the data obtained is a difficult process as there are many words to examine in each of the essay groups. The data tools used in this study showed inconsistencies which invoked a manual check of the researcher.

Implications

The findings of the study provide implications regarding language use in academic writing. Since the study was conducted with a learner corpus, the importance of gathering data from the participants could be crucial to customising a language syllabus. Moreover, the outcomes of this thesis can be used to redesign language classrooms in the Turkish EFL context.

Further Suggestions

This thesis solemnly focused on the use of hedges in tertiary-level EFL learners’ argumentative essays with a limited number of participants. For further research, the participants and analysis of those participants might expand. Answering questions as to why participants mostly rely on specific hedges could be examined via surveys or interviews. Moreover, not only hedges but also other metadiscourse markers could be examined to create effective feedback sessions and lesson plans. Outcomes from such studies can be used to develop language teaching materials and help the students

improve their understanding of language use. Gender related analysis could be carried out based on the evidence gathered from similar studies.



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APPENDIXES

Appendix 1: Rubric Used to Grade Student Essays

	SCORE	LEVEL	CRITERIA	COMMENTS
CONTENT		30-27	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: knowledgeable • substantive • thorough development of thesis • relevant to assigned topic GOOD TO AVERAGE: some knowledge of subject • adequate range • limited development of thesis • mostly relevant to topic, but lacks detail FAIR TO POOR: limited knowledge of subject • little substance • inadequate development of topic VERY POOR: does not show knowledge of subject • non-substantive • not pertinent • OR not enough to evaluate	
		26-22		
		21-17		
		16-13		
ORGANIZATION		20-18	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: fluent expression • ideas clearly stated/ supported • succinct • well-organized • logical sequencing • cohesive GOOD TO AVERAGE: somewhat choppy • loosely organized but main ideas stand out • limited support • logical but incomplete sequencing FAIR TO POOR: non-fluent • ideas confused or disconnected • lacks logical sequencing and development VERY POOR: does not communicate • no organization • OR not enough to evaluate	
		17-14		
		13-10		
		9-7		
VOCABULARY		20-18	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: sophisticated range • effective word/idiom choice and usage • word form mastery • appropriate register GOOD TO AVERAGE: adequate range • occasional errors of word/idiom form, choice, usage but meaning not obscured FAIR TO POOR: limited range • frequent errors of word/idiom form, choice, usage • meaning confused or obscured VERY POOR: essentially translation • little knowledge of English vocabulary, idioms, word form • OR not enough to evaluate	
		17-14		
		13-10		
		9-7		
LANGUAGE USE		25-22	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: effective complex constructions • few errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions GOOD TO AVERAGE: effective but simple constructions • minor problems in complex constructions • several errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions but meaning seldom obscured FAIR TO POOR: major problems in simple/complex constructions • frequent errors of negation, agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions and/or fragments, run-ons, deletions • meaning confused or obscured VERY POOR: virtually no mastery of sentence construction rules • dominated by errors • does not communicate • OR not enough to evaluate	
		21-18		
		17-11		
		10-5		
MECHANICS		5	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: demonstrates mastery of conventions • few errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing GOOD TO AVERAGE: occasional errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing but meaning not obscured FAIR TO POOR: frequent errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing • poor handwriting • meaning confused or obscured VERY POOR: no mastery of conventions • dominated by errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing • handwriting illegible • OR not enough to evaluate	
		4		
		3		
		2		

Source: Brooks, G. (2013). Assessment and academic writing: A look at the use of rubrics in the second language writing classroom. *Kwansei Gakuin University Humanities Review*, (17), 227-240.

CURRICULUM VITAE

She graduated from Kanuni Anatolian High School in 2014. She obtained her bachelor's degree from the Department of English Language and Literature, at Karadeniz Technical University. She started her master's degree in the Applied Linguistics program at Karadeniz Technical University.

GÜRSOY is engaged and speaks English.

