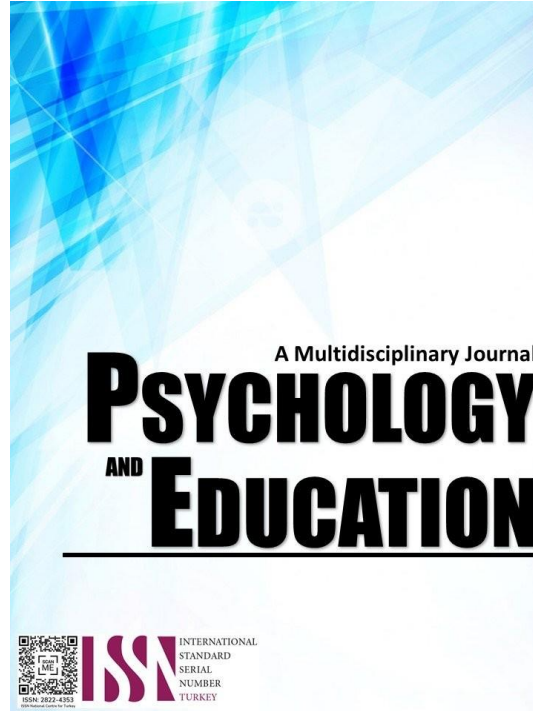


# FORMS AND FUNCTIONS OF HEDGES IN SCHOOL PAPER ARTICLES



**PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL**

Volume: 18

Issue 10

Pages: 1020-1029

Document ID: 2024PEMJ1732

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.10980537

Manuscript Accepted: 03-14-2024

## Forms and Functions of Hedges in School Paper Articles

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### Abstract

This study sought to investigate the use of hedging in school paper articles written by elementary pupils. It compared the form and functions of hedging in articles from public and private schools and formulated an action program to promote the correct usage of hedging devices. The methodology involved a descriptive-quantitative approach through the content analysis of 24 school paper articles. The results showed that writers from both school types employ hedging forms to cautiously present facts, demonstrate confidence in their propositions, and establish solidarity with readers. Furthermore, the study suggests that writers in public and private schools utilize hedging functions to fulfill the distinct purposes of journalistic genres, preferring factual presentation over subjective viewpoints. Despite differences in specific hedging devices, no significant variation was found between public and private schools regarding forms and functions across the editorial, feature, news, and sports articles. The analysis reveals a commonality in using hedging devices across public and private schools, indicating a shared approach to journalistic writing among student writers. It was recommended that Namsaraev's (1997), Vass' (2004), Cabanes' (2007), and Martin-Martin's (2008) models on hedging devices, hedging strategies, and functions of hedges be used to provide a comprehensive understanding of hedging as a multi-faceted phenomenon in the journalistic genre. Institutions are encouraged to integrate the concept of hedges into their communication arts curriculum, employing innovative teaching methods to develop students' proficiency in using hedges effectively. Moreover, future research endeavors could focus on replicating this study, particularly investigating the impact of hedges on truth attribution within articles.

**Keywords:** *hedging, content analysis, school paper articles, elementary pupils, journalism*

### Introduction

Staying informed across various aspects of life is crucial in a rapidly changing world. Though numerous media options exist, newspapers remain popular due to their comprehensive coverage and depth of information. Their role in educating, informing, and entertaining readers on topics like politics, the economy, and sports makes them a valuable resource for many.

In schools, student-written newspapers play a significant role in engaging and informing the school community. Through campus journalism, students are empowered to express their views and commentaries on issues of interest. They undergo training to collect, organize, and present news, as well as to write headlines, editorials, columns, features, sports, and literary articles.

Campus newspapers, much like their professional counterparts, exhibit a diverse range of materials. Buitkiene (2008) emphasizes newspapers as distinct discourses with unique rhythms, tones, words, and phrases. Galperin (1977), as cited in a web article, defines newspapers as complex systems comprising interconnected lexical, phraseological, and grammatical components, perceived by the community as a cohesive linguistic entity. The distribution and utilization of these linguistic resources vary across different genres of newspaper articles.

Moreover, student journalists in educational institutions serve not only as informers and entertainers, but also as articulators of issues and identifiers of problems. They may even offer solutions, contributing actively to societal discourse (Sampungan & Sampungan, 2013). To achieve these goals, various interactional elements, including hedging devices, are employed. These devices help writers mitigate commitment to their propositions, avoiding errors and demonstrating reserve or uncertainty when necessary.

Academic and journalistic writing involves the creation of novel insights or the dissemination of knowledge to meet societal needs (Aquino, 2014). Establishing recognizable patterns and adhering to conventions within specific discourse communities are crucial aspects of this process. Rhetoric plays a significant role in shaping knowledge within these domains by persuading audiences and facilitating dialogue. Additionally, interactional elements like hedges are instrumental in achieving these goals (Vasquez & Giner, 2008). Overall, these elements collectively contribute to the coherence and effectiveness of written communication in academic and journalistic contexts.

While the majority of studies have focused on the hedging phenomenon in the field of research and scientific articles, its exploration in different journalistic genres receives too little attention. Therefore, investigating how hedging functions in school paper articles is imperative. Additionally, as a school paper adviser, gaining knowledge on how these hedging devices can be appropriately used as a strategy for writing school paper articles is crucial. This understanding may help recommend proposed action programs that would benefit both school paper advisers and student journalists. Furthermore, as a future school administrator—since every school administrator is a consultant of every school publication—gaining knowledge on hedges may help avoid the possibility of damages for defamation and misrepresentation of facts. Moreover, the completion of this study may serve as the researcher's contribution to the development of linguistic analysis in school paper articles.

## Research Questions

This study sought to investigate the utilization of hedges in school paper articles written by elementary pupils published in their school publication issue. Specifically, the study aimed to address the following questions:

1. What is the frequency hedging forms utilized in school paper articles, categorized by;
  - 1.1 editorials
  - 1.2 news
  - 1.3 features and
  - 1.4 sports?
2. What functions are associated with the identified hedging devices used within the aforementioned school paper articles?
3. Is there a significant difference in the use of hedging devices between school types in terms of the forms and functions of hedges?
4. What action program may be implemented to address the correct use of hedging devices in writing school paper articles?

## Methodology

### Research Design

The study utilized the descriptive-quantitative method via content analysis of the corpora. The selected school paper articles were read and analyzed thoroughly to determine the forms and functions of hedge words and discuss their implications in these articles.

### Participants

The researcher employed a purposive sampling method to select 24 school paper articles, ensuring representation from different journalistic genres. From each genre – editorial, feature, news, and sports – six articles were chosen for analysis. To ensure diversity in the sample, the researcher selected the top three performing schools in both public and private elementary schools within the Division of Tagbilaran City. The criterion for selection was the schools' performance during the City Schools Division Press Conference 2015. This criterion aimed to include schools with demonstrated excellence in campus journalism.

In the selection of the school paper articles within each journalistic genre, the researcher was guided by several criteria. The first guideline was the length of the articles. It was assumed that longer articles were more likely to contain instances of the use of hedge words. The second guideline was the date of publication. All articles under analysis were published in the same school year, S.Y. 2014-2015 were chosen to minimize the influence of temporal factors on writing style. Lastly, all articles were written by elementary-level learners.

### Instruments

The researcher employed a two-fold approach to analyze the hedging devices present in the school paper articles. Firstly, Salager-Meyer's taxonomy of hedging devices was utilized to systematically classify the various forms of hedging devices found across the four journalistic genres. This taxonomy categorizes hedge words into seven types, encompassing modal auxiliary verbs, modal lexical verbs, adjectival, adverbial, and nominal modal phrases, approximators of degree, quantity, frequency, and time, introductory phrases, if clauses, and compound hedges (Salager-Mayer, 1997). By applying this taxonomy, the researcher identified the specific linguistic forms of hedging utilized within the articles, providing a comprehensive understanding of how the writers expressed uncertainty and cautiousness.

Secondly, the researcher employed Hyland's Polypragmatic Model of Hedges to find out the functions carried out by the recognized hedging devices across the four journalistic sections. Hyland's pragmatic framework categorizes hedges into two types: content and reader, each serving distinct purposes within the discourse. Content-oriented hedges are classified into accuracy and writer-oriented hedges. Accuracy-oriented hedges function to attenuate the relationship between propositional content and reality, with attribute and reliability hedges offering nuanced ways to specify the approximation of results and indicate the writer's confidence in the truth value of the proposition, respectively. Conversely, Writer-oriented hedges serve to safeguard the writer's reputation and minimize the risk of potential harm resulting from definitive assertions, thus allowing the writer to evade personal responsibility for statements. In contrast, reader-oriented hedges invite reader involvement and personalize the information presented, fostering engagement with the proposition (Hyland, 1998).

Hyland's division of hedges suggests that hedging strategies are deployed for two primary reasons: to enhance propositional accuracy and to safeguard the writer's self-interests. By employing this model, the researcher was able to discern not only the linguistic forms of hedging utilized within the articles but also the underlying communicative functions they served. This comprehensive analysis sheds light on the nuanced ways in which writers navigate uncertainty and manage their discourse, providing valuable insights into the rhetorical strategies employed in campus journalistic writing.

## Procedure

The researcher obtained approval from the Schools Division Superintendent of the Division City Schools of Tagbilaran City to conduct the study. The main source of school paper articles was collected from top-performing public and private elementary school publications.

From the collected school publications, 24 articles were selected, with 6 articles representing each of the four journalistic genres (editorial, feature, news, and sports). These articles underwent thorough content analysis by the researcher to identify instances of hedging devices.

The identified hedging items were categorized based on their forms using Salager-Meyer's Taxonomy of Hedges. Following this classification, the researcher performed a quantitative analysis to determine the prevalence of these hedging devices across the various journalistic genres. Additionally, the hedging items were further analyzed in terms of the functions they served, based on Hyland's Polypragmatic Model of Hedges, which considers the various purposes that hedging devices can fulfill in discourse.

To ensure the accuracy of the analysis, the researcher sought the assistance of an English Professor with expertise in hedges to analyze of the content. Both the researcher and the rater discussed the mechanics to establish a common understanding and interpretation of the data.

The raw data obtained from the content analysis underwent statistical analysis. The percentage formula was used to determine the distribution of hedging forms and functions across the different journalistic articles. Additionally, the t-test on the mean difference was employed to determine the significant difference in the use of hedging devices between school types regarding the forms and functions of hedges.

## Ethical Consideration

The researcher meticulously followed all research protocols concerning ethics, including principles such as voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, and legal compliance. By prioritizing participants' autonomy and well-being, maintaining data confidentiality, and adhering to relevant legal frameworks, the researcher upheld the highest standards of ethical conduct throughout the study. This commitment to ethical principles not only ensures the integrity of the research process but also fosters trust and respect within the academic community.

## Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings of the study's research questions, organized according to the specific questions posed in the problem statements.

### The Use of Hedging Devices in School Paper Articles

Table 1. *Use of Hedging Devices in School Paper Articles*

<i>School Paper Articles</i>	<i>Public Schools</i>		<i>Private Schools</i>	
	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Editorial	24	35.29	18	23.38
Feature	39	57.35	55	71.43
News	2	2.94	4	5.19
Sports	3	4.41	0	0
TOTAL	68	100	77	100

Table 1 shows the use of hedging devices in public and private school paper articles. Public schools had 68 hedging devices, with 39 (57.35%) found in feature articles, followed by editorials (24, 35.29%), news (2, 2.94%), and sports (3, 4.41%). Private schools showed similar trends, with 77 hedging devices: 55 (71.43%) in features, 18 (23.38%) in editorials, and 4 (5.19%) in news. No hedging devices were found in private school sports articles.

Feature articles emerged as prominent in the usage of hedging devices compared to other article types. This trend likely mirrors the nature of feature articles, which may present factual information yet permit subjective viewpoints and opinions. In contrast, editorials are recognized for their subjective and persuasive writing style (Buitkiene, 2008). Conversely, news and sports stories are characterized by their objective reporting of facts, leading to a minimal use of hedging devices. It is worth noting that sports articles were the least prevalent, with some issues lacking any coverage of sports events or related stories. Aquino's (2014) study yielded similar findings, observing higher occurrences of hedging in feature and editorial articles compared to news and sports articles. This reinforces the notion that hedging is more common in writing that allows for subjective viewpoints and less prevalent in strictly factual writing.

### Public Schools' Use of Hedging Forms in School Paper Articles

Table 2 displays the frequency of hedging forms utilized in public school articles across different categories: editorial, feature, news, and sports. Feature articles emerged as the category employing the most hedging forms, with 34 instances (50%), primarily utilizing



approximators of degree, quantity, frequency, and time. Conversely, news articles exhibited minimal usage, with no instances of several hedging forms, including modal auxiliary verbs, adjectival, adverbial, or nominal modal phrases, introductory phrases, if-clauses, or compound hedges. Similarly, sports articles demonstrated minimal utilization of hedging devices, lacking several forms such as modal lexical verbs, adjectival, adverbial, nominal modal phrases, introductory phrases, and compound hedges. Editorial articles fell in the middle regarding hedging frequency, although they lacked adjectival, adverbial, and nominal modal phrases, as well as compound hedges.

Table 2. *Public Schools' Use of Hedging Forms in School Paper Articles*

Hedging Forms	Editorial		Feature		News		Sports		N	%
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Modal Auxiliary Verbs	14	20.59	2	2.94	0	0	1	1.47	17	25.00
Modal Lexical Verbs	1	1.47	1	1.47	1	1.47	0	0	3	4.41
Adjectival, Adverbial and Nominal modal Phrases	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Approximators of Degree, Quantity, Frequency and Time	6	8.82	34	50.00	1	1.47	1	1.47	42	61.76
Introductory Phrases	2	2.94	2	2.94	0	0	0	0	4	5.88
If Clauses	1	1.47	0	0	0	0	1	1.47	2	2.94
Compound Hedges	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>35.29</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>57.35</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2.94</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4.41</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>100</b>

From another perspective, approximators of degree, quantity, frequency, and time had the highest occurrence at 42 (61.76%), followed by modal auxiliary verbs comprising 17 (25%), introductory phrases with 4 (5.88%), modal lexical verbs with 3 (4.41%), and if-clauses with 2 (2.94%). Notably, no markers of hedging were found in the forms of adjectival, adverbial, or nominal phrases, or compound hedges.

The results indicate that hedging is most frequent in feature articles, primarily utilizing approximators of degree, quantity, frequency, and time. This suggests that public school writers of feature articles employ these hedging forms to convey estimations or vagueness, which aligns with their subjective and less-structured writing style. Conversely, sports and news articles exhibit the least frequent use of hedging devices, supporting the notion that these articles are characterized by purely factual writing. Additionally, modal auxiliary verbs emerge as the most common hedging form in editorial articles, indicating that public school writers of editorials utilize this hedging form to cautiously express degrees of uncertainty, obligation, and possibility while also expressing some opinions.

**Private Schools' Use of Hedging Forms in School Paper Articles**

Table 3. *Private Schools' Use of Hedging Forms in School Paper Articles*

Hedging Forms	Editorial		Feature		News		Sports		N	%
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Modal Auxiliary Verbs	11	14.29	22	28.57	2	2.60	0	0	35	45.45
Modal Lexical Verbs	1	1.30	3	3.90	0	0	0	0	4	5.19
Adjectival, adverbial and Nominal modal Phrases	0	0	6	7.79	0	0	0	0	6	7.79
Approximators of Degree, Quantity, Frequency and Time	3	3.90	20	25.97	2	2.60	0	0	25	32.47
Introductory Phrases	2	2.60	1	1.30	0	0	0	0	3	3.90
If Clauses	1	1.30	1	1.30	0	0	0	0	2	2.60
Compound Hedges	0	0	2	2.60	0	0	0	0	2	2.60
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>23.39</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>71.43</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5.20</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 3 presents the private schools' utilization of hedging forms across editorial, feature, news, and sports articles. Among these, feature articles stood out with 55 instances, representing a significant 71.43% of the total occurrences. This suggests a deliberate choice by private school writers to employ hedging forms, likely to convey varying degrees of certainty or uncertainty within the information presented.

Conversely, fewer hedging devices were observed in news articles, with no representative hedges found in sports articles. Editorial articles, though positioned medially in terms of hedging device occurrence, were characterized by the absence of adjectival, adverbial, and nominal modal phrases, as well as compound hedges.

From another perspective, modal auxiliary verbs emerged as the most prevalent hedging form, constituting 35 or 45.45% of the instances. They were followed by approximators of degree, quantity, frequency, and time at 25 or 32.47%, with adjectival, adverbial, and nominal modal phrases trailing behind at 6 or 7.79%. Modal lexical verbs represented 4 or 5.19% of the instances, while introductory phrases and if-clauses, along with compound hedges, each constituted 3 or 3.90% and 2 or 2.60%, respectively.

The data from Table 3 further revealed that hedging was most frequent in feature articles, primarily employing modal auxiliary verbs. This finding reinforced the trend observed earlier, indicating that hedging is more prevalent in writing that allows subjective viewpoints compared to purely factual writing. Conversely, news and sports articles exhibited minimal to no use of specific hedging forms, supporting the notion that these writing styles prioritize factual accuracy and clarity, minimizing the need for hedging devices.

The hedging forms observed in both public and private school corpora shared some similarities. Both primarily utilized approximators of degree, quantity, frequency, and time, as well as modal auxiliary verbs as dominant hedging forms. Conversely, both school types demonstrated minimal hedging in news and sports articles, indicating an association between minimal hedging and factual writing styles. However, it can be inferred that feature articles in private schools utilized a wider variety of hedging forms compared to public schools. The data in Table 3 indicated that private school feature articles employed adjectival, adverbial, nominal modal phrases, if clauses, and compound hedges, which were absent in public school articles.

To show how the different hedging forms were used to mitigate statements, express uncertainty or certainty, express deference, and so on, consider the following text samples taken from the articles under study:

1. We *may* not be able to keep in touch for a time, but let's not forget that technology has made the world smaller and closer so our friends who *may be* far away are just a text or a chat away.

-Graduation Inspirations (Editorial)

2. Families *can* spend some quality time with nature. Kids will surely love the huge swimming pool that has 2 kiddie slides.

-Best Summer Destination (Feature)

3. In her speech, she expressed how grateful she was to all her second parents for all the sacrifices the teachers had made for us pupils, so that we *may* learn not just the lessons inside the four walls of the classroom but the wisdom which *may* help us outside school.

-Two Celebrations in One (News)

4. The winners of CVIRAA 2015 *will* represent the region in the "2015 Palarong Pambansa" in Tagum City, Davao del Norte this coming May 9, 2015.

-Zone Meet, City Meet, CVIRAA 2015 (Sports)

In the provided text samples taken from the articles under study, various hedging forms were utilized to mitigate statements, express uncertainty or certainty, and convey deference. For instance, in the editorial titled 'Graduation Inspirations,' the writer employed modal auxiliary verbs ('may' and 'may') to express uncertainty and doubt about the truth value of the propositions presented. Similarly, in the feature article 'Best Summer Destination,' the use of 'can' attenuated the force of the statement, indicating a level of uncertainty. Conversely, in the news article 'Two Celebrations in One,' the modal auxiliary verb 'may' was used to suggest possibility without casting doubt on the truthfulness of the statement.

Furthermore, in the sports article 'Zone Meet, City Meet, CVIRAA 2015,' the modal auxiliary verb 'will' was employed to express the writer's certainty regarding the accuracy of the statement regarding the winners representing the region in the upcoming event. This use of 'will' allowed the writer to assert the statement with confidence, contrasting with the more tentative tone conveyed by 'may' and 'can' in the previous examples.

5. This would mean that there would be *at least* one year of kindergarten education, six years of elementary, and six years of secondary education, in that sequence.

- Basic Education Department (Editorial)

6. Generation Z goes by *many* nicknames. Here we are just *a few*: The Silent Generations, The Internet Generation, The iGeneration, Generation Now, The Google Generation.

- Generation Z (Feature)

7. A cake for the teachers and *some* sumptuous foods were served.

- Teacher's Day Celebration 2014 (News)

8. Even if *some* did not bring home the bacon, still they were able to prove what the true spirit of an athlete and they're proud of representing our division.

-Zone Meet, City Meet, CVIRAA 2015 (Sports)

In the text samples provided, hedge words such as 'at least,' 'many,' 'a few,' and 'some' were employed as approximators. For instance, in sentence 5, the writer used 'at least' to indicate a minimum requirement without definitively stating the exact duration. Similarly, the hedge words 'many' and 'a few' in sentence 6 suggested that the list presented was not exhaustive. In sentences 7 and 8, the hedge words 'some' and 'some' conveyed a vague quantity without specifying exact numbers and acknowledged variability in performance without providing precise details, respectively.

Through the use of these hedge words, the writers demonstrated uncertainty about their claims and were careful not to convey rigid descriptions, thus making their claims more acceptable to the reader.

9. We *all know* that the family is the basic political unit of society.

- The Children, The Teachers, and The Media (Editorial)

10. They see themselves as the solution to these problems and, as a result, are more likely to pursue careers they *think* will help society.

- Generation Z (Feature)

11. Booy Elementary School strongly *believes* that healthy children perform better both in academic and extra-curricular activities in school.

- BES Observes Nutrition Month (News)

The modal lexical verbs in sentences 9 to 11 serve as hedging strategies by modifying the force of the utterance. In sentence 9, the hedge word "we all know" suggests that the statement is a widely accepted belief rather than an indisputable fact. The modal lexical verb "know" softens the assertion by indicating that it is commonly recognized rather than presented as an absolute truth. In sentence 10, "think" indicates a level of uncertainty or subjectivity in the statement. Hence, it suggests that the individuals' decision to pursue certain careers is based on their perception or belief about what will benefit society. This hedge softens the assertion by presenting it as influenced by subjective opinions rather than as an absolute truth. In sentence 11, the modal lexical verb "believes" indicates a strong conviction or opinion rather than presenting the statement as an indisputable fact. It softens the assertion by suggesting confidence in the belief but acknowledging that it is a subjective viewpoint rather than an objective truth. These hedges function as hedges by softening the assertions and indicating a level of uncertainty, subjectivity, or conviction in the statements presented.

When it comes to adjectival, adverbial, and nominal modal phrases, adverbial modal phrases are found in feature articles. To wit:

12. They're technologically savvy and just as *likely* out to spend their writing and programming video games as simply playing them.

13. They see themselves as the solution to these problems and, as a result, are *more likely* to pursue careers they think will help society.

The use of "just as likely" suggests that there is a similar likelihood of the individuals engaging in both activities (writing and programming video games) rather than stating it as a definite fact. The use of "more likely" suggests that there is a higher probability of the individuals pursuing careers they believe will benefit society, but it does not assert it as a definite outcome.

The examples provided in the use of likely and more likely in sentences 12 and 13 introduce a level of uncertainty or probability, softening the assertions and indicating that the described actions or outcomes are not presented as absolute truths but rather as possibilities or tendencies based on the individuals' perceptions or behaviors.

Articles should convey conviction while also engaging readers through alignment with the writer's reasoning. Journalists, recognizing the uncertainty inherent in shared assumptions, express their stance cautiously using hedging language. Additionally, they strive for objectivity and accuracy, frequently citing sources to prevent misinterpretation and safeguard against potential negative judgment by readers. These typical examples from my linguistics corpus give some flavor of these:

14. *According to Maria Montessori*, the children's mind is very absorbent.

- The Children, The Teachers, and The Media (Editorial)

15. *But if* this makes Gen Z seem like an overstimulated, impatient lot, *then* consider for a second the challenges they recognize in their future.

- Generation Z (Feature)

16. While they *may seem* like self-centered prima donnas now, there is a reason to believe that today's kids will have both the intelligence and sense of social responsibility to contribute in ways that will outlast their ridiculous haircuts.

- Generation Z (Feature)

The phrase "According to Maria Montessori" serves as a hedge by attributing the statement to a specific source, thereby aligning with the writer's reasoning and journalistic practice. It indicates that the assertion is based on Maria Montessori's perspective rather than presented as an absolute truth, demonstrating caution in expressing the stance. Also, the conditional clause "if this makes" introduces uncertainty and encourages readers to consider alternative perspectives, which aligns with the idea of journalists cautiously expressing their stance using hedging language. It acknowledges that the characterization of Gen Z may not be definitive and invites readers to engage with different viewpoints. Moreover, the use of "may seem" acknowledges the possibility of alternative interpretations or perspectives. This hedge allows for a more nuanced understanding of the subject's behavior or characteristics.

### Public and Private Schools' Use of Hedging Functions in School Paper Articles

Table 4 reveals the public and private schools' use of hedging functions in school paper articles. The data reveals that accuracy-oriented hedges are more frequently employed by both public and private schools, as opposed to writer-oriented hedges. Notably, attribute hedges emerge as a prominent feature in content-oriented hedging functions, constituting 64.71% in public schools and 35.06% in private schools, indicating a substantial difference between the two. The large disparity in the use of attribute hedges between school types may suggest a complex strategy for how writers approach hedging within content-oriented functions. The disparity may reflect differing writing styles and educational philosophies between the two school types.

Moreover, the presence of reliability hedges in accuracy-oriented contexts, especially in public schools (22.06%), suggests a conscious effort to emphasize the dependability of information. This could be attributed to a commitment to journalistic standards and a desire to build trust with the readership.

Table 4. *Public and Private Schools' Use of Hedging Functions in School Paper Articles*

Hedging Forms	School Types	Editorial		Feature		News		Sports		N	%
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
1. Content – Oriented	Public	21	30.88	37	54.41	1	1.47	2	2.94	61	89.71
	Private	15	19.48	51	66.23	3	3.90	0	0	69	89.61
1.1. Accuracy- Oriented	Public	20	29.41	36	52.94	1	1.47	2	2.94	59	86.76
	Private	14	18.18	49	63.63	3	3.90	0	0	66	85.71
1.1.1. Attribute	Public	8	11.76	34	50.00	1	1.47	1	1.47	44	64.71
	Private	4	5.19	21	27.27	2	2.60	0	0	27	35.06
1.1.2. Reliability	Public	12	17.65	2	2.94	0	0	1	1.47	15	22.06
	Private	10	12.99	28	36.36	1	1.30	0	0	39	50.65
1.2. Writer- Oriented	Public	1	1.47	1	1.47	0	0	0	0	2	2.94
	Private	1	1.30	2	2.60	0	0	0	0	3	3.90
2. Reader – Oriented	Public	3	4.41	2	2.94	1	1.47	1	1.47	7	10.29
	Private	3	3.90	4	5.19	1	1.30	0	0	8	10.39
TOTAL	Public	24	35.29	39	57.35	2	2.94	3	4.41	68	100
	Private	18	23.38	55	71.43	4	5.19	0	0	77	100

In terms of reader-oriented hedging functions, the consistent allocation of approximately 10% of total hedges in both public and private schools indicate a balanced approach to engaging the audience. While this hedging function is more noticeable in opinion articles, its relatively modest proportion suggests a careful calibration between asserting viewpoints and acknowledging potential reader perspectives.

Another noteworthy difference concerns the use of hedging devices for reader-oriented purposes. Said hedging function was only prominent in the corpus of opinion articles, but it amounted to only 4.41 percent (public) and 3.90 percent (private) out of all the hedges used. This indicates a balanced approach to engaging the readers that is to carefully assert viewpoints and acknowledge reader perspectives.

According to Hyland's Polypragmatic model, hedges serve two primary functions: content-oriented and reader-oriented. Reader-oriented hedges primarily focus on the interpersonal interaction between readers and writers. In the present study's corpus, this category of hedges was only observed in opinion articles. Specifically, they constituted approximately 2 percent of all identified hedging devices in the corpus of news and sports articles. This discrepancy can be attributed to genre differences; opinion articles are inherently reader-oriented, as writers seek to engage readers in discussions on various current events and significant issues. The following examples can elucidate this hedging function:

16. This is crucially a big challenge for us because *if* we just let the children do whatever they want without our guidance, they might get lost and wander to the darker side of life.

- The Children, The Teachers, and The Media (Editorial)

17. *For me*, months ending in "ber" are already the beginning of the Christmas season.

- My Christmas Vacation (Feature)

18. *We believe* more in ourselves, by knowing that we can do great things, we can do more.

- Graduation Inspirations (Editorial)

The use of "if," "we believe," and "for me" demonstrates the writer's awareness of alternative perspectives and the subjective nature of their statements, thereby inviting readers to consider different viewpoints and reflect on their own experiences. This approach aligns well with the idea of reader-oriented hedging, where writers aim to engage readers by acknowledging their perspectives and fostering a sense of inclusivity in the discourse.

The prevalent use of content-oriented hedges in both school types, particularly accuracy-oriented hedges, reflects how writers carefully adjust their statements to make sure they accurately represent reality by adding details or qualifiers to their sentences. This helps them convey their message more precisely and consider different ways people might understand what they're saying. The following examples provide compelling evidence of accuracy-oriented hedges:

19. *Most* dental professionals agree that a soft-bristled brush is best for removing plaque and debris from teeth.

This is the Way...(Feature)

20. Some of the children cried because they missed their parents.

St. Joseph Freinademetz's Day (News)

21. *Lots of* activities were done.

Memories of the 2014 BSP Jamborette (Feature)

22. *At times*, they even unconsciously learn different things from their environment.  
- The Children, The Teachers, and The Media (Editorial)

23. We *can't* just let them roam around and bully more people.  
- Say NO to Bullying! (Editorial)

24. Once the caps and gowns are taken off, we *will* be taking on heavier responsibilities, learning new lessons and reaching far more goals.  
- Graduation: An Ending and a Beginning (Editorial)

25. The use of mobile technology makes them more available and being solicited by friends is *more likely* to interest them.  
- Generation Z (Feature)

On the other hand, accuracy-oriented hedges are evident in how the writers qualify their statements, either by defining the extent of approximation to an idealized state (attribute hedges) or by indicating their confidence in the truth value of the proposition (reliability hedges). Examples in sentences 20-22 illustrate attribute hedges, while sentences 23-25 provide typical instances of reliability hedges.

Meanwhile, the following examples demonstrate the use of writer-oriented hedges, viz:

26. *According to the Oral and Dental Health Resource Center*, proper brushing should take at least two minutes.  
- This is the Way...(Feature)

27. To properly brush teeth, it is *recommended* to do short, gentle strokes, paying extra attention to the gum line, hard-to-reach back teeth and areas around fillings, crowns or other restoration.  
- This is the Way...(Feature)

28. Considering the fast pace of technology's innovation, every one of us *tends* to hastily catch up; and monitoring the children might be very difficult for us.  
- The Children, The Teachers, and The Media (Editorial)

The above examples retrieved from the data show that modal lexical verbs (such as recommend and tend) and introductory phrases (such as according to) help the writers to present information without fully committing to its accuracy or validity.

### Comparative Analysis of Hedging Forms in School Paper Articles

Table 5. *Difference Between Public and Private Schools' Use of Hedging Forms in School Paper Articles*

<i>School Types</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Sd</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Critical Value</i>	<i>Computed t-test</i>	<i>Decision</i>
Public	23.07	23.86	7	1.645	0.581	Accept Ho
Private	29.69	18.45	7			

Table 5 presents the difference between public and private schools' use of hedging forms in school paper articles. Based on the results of the collated data, the computed mean of private schools' use of hedging forms is higher than that of public schools by 6.62. Statistically, the result did not show a significant difference. This is proven by the computed value of t, which is lower than the critical value. The standard deviation of private schools' use of hedging forms, which is smaller compared to public schools, shows that both types of schools make use of similar hedging forms when they hedge their propositions.

The findings demonstrate that both school types use similar hedging forms. Writers from both school types express caution in presenting and interpreting facts, in showing confidence and commitment in their proposition, and in marking involvement and solidarity with their readers.

### Comparative Analysis of Hedging Functions in School Paper Articles

Table 6. *Difference Between Public and Private Schools' Use of Hedging Functions in School Paper Articles*

<i>School Types</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Sd</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Critical Value</i>	<i>Computed t-test</i>	<i>Decision</i>
Public	55.15	48.88	2	1.645	0.50	Accept Ho
Private	55.20	48.67	2			

Table 6 shows the difference between public and private schools' use of hedging functions in school paper articles. Based on the results of the gathered data, the computed mean of private schools' use of hedging functions is higher than that of public schools by 0.05. Statistically, the result did not show a significant difference. This is proven by the computed value of t, which is lower than the critical value. The standard deviation of private schools' use of hedging functions, which is smaller compared to the public schools, shows similar use of hedging functions between the two types of schools. The computed value of t suggests accepting the null hypothesis.

This means that writers in public and private schools adopt the same hedging functions to serve or achieve the different purposes of each journalistic genre.

This implies that both public and private schools adhere to the same practical considerations when using hedges. They seem to stick to hard facts and shy away from being subjective. It can be understood that since these writers are still children, one cannot expect them to be assertive of their point of view or opinionated on an issue. The use of hedging devices, whether for mitigation or assertion, is not merely an adherence to arbitrary conventions by writers. Instead, it represents a rational effort to maximize the efficacy of linguistic resources in engaging with readers and garnering agreement with the propositions presented.

## Conclusion

The researcher concludes that writers in both public and private elementary schools use the same patterns of hedging forms and functions. This indicates a common approach to journalistic writing among student writers. This suggests that regardless of the school setting, writers prioritize factual accuracy and cautious representation of information. Across various article types, including feature, editorial, news, and sports articles, hedging devices are consistently utilized to navigate the balance between objective reporting and subjective expression. Particularly in feature and editorial articles, writers demonstrate a deliberate effort to engage readers and establish solidarity through the use of hedging functions. However, these student writers tend to stick to hard facts and shy away from being subjective. It can be understood that since these writers are still children, one cannot expect them to be assertive of their point of view or opinionated on an issue. The use of hedging devices is quite challenging for them.

The findings and conclusions of this study suggest several recommendations, including conducting a parallel study based on larger corpora using Namsaraev's (1997), Vass' (2004), Cabanes' (2007), and Martin-Martin's (2008) models on hedging devices, hedging strategies, and the functions of hedges. This would provide a relatively clear view of hedging as a multi-faceted phenomenon in the journalistic genre and further validate the results obtained in this study. Additionally, incorporating the concept of hedges into the communication arts curriculum could develop students' skills in using hedges in writing. Furthermore, encouraging school paper writers, especially pupil writers, to cover relevant sports events and develop them into sports news articles could enrich their journalistic experience and contribute to the diversity of content in school publications. Lastly, replication of the study focusing on the effect of hedges on the attribution of truth in the articles could provide valuable insights.

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