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Hedges among Sexes: An Analysis of Frequency of Use among Male and Female Interlocutors in a Discourse Event

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Abstract		**Review Article**

The notion that men use hedges to dominate, while women use hedges to confirm their subordination is a cankerworm that is negatively impacting individual user's language domain. This is because the use of hedges among interlocutors in a discursive event is a marker of reverence, humility, respect and honesty. Using a questionnaire administered to male and female participants of five Bible Banquet program and descriptive analysis based on Janet Holmes, (1992) Sociology of Language which focuses on the motivated account of the way language is used in a community, and of the choices people make when they use language, as research frame work, the study surveyed the convention attribute and frequency of the use of hedges among male and female contributors in a radio program. Findings showed frequency of hedges use as; male participants; 47%, 44%, 42%, 46% and 43% respectively, while the female participants used 53%, 56%, 58%, 54 and 57respectively in 5 sessions selected for analysis. Conclusion suggests that female participants employed the use of hedges more than men, this supports the views of Harmant (1976) which claimed that females use more qualifiers and intensifiers than men, while, men used more absolutes. Therefore hedges are paradigmatic marker of reverence, honesty and integrity among interlocutors in a discourse event.
Keywords: Hedges, men language, women language, certainty, convention.

INTRODUCTION

Hedges are linguistic devices that can serve a number of purposes; they can express that a speaker is unsure or uncommitted to what is being said, indicate an unwillingness to give up one's speaking turn or work to soften an utterance so as not to hurt the recipient's feelings. According to Darwin (2017), in the past decades, there existed very clear-cut differences in the way men and women spoke. Women were significantly more likely to use linguistic techniques known as hedging in their linguistic reportage. Hedging devices include fall-rise intonation patterns: phrases such as "I assume "sort of, adverbials such as "maybe" "probably" and "generally"; the modal verbs "may," "might" "would" and "could"; and tag questions such as "isn't it" and "didn't he". These differences often reflected the types of conversations that women and men held. Women usually used language to air their feelings and establish bonds, so it was more important to use devices that lessen the chances of hurting one another's feelings, while men used language primarily to transmit information, meaning that their recipient's feelings did not matter as much. Hence, female languages are generally regarded as being more polite and formal, while men were socially allowed more room to use profanity and non-standard English. Therefore, it is not uncommon to here women being reprimanded with expressions such as; "that utterance is un lady-like" while the same utterance would have been acceptable if used by a male. Nevertheless, men are beginning to be recorded as using more frequency of hedges in their conversations. The differences however are located in the ways men use some hedging devices. Whereas women tend to use the hedging device "you know" as an indicator of politeness, men use it when there is a presumption of shared knowledge between the speaker and listener. It is noticed that men talk much less when engaging in conversations with each other; the emphasis is generally placed on physical activities rather than on verbal communication and when they talk, they use hedges sometimes as devices [words] by speakers usually to soften or explain utterances beforehand and are usually regarded as intentional euphemism. It is an integral part of everyday communication and as a discourse strategy, it is important part of polite conversation, this is because they make utterances less direct. Hedges often occur in the forms of slot fillers, adverbs, politeness and

adjectives, but can also be clauses such as one of tag questions; bragging avoidance, softening the blow, correction of error or personal idiosyncrasies [1]. Tang [2] posited that it is important to "point out that improper use of edges fails to maintain politeness and leads to pragmatic failure". Commonly used Hedges are; verbs and adverbs as well as vague language such as sort of, kind of and some verbs tense, aspect, modal expressions and so on. Some instances use of hedges includes the following:

Modal expressions
It *could* be that he was convicted of the Holy Spirit.
He is converted

Maybe you'll help the needy as a token of unity
Help the needy
This is *possibly* the best manifestation of unity in the early church
The is manifestation of unity in the early church

Tense and Aspect: For instance, wondered may be used in a statement as follows:
I *wondered* if apostle was referring to the gentiles when he made the statement. [less direct and more polite)
Apostle Paul was referring to the gentiles. [direct and less polite]

Vague Language
This does not add any significant meaning to the expression, but helps in achieving politeness especially in less direct communication.
- It's *sort of* difficult to please man
- It's difficult to please man
- You may *just* wait for the unction of the Holy Spirit
- Wait for the Holy Spirit

Verbs
Verbs, including feel, suppose and reckon are often used as hedges in communication, in an individual's attempt to make personal utterances, utterances less direct. For instance, rather than a direct statement such as; this is the best option, the speakers says 'I *suppose* that this is the best option'. We reckon that this is the best option among all rather than. This is the best option among all. In the above examples, the original meanings and intentions are retained; the statements are however less direct. They are also more pleasant to the audience. Hedges are not limited to the fields of arts and languages. They are greatly valued and employed in the sciences. Science has its peculiar and almost unavoidable collection of hedges. This is illustrated in the work of Teppo Varttala [3] who noted:

In academic writing, hedges are employed to show that statements are not totally based on personal opinions. It is also used to show that statements are not expressed as absolute truths that cannot be improved, adjusted or even controverted. This, in the sciences, is a way to avoid absolute assertiveness in making judgments and inferences. Sentence Structures are constructed in the passive voice (pp20-25).

These sentence structures are seen in the following examples;
- It is reported that
- It has been observed that
- It is generally believed that
- It is probably the only specie in existence

Before now the emphasis on academic writing, particularly scientific writing is on facts. This is so because academic writings are believed to simply be conveying facts and information. Recently, it is recognized that an important feature of academic writing is the concept of cautious language, often called 'hedging' or 'vague language'. In other words, this is necessary to make decisions about one's position on a particular subject, or claims one is making. Achievement of these, come in a number of ways depending on the audience, subjects, culture and other variables. Although subjects and culture may vary, it is important to note that for pragmatic competence to be achieved in talk events and communication, it must be relative to the use of hedges, irrespective of the sex of the participants and audience. To this fact, Bruce Fraser [4] maintained that:

Pragmatic competence is the ability to communicate your intended message with all its nuances in any socio-cultural context and to interpret the message of your interlocutor as it was intended. As critical as this ability is for communication success, it is often not given the emphasis it deserves in the teaching of a second language; with the result that second-language speakers, who lack pragmatic competence, may produce grammatically flawless speech that nonetheless fails to achieve its communicative aims (pp17-34).

Weinreich [5] and Lakoff [6] observing the difficulty faced in the use of hedges by an individual particularly as a second language learner posited that "the fact to bear in mind is the author's emphasis on the evolution of hedges from what they were defined to be". Hence this particular study is justified on two major grounds which are; the peculiarities associated with the use of hedges by second language speakers of English which Bible Banquet contributors fall within the scope and the elements of language evolution that could be observed based on individual personal idiosyncratic attitude of language use.

Hypothesis
The patterns of word use and expressions that are typically chosen as hedges will differ among societies, sexes or groups of language users following a defined pattern determined by any of the following: Sex, culture, experience, education, and environment.

Hence, the use of hedges in English Language cannot be generalized as a linguistic tool of dominance or subordination. These are therefore very important to be determined and identified. It would be very useful factors that can influence and create effective communication especially between individual sexes and groups of English Language users.

Methodology

The study administered structured questionnaire to individual contributor of Bible Banquet programme following systematic sampling procedure to a set of 10 different Bible Banquet radio program contributors in Babcock University radio station Hope 89.1 FM. The study employed purposive random sampling technique to select only the 10 sessions that had complete five participants in attendance. The participants totaled 50 respondents that were made of 26 females and 24 males which included, the moderator, the sound engineer and three guests, totaling five participants for every session that was recorded for Bible Banquet programme for second quarter, that is April to June, 2018. It is worthy of note that some sessions had only two guests in attendance. Such sessions were not selected for analysis. The Bible Banquet program is recorded every Friday and every quarter is made up of three months. Hence the total recordings for the second quarter selected for this study are twelve in number and ten sessions were selected as sample for analysis. The questionnaire is made up of a list of words that are typically employed as hedges in English language and everyday conversation. Participants were requested to complete the questionnaire with a brief introduction of the topic of study as well as detailed explanation on the purpose and essence of the study. A paragraph of introduction captured the motive, meaning, importance and uses of hedges as a linguistic tool of everyday communication in English Language.

Copies of the questionnaire were administered only to participants of the community under study as a criterion for inclusion. Completed questionnaire were collected; responses were collated as raw data and analyzed to observe the frequency of uses of Hedges by male and female contributors in the programs in the second quarter of 2018. Results are presented as charts below.

RESULTS

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table showing the various Languages used in hedging by both sexes

Introductory verbs	Seem, tend, look like, appear to be, think, believe, doubt, be sure, indicate, suggest
Clauses	It could be the case that It might be suggested that
Certain modal verbs	Will, must, would, may, might, could
Clause+adjective	It may be possible to obtain It is important to develop It is useful to study
Modal verbs	Certainly, definitely, clearly, probably, possibly, perhaps, conceivably
Modal adjectives	Certain, definite, clear, probable, possible
Modal nouns	Assumptions, possibility, probability
lexical verbs	There is every hope that Believe, assume, suggest
Adverbs of frequency	Often, sometimes, usually

Table- 1: Distribution of respondents based on gender.

Variable Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	21	46.0
Female	29	54.0
Total	50	**100**

Table -2: This shows the distribution of respondents based on their primary languages. This included their local languages, pidgin and other local minor languages typical Nigerian scenarios of Language use.

Variable Ethic group	Frequency	Percentage
Hausa	09	16.0
Igbo	21	46.0
Yoruba	13	20.0
Pidgin	06	10.0
Others	02	8.0
Total	**50**	**100**

Table- 3: Table 3 shows the distribution of respondents based on educational qualifications.

Variable Education qualification	Frequency	Percentage
O' Level	8	17.8
OND/ HND	5	16.0
NCE	-	-
Bachelor Degree	23	42.4
Postgraduate Degree	14	23.8
Total	**50**	**100**

Table -4: Table showing the distribution of respondents based on their primary fields of education, study or knowledge. The distributions showed that respondents were distributed across various walks of life and as proportionally represented in the population

Variable Background	Frequency	Percentage
Sciences	05	15.0
Art and Humanities	26	44.8
Medicine	02	6.8
Law	01	3.0
Social sciences	07	11.2
Others	09	19.2
Total	**50**	**100**

Table 5: Table showing the distribution of respondents based on their employment status. Most respondents were formally employed or engaged; an indication that they would be required to communicate in the official national and formal language regularly.

Variable Place of Work	Frequency	Percentage
University	35	60.4
Self-employed	10	29.1
Student	04	9.2
Civil servant	01	1.3
Total	**50**	**100**

Table -6: Table showing the distribution of respondents based how often they use introductory verbs as hedges. Results showed that many respondents regularly used *introductory verbs and 'seem' was the most popularly used of them.

Introductory Verbs	I don't Use	I use Often	Use Rarely	Use Very Often	Total
Believe	10 (8.00)	15 (20.00)	20 (70.00)	5 (12.00)	**50 (100)**
Doubt	16 (52.80)	17 (21.60)	12 (9.60)	5 (16.00)	**50 (100)**
Be Sure	20 (56.00)	10 (20.00)	0 (0)	20 (24.00)	**50 (100)**
Suggest	14 (11.20)	6 (20.80)	5 (24.00)	25 (44.00)	**50 (100)**
Seem	14 (19.20)	28 (70.40)	7 (9.60)	1 (0.80)	**50 (100)**
Tend	10 (24.00)	23 (40.00)	14 (16.00)	3 (20.00)	**50 (100)**
Look like	0 (0)	12 (26.60)	29 (47.20)	9 (27.20)	**50 (100)**
Appear to be	5 (12.00)	17 (32.00)	0 (0)	28 (56.00)	**50 (100)**
Think	1 (0.80)	14 (19.20)	8 (9.60)	27 (70.40)	**50 (100)**

Table -7: Table showing the distribution of respondents based on their use of lexical verbs. Respondents regularly used lexical verbs as hedges and the word 'assume' is the most popularly used.

Certain lexical verbs	I don't Use	I use Often	Use Rarely	Use Very Often	Total
Believe	0 (0)	5 (44.00)	25 (32.00)	20 (24.00)	**50 (100)**
Assume	4 (8.00)	10 (16.00)	25 (44.00)	11 (32.00)	**50 (100)**
Suggest	0 (0)	12 (26.60)	29 (47.20)	9(27.20)	**50 (100)**

Table -8: Table showing the distribution of respondents based on their regular use of specific modal verbs. There are disparities in the choice of modal verbs among users with majority of respondents using 'would' most regularly.

Certain modal verbs	I don't Use	I use Often	Use Rarely	Use Very Often	Total
Will	15 (32.00)	25 (44.00)	10 (24.00)	0 (0)	**50 (100)**
Must	1 (0.80)	14 (19.20)	12 (9.60)	23 (70.40)	**50 (100)**
Would	0 (0)	30 (56.00)	8 (20.00)	12 (24.00)	**50 (100)**
May	5 (12.00)	10 (32.00)	35 (56.00)	0 (0)	**50 (100)**
Might	3 (8.00)	15 (20.00)	25 (60.00)	7 (12.00)	**50 (100)**
Could	15 (32.00)	25 (44.00)	0 (0)	10 (24.00)	**50 (100)**

Table -9: Table showing the distribution of respondents based on their uses of adverbs of frequency. The most popularly used adverb of frequency was 'usually'.

Adverbs of frequency	I don't Use	I use Often	Use Rarely	Use Very Often	Total
Often	5 (12.00)	15 (20.00)	5 (12.00)	25 (56.00)	**50 (100)**
Sometimes	20 (40.00)	10 (24.00)	7 (16.00)	13 (20.00)	**50 (100)**
Usually	16 (20.80)	24 (44.00)	6 (24.00)	4 (11.20)	**50 (100)**

Table 10: Table showing the distribution of respondents based on their regular choice of other modal verbs. The word 'possibly' was the most popularly used word in this category.

Modal verbs	I don't Use	I use Often	Use Rarely	Use Very Often	Total
Certainly	0 (0)	10 (32.00)	0 (0)	40(68.00)	**50 (100)**
Definitely	3 (8.00)	15 (24.00)	7 (12.00)	25 (56.00)	**50 (100)**
Clearly	20 (40.00)	20 (40.00)	0 (0)	10 (20.00)	**50 (100)**
Probably	4 (11.20)	11 (20.80)	0 (0)	35 (68.00)	**50 (100)**
Possibly	11 (26.60)	27 (47.20)	0 (0)	12 (27.20)	**50 (100)**
Perhaps	5 (9.60)	12 (21.60)	9 (16.00)	24 (52.80)	**50 (100)**
Conceivably	25 (44.00)	7 (24.00)	0 (0)	18 (32.00)	**50 (100)**

Table -11: Table showing the distribution of respondents based on their regular choice of other modal verbs. The word 'possibly' was the most popularly used word in this category.

Modal adjectives	I don't Use	I use Often	Use Rarely	Use Very Often	Total
Certain	15 (32.00)	25 (44.00)	5 (12.00)	5 (12.00)	**50 (100)**
Definite	45 (80.00)	5 (20.00)	0 (0)	0 (0)	**50 (100)**
Clear	40 (76.00)	0 (0)	0 (0)	10 (24.00)	**50 (100)**
Probable	0 (0)	20 (44.00)	0 (0)	30 (56.00)	**50 (100)**
Possible	0 (0)	25 (44.00)	10 (24.00)	15 (32.00)	**50 (100)**

Table -12: Table showing the distribution of respondents based on their regular choice of modal nouns. The word 'possibility' was the most frequently used modal noun among respondents.

Modal nouns	I don't Use	I use Often	Use Rarely	Use Very Often	Total
Assumptions	10 (24.00)	5 (20.00)	35 (56.00)	0 (0)	**50 (100)**
Possibility	8 (20.00)	38 (64.00)	0 (0)	4 (16.00)	**50 (100)**
Probability	1 (0.80)	8 (19.20)	5 (9.60)	36 (70.40)	**50 (100)**

Table -13: Table showing the distribution of respondents based on their regular choice of 'that clauses'. Most respondents would use the clause 'It could be the case that'.

That clauses	I don't Use	I use Often	Use Rarely	Use Very Often	Total
It could be the case that	6 (20.00)	39(70.40)	5 (9.60)	0 (0)	**50 (100)**
It might be suggested that	0 (0)	20 (44.00)	0 (0)	30 (56.00)	**50 (100)**
There is every hope that	15 (32.00)	30 (56.00)	4 (11.20)	1 (0.80)	**50 (100)**

Table -14: Table showing the distribution of respondents based on their regular use or choice of 'to-clause + adjective'. There was wide disparity in the uses of these hedges.

To-clause+adjective	I don't Use	I use Often	Use Rarely	Use Very Often	Total
It may be possible to obtain	44 (90.40)	0 (0)	6 (9.60)	0 (0)	**50 (100)**
It is useful to study	0 (0)	0 (0)	50 (100)	0 (0)	**50 (100)**
It is important to develop	1 (0.80)	19 (43.20)	0 (0)	30 (56.00)	**50 (100)**

DISCUSSION

The Respondents and their different Education and Communication Skills

The analysis showing the distribution of respondents with focus on their gender showed that the respondents were both adult males and females, with the females being more in number. Questionnaires were distributed without gender bias; thus, results provided information based on the population structure. Users of English in the studied community had other local languages. Table 2 foregrounded the distribution of respondents based on their primary languages or mother tongues. The results indicated however that the primary languages were all represented and these included the three major ethnic languages in Nigeria-Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. Pidgin was also prominent. Pidgin is a main language variety which is used by a significant proportion of Nigerian populace in various talk events to communicate with others especially, in situations where the official or the national language which is English and the other aforementioned major local languages are not handy. The observation shows also that the typical language situation in Nigeria which is a major factor to be considered alongside the peculiarities associated with the use of English language among Bible Banquet contributors also affected their communicative competence.

Relatively, respondents had at least the ordinary level certificate, meaning that respondents were educated enough to be users of the English Language. Furthermore, more than fifty percent of them had bachelors or postgraduate qualifications. These fact shows that they were educated people, who had the basic knowledge as well as the basic skills in English Language communication.

The distribution of respondents based on primary fields of education, indicated that the respondents were proportionally distributed across various walks of life and therefore; appropriately represented the Nigerian population. The distribution shows that majority are individuals in humanities. This is a fair reflection of the studied community in terms of the distribution of individuals based on fields of study. Humanities had the largest proportion, arguably because of the large size of the fields and its large sub-fields. An important fact to note from this result also is that the studied community was made up of people that make use of English language in their everyday speech event as regular non-specialist users. Therefore, this result provides a fair reflection of how individuals use hedges in their everyday communication during Bible banquet radio program on Hope 89.1 FM, Babcock University.

It is also worthy of note that most respondents were formally employed or engaged. This is an indication that they would be required to communicate in the official national and formal language regularly. In line with the observation that these people also have mastery of their primary local languages which are considered major local languages, it is also very necessary to underscore that these group of people would require an average standard and quality of language use in their day to day communications. This

is seen in the obtained result which is shown in the frequency of use of hedges by the respondents.

Respondents and their use of Hedges in Communication

Table 7 shows the distribution of respondents based on the frequency of use of hedges as introductory verbs. Findings show that most respondents employed the use of hedges as introductory verbs. The result also shows that many respondents regularly used the introductory verbs and among them 'seem' is the most popularly used. This is followed by 'tend'. Many respondents indicated that they did not regularly use words like 'be sure' and 'doubt'. Meanwhile, individuals in the studied group were selective of the specific word they used as hedges; which had much to do with 'politeness'. This is a major consideration in the use of hedges in communication. Notably, the contributors to Bible Banquet radio programme being Africans are very conscious of being polite and being very much indirect in communication, this is especially seen among the female contributors and therefore entailed the preference of verbs such as 'seem' and 'tend' while; verbs such as 'be sure;' were rarely used. In the same vein, words like 'think' and 'appeared to be' were employed very often which is in line with the societal principle of politeness not being overly direct in communication. Another possible relationship between these choices and the backboard of the individuals is the fact that many of them were in humanities. Overtly, communication in the humanities is usually expected to be truthful and thus required to be less absolute and assertive.

A cursory look at the use of lexical verbs as used by respondents, the use of 'believe' and 'assume 'were employed more than the use of 'suggest'. The two, though not necessarily direct are more emphatic than suggests. So also is 'believe', which carries positive impression in context. This is because, 'assume' shows a more positive tendency, though relatively less factual.

In table 9, findings show the distribution of respondents based on their normal use of some modal verbs. This finding foregrounds a level of disparity in the choice of modal verbs among users with majority of respondents using 'would' most regularly. It is worthy of note that "Would", "could" and "must" are favoured by respondents among the modal verbs. While 'would' and 'could' are used by respondents as favorite hedges to indicate politeness and give impression of not being too direct, 'must' are required to show emphasis. Interestingly, the verb "may", which appeared to be a typical verb in conventional context use of the English language, was not often in use.

The adverbs of frequency used more often by participants according to the study were 'usually' and 'often'. However, their contexts of use were expectedly different in that their use attested to the fact that Bible banquet contributors emphasized the frequency of a deed and event, which presents it as not an indication of directness but emphasis. This also applies to the use of 'usually'. Quite a number of the respondents indicated that they either would not use the word 'sometimes' or use it rarely. This is because the expression does not indicate emphasis as people would want to use hedges to indicate especially among male respondents. So also, people may not want to emphasize negative impressions typically, hence the rare use of sometimes in the various contributions of both male and female contributors in Bible banquet radio program

In table 11, the distribution showed the regular choice of other modal verbs. An example is the word 'possibly' which was one of the most popularly used words in this category. 'Perhaps' also was extensively used by female contributors in the program. The choices occurred in the same line with the principle of politeness in communication which is often achieved through the use of hedges.

For the distribution of respondents based on their regular choice of other modal verbs, the word 'probable' and 'possible' were mostly used. Words such as 'certain' 'definite' and 'clear' were not used very often. Again, this shows that the basic principle guiding the use of hedges is politeness and being less direct, especially, in a religious programme such as bible banquet. Respondent obviously avoided words that were overly assertive. This has a sociocultural dimension as the participants naturally opted for the principles of politeness and being relatively indirect in communication. Concerning the employment of modal nouns, findings indicated that the distribution of respondents based on their regular choice of modal nouns-'possibility' and probability' were like mostly favoured against other options such as 'assumptions'.

On the choice of 'that clauses', findings indicated that respondents used the clause 'it could be the case that' most often when compared with their choices of 'it might be suggested that' and 'there is every hope that'. The clause 'may' and 'might' appeared not relatively favored by the respondents in general terms. With respect to the results showing the distribution of respondents based on their regular use or choice of 'clause + adjective', there was wide disparity in the uses of these items as hedges. A lot of respondents choose 'it is important'. This is also used to indicate emphasis.

Choices and Preferential uses of Hedges

The five selected sessions of Bible Banquet is replete with the preferential use of hedges. These inputs from respondents provide very useful information on the peculiarities associated with the choice of words and expressions of the studied population - Bible Banquet contributors. Nevertheless, since various people across

the world use English language as influenced by different forms of interferences and a number of factors including culture and other major languages, it is expedient to note that there would be levels of variations also in the use of hedges. As a result, it is important to focus attention to the variations and peculiarities of findings of the present study. In essence, Ziran [7] posited that 'politeness is a linguistic universal', the choice of words may however vary. Understandably, the second language acquisition has its peculiar features [8]. Another aspect of social and cultural influence is cross-cultural pragmatic failure [9]. Hence, the frequency of hedges use are; male participants; 47%, 44%, 42%, 46% and 43% respectively, while the female participants used 53%, 56%, 58%, 54 and 57respectively in 5 sessions selected for analysis.

Socio-cultural implications

Female participants' choice of hedges aligns largely with the politeness and less directness principles of hedges and this also aligns with the cultural practices of the target population. The implication of this would mean that English language would vary between groups based on sociocultural factors. Hence, aside from the basic principles of grammar especially in terms of lexis and structure; culture plays a principal role in language variations as women avoid the use of absolutes which could be perceived as a high level of self-assertiveness. It is therefore important to explore this factor and the patterns of variations between various groups of people that use English language globally and precisely, among participants of Bible Banquet. This goes a long way to agree with the assertion of Yongqing [10], who analyzed the functions of hedging devices in American presidential inaugural addresses thus: In American presidential inaugural addresses, the application of hedging contributes a lot to the mildness, politeness and flexibility of linguistic expressions, thus fulfilling the needs of some special political purposes.

A cursory look at the above foregrounds a typical example of communication in the political arena where intentions are clear, yet communication is made as polite, euphemized and mitigating as possible. Interestingly, such mode of communication is usually considered as an aspect of political culture in America. Furthermore, he stated that the style of communication helped in:
- Excessive self-assertiveness
- Avoiding absoluteness
- Achieving politeness and
- Accomplishing tactfulness

CONCLUSION

There is an increase in women speaking assertively in the presence of males and communication between the genders become less confusing as the language patterns of men and women continue to merge

over time. There are prominent variations in the preference and uses of hedges among male and female participants in Bible Banquet radio program sessions selected for this study. The choices align largely with the politeness principle and reverence. There is however, the underlying danger of pragmatic failure or compromised pragmatic competence among the participants that exhibit high level reliance on the various aspects of hedges in the studied population. Findings suggests that female participants employed the use of hedges more than men, this supports the views that females use more qualifiers and intensifiers than men, while, men used more absolutes in their everyday language event. Therefore hedges are paradigmatic marker of reverence, honesty and integrity among interlocutors in a discourse event.

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