

USING HEDGES IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE CONVERSATIONS: THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

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ABSTRACT

Doing research on using hedges in conversation is the first step to approach pragmatics study which requires learner a determined effort. With hardworking process to deal with pragmatics, learners' language power of word usage is extremely widened. Not only do they can use target language flexibly, but they are also more confident in conversational English with less anxieties of unexpected interpretation. This article mainly focuses on the similarities and differences in using hedges in English and Vietnamese conversation in order to help students use English effectively based on the cooperative principles as well as point out the implication for leaning and using hedges.

Keywords: Conversation, expression, implication, using hedges.

INTRODUCTION

Living in Vietnam, TESOL-majored students need a general consciousness of hedges since it will benefit in many aspects. First, knowing how and when to use hedges for communicating purpose is a way serving for politeness and face saving. That good point is useful for social interaction. In the field of teaching, hedges can be used by the teacher to balance the quantity of work-share between the teacher and the students thanks to the characteristic of this tool. However, Vietnamese TESOL majored students have difficulty in using hedges in their conversations. As a rule, various cross-cultural values build up diverse language styles, and using hedges is not an exception; the cultural gap between Eastern and Western countries unintentionally causes difficulties for the students. In addition, the condition for students to sharpen their competence in hedging is still limited because the ability to hedge is not put in the adequate attention. The researchers carried out the thesis "Using Hedges in English and Vietnamese Conversation" with three specific purposes. First, we wants to remind TESOL students the values of hedges in aspects of life and career as discussing about the importance of hedges. Second, a general summary about hedges is given to provide people with a firm foundation about hedges. Last, hopefully, the research investigates the use of hedges in English as well as in Vietnamese conversation and makes a comparison between the two.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A successful conversation

A real conversation must fulfill required standards. It is a conversation in case the people involved in the conversation have a turn taking in the process of exchanging information; in other words, the participants both give responds and pose question to their partner. In addition, the content of the conversation emerges naturally without the fixed dialogue of participants. Joan (2002) defined "Conversation is discourse mutually constructed and negotiated in time between speakers; it is usually informal and unplanned" (p.28) to strengthen the idea. A successful conversation benefits people a lot. Joan (2002) insisted that "*Even the most casual of conversations have an interactional function. Casual conversations in parties can have the practical task of ascertaining whether the future social cohesion is possible*

or desirable and, for some, whether establishing an intimate relationship is going to be feasible” (p.28) to make clear that successful conversations widen and deepen the relationship among human being.

Cooperation in conversation

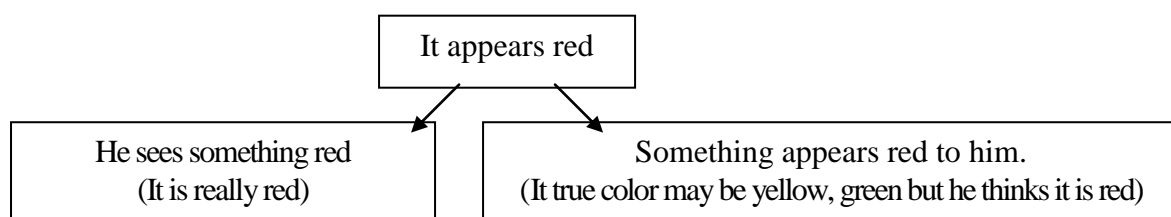
Cooperation makes the conversation continue smoothly and involve people manage the time of communicating as well as the effectiveness of what is transmitted well. With cooperation, both speaker and listener focus on the already known background and simply use language to make the conversation occur to mention the issue in their own way. It is not the purpose that surrounding people can or cannot understand; the point is speaker and listener can catch up with the each other’s ideas. The cooperation is fostered by the cooperative principles. They are the principles stated by a well-known linguist, Paul Grice. According to this scholar, there are 4 maxims including the maxims of quantity, quality, relevance and manner that the people need to follow in order to have a successful conversation. Those maxims are described clearly by Grice (1975).

Hedges in conversations

Definition of hedges in conversation

Hedges are considered as a tool for people to protect themselves from the audience; using hedges make a sense of neutral for the statement; hence, outside negative impacts can be denied by the speaker. A digital web with the link http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hedge_%28linguistics%29 (November 14, 2014) defined that “A hedge is a mitigating device used to lessen the impact of an utterance. The below situations will explain the neutral characteristic of a statement containing “hedges”.

A says “Jogging is good for health”. A is responsible for his statement; and he may cause arguable conversation with his listener in case listener have some points to debate such as people with heart disease are not recommended to jog. But, the situation will diverse in the following case A says “I’ve heard that jogging is good for health”. The expression “*I’ve heard that*” saves A’s face. A can be always in favor of his hearer either his hearer agree or not because the hedge “heard” ensures that he is not the person who takes charge of the exactness of the utterance, as well it reveals that he is still unsure of the exactness of the information. Therefore, it is reasonable for him to support his hearer’s contrasting remarks. In addition, the term “hedge” has been recommended by Brown and Levinson (1987) that it is “a particle, word or phrase in a set; it says membership that is partial or true only in certain aspects, or that is more true or complete than perhaps might be expected...” (p. 145) This theory mainly discusses the hedges in the quality aspect, the level of exactness. Similar to George’s theory, hedges in Brown’s definition can imply that the communicated information is right in some cases, but wrong in some cases. Grice (1975) presented an example in which people can analyze the statement into two trends.



Graph 1: The possible interpretations a hedge

However, there is ambivalent between Brown's theory and the conversational maxims. Brown (as cited in Cohen, 2008) mentioned one aspect of the utterance "that is more true or completed than perhaps might be expected" (p. 31). This means the communicated information is certainly true and the speaker wants to emphasize he knows the issue very well. On the other hand, Grice did not mention about intensification in his maxims. Therefore, it is important to confirm that the hedges in conversations are studied via observing Grice's maxims. In conclusion, the researcher concludes this point of definition concerning hedges with what George (1998) explained "There are certain kinds of expressions speakers use to mark that they may be in danger of not fully adhering to the principles (4 maxims by Grice). These kinds of expressions are called hedges" (pp. 37- 38).

The importance of hedges in conversations

With hedges, the willing attitude to cooperate with the others of the speakers is highlighted. George (1998) explained about hedges that "such forms also communicate the speaker's concern that their listeners judge them to be cooperative conversational patterns" (p. 39). The talkers signal that hearers do not have to infer whether what they say has hidden meanings or not. They volunteer to consider the necessary conditions such as the hearers' knowledge about mentioned topics, surrounding contexts before observing one or more maxims in their remarks. Speakers also open a smooth path for listeners to get the transmitted information with a lower requirement for cognitive activities. In linguistic aspect, hedges are helpful for the speakers for two prominent reasons. First, the existence of hedges in some cases gains confidence for speakers in term of giving opinion in front of the crowd, or answering journalistic interviews. Sometime, people cannot avoid saying about unfamiliar topics; and it is not wise to use declarative statements since listeners are always ready to assess the exactness of what are said. Therefore, the second advantage is that it both reveals the speakers' modesty and protects speakers' self- image from their unfriendly listeners.

METHODOLOGY

Research questions

What is the importance of using hedged in conversation?

Are there any similarities and differences in using hedges in English and in Vietnamese conversation?

Research methods

The data was collected through using such methods as *material analysis and comparison*.

Material analysis

Material provides the researchers with a clear awareness of hedges. At the beginning, it is very important for us to read about the hedges as well as the relevant theories; a general look will soon stretch over the subject. After ascertaining the confused points, it is the time to investigate literature works which contains conversations. This is not a kind of time wasting because via the support of writers who have been equipped with a firm foundation for language usage the researchers on one hand can make clear the main functions of hedges in conversation, on the other hand can enrich her own source of hedge expression.

Comparison

The researchers make a comparison between common Vietnamese and English hedges. The material for this method is from daily conversations, literature works, and useful documents about hedges.

RESULTS

Similarities

The two languages involve the same aims of using hedges in conversations

The aim of using hedges in conversations is to carry out the function of saving the public self image of the participants. Myers (1988, as cited in Markkanen & Schroder, 1997) assumed that “the effect of hedging devices is face- saving” (p.23). In English, Thuy (2009) emphasized that people use hedges to protect the speaker from unexpected situation when they do not fully follow the cooperative principles of Grice.

George (1998) defined that “ there are certain kinds of expressions speakers use to mark that they may be in danger of not fully adhering to **the principles**” and “hedges are good indications that the speakers are not only aware of **the maxims**, but that they want to show that they are trying to observe **them**” (p.39). Basing on the fact, the researcher concludes that English hedges in conversations do exist and they are used to serve for the cooperative principles.

George (1998) introduced hedges that often appear in daily conversation.

* Observing the maxim of quality

As far as I know, they are married

He could not live without her, *I guess*

* Observing the maxim of quantity

As you probably know, I am terrified of bugs.

So, *to cut a long story short*, we grabbed our stuff and run.

* Observing the maxims of relevance

Not to change the topic, but is this related to the budget?

This may sound like a dumb question, but whose hand writing is this?

I don't know this is important, but some files are missing.

* Observing the maxims of manner.

This may be a bit confused, but I remember being in a car.

I'm not sure if this makes sense, but the car had no lights. (pp. 38-39)

In Vietnamese, Chau and Hung (2007) listed a lot of expressions which are subdivided into sections of quantity, quality, relevance, manner, and politeness.

i.

Quantity

Vietnamese

Như chúng ta đã biết, như đã nói, cậu biết rồi đây

Đại thể là, tất cả những gì tôi biết là..., mình không muốn làm phiền cậu với những chi tiết vụn vặt nhưng...

English

As we all know; As I said; As you know...
Generally, broadly speaking; all I know/ to my best knowledge...; I don't want to bother you with all details but...

ii. Quality

Vietnamese

Nghe đâu, nghe đồn, có lẽ, hình như, có thể là, theo tôi nghĩ, tôi cho rằng

English

It is said that...; It is rumoured that...; possibly, perhaps, maybe, probably; It seems that; be likely to, possible, ...; I think, in my opinion, in my point of view, for me; I suppose

iii. Relevance

Vietnamese

à này..., tiện đây..., có lẽ đã đến lúc phải nói điều này..., không muốn làm các cậu mất hứng nhưng bây giờ phải nói đến ..., vì cậu đã hỏi nên tớ phải nói...phải thế không

English

By the way...; it's time to say this...; Sorry for interruption, but it's time to mention ...; As you asked me,

iv. Manner

Vietnamese

Chân thành (cảm ơn), thực tình (góp ý với em), tôi bảo thật, chị không nói nhin em đâu, không nói phét..., xin mạo muội hỏi bác, chỗ bạn bè mình mới nói

English

Sincerely; honestly; to tell you the truth; excuse me, is it Ok if..., As a close friend of yours, I want to tell you tha

In reality, Vietnamese do use hedges similarly to the ways American people do. There are the hedges that Nhân, a professor in the field of history, used when having conversation with a reporter. The utterances that contain hedges are

Có lẽ là như thế! (Vietnamese)

Or: **Maybe** it is! (English)

Song, *theo tôi*, tất cả những cái đó không thể tránh khỏi. (Vietnamese)

Or: however, **in my opinion**, all of them are unavoidable. (English)

Tương tự như vậy, *trong chừng mực nào đó cũng có thể nói* là ... (Vietnamese)

Or: Similarly, in some circumstance **it is possible to say that** (English)

Conclusion: The hedges “*có lẽ, theo tôi, trong chừng mực nào đó có thể nói là*” or “**maybe, in my opinion, and it is possible to say that...**” observe the maxim of quality.

Trở lại vấn đề đang nói: Tôi cũng thường nghĩ trong quá trình phát triển, truyền thống không phải là mục đích... (Vietnamese)

By the way, I often think that when developing period continues, tradition is not the purpose... (English)

Conclusion: the hedges “*trở lại vấn đề đang nói: Tôi cũng thường nghĩ*” or “**by the way, I often think**” observe the maxims of relevance and quality.

Nam Cao (2009) used hedge in his protagonist character, lão Hạc

Có lẽ tôi bán con chó đấy, ông giáo ạ! (p.89)

Or: Ông giáo, **maybe** I will sell the dog!

Conclusion: the hedge “*có lẽ*” or “*maybe*” observes the maxim of quality.

All in all, basing on the list of Chau and Hung as well as the usage of Vietnamese hedges in reality, the researcher believes that hedges are also used to observe the cooperative principles to make conversations by Vietnamese.

The hedges exist as a word, a phrase, and a clause in English and Vietnamese

i. As a word

In Vietnamese, such words like “*tuờng, chắc*” or “*believe, maybe*” is used by novelist Nhất Linh (1951, as cited in Hoa, 2000)

In English, the website <http://www.uefap.com/writing/feature/featfram.html> (1999) introduces languages used in hedging that exist as a word.

- Introductory verbs: e.g. seem, tend, look like, appear to be, think, believe, doubt, be sure, indicate, suggest.
- Certain lexical verbs: e.g. believe, assume, suggest
- Certain modal verbs: e.g. will, must, would, may, might, could
- Modal adverbs: e.g. possibly, perhaps, conceivably,
- Modal adjectives: e.g. certain, definite, clear, probable, possible
- Modal nouns: e.g. assumption, possibility, probability

As a word, for example

Vietnamese	English
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Chắc</i> trời sắp mưa. 2. Tôi <i>tin</i> việc này sẽ thành công thôi. 3. <i>Hình như</i> chị ấy đứng ở đằng kia thì phải. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It may rain soon. <i>or</i> <i>Perhaps</i>, it will rain soon 2. I <i>believe</i> this business will reach success. 3. It <i>seems</i> her standing over there

Graph 2: A comparison between hedges as a word in English and Vietnamese**ii. As a phrase**

In Vietnamese, the list of Chau and Hung (2007) introduced phrases like “Đại thể là..., có lẽ đã đến lúc phải nói điều này..., không muốn làm các cậu mất hứng nhưng bây giờ phải nói đến ..., xin mạo muội hỏi bác..., chỗ bạn bè mình mới nói..., thực tình (góp ý với em)...”

In English, Ronald and Michael (2006) introduced phrases like

more or less	roughly speaking
as a rule	broadly speaking
generally speaking	as a general principle (p.282)

iii. As a clause

In Vietnamese, there are clauses that Chau and Hung (2007) listed like câu biết rồi đấy (As you know), mình không muốn làm phiền cậu với những chi tiết vụn vặt nhưng... (I don't want to bother you with all details but...), tôi cho rằng (I think...), tôi bảo thật (I tell you the truth...), chị không nói nhin em đâu (I do not lie you to please you at all, but...) (p. 102)

In English, there are familiar clauses like “I think, I guess, It is said that..., It may be a mistake but..., if I am right...)

Carter and McCarthy (2006) stated that two impersonal constructions composing of it- clause and existential “there” enable speakers to distance themselves from assertion. In other word, those sorts of expression enable speakers to lessen affirmation and directness (pp. 286- 287). “It- clause” is formed by combining passive forms of lexical verbs carrying the shortage of certainty in their meaning such as “believe, suggest, and claim” and the impersonal subject “it”.

E.g. Literature, *it is claimed*, seeks to recapture and reconstruct tradition. (1)

Or: *It is claimed* that literature seeks to recapture and reconstruct tradition. (2)

Existential “there” has two structures

Structure 1: *There + be + noun/ noun phrase*

E.g. There are four books on the table.

Structure 2: *There + exist(s) + noun/ noun phrases*

E.g. There exist thirty seven students in my class.

Differences**In Vietnam****Vietnamese’s behavior style**

Vietnamese has been distinguished from the world for several characteristics. Them (2006) once told about behavior style; he said that Vietnamese people enjoy interaction, but they are shy. Them (2006) also added the second feature, gentleness and friendliness are closely attached to Vietnamese’s communicative style. Thuy (2009) also explained that Vietnamese tries to observe the principle “Dĩ hòa vi quý” or “catabolism of you” in English. In fact, Vietnamese believes maintaining relationship, and saying “No” with ambivalence toward people are the manner of an educated person. In conclusion, a tendency to highly respect the

strangers and to try to be modest when interacting to strangers has been intentionally formed and respected by Vietnamese very long ago.

The purpose of Vietnamese hedges' usage

Thuy (2009) confirmed that through communicating, Vietnamese mainly focus on prolonging harmony, peace, and close friendship. Vietnamese distinguished behavior style encourages them to use hedges regularly to retain friendliness and well knit relationship. Therefore, hedges are mostly used to serve the purpose of saving **the listener's** self- image. This mean speech art hedges are used more frequently than conversational hedges.

When giving opinions in terms of scolding, criticizing, giving advice and making claims Thuy (2009) found Vietnamese often accompanies hedges. For example, people can say to advise a friend

Vietnamese	English
<p><i>Là bạn bè thân bao năm nên tôi mới có ý kiến, bạn nên quan tâm đến việc học nhiều hơn</i></p>	<p><i>I would keep silent if you weren't my close friend, you should pay attention to your study.</i></p>

Graph 3. A comparison between English and Vietnamese utterances

There are four main points of Vietnamese's way of using hedges that are introduced by Tâm (2006)

- i. *To ask for permission when carrying out an action such as declaring, announcing, giving remarks.*

E.g.

Thưa các anh chị, mặc dù không được dự từ đầu buổi họp và là người nhỏ nhất tổ, song qua phần trình bày vừa rồi của anh tổ trưởng, em xin **mạo muội** có mấy ý kiến như sau...(Tam, 2006, para 2)

Or: Though I am not expected from the early of the meeting and....; however, over our group leader's presentation, **I presume** to have some ideas...

- ii. *To show the subjective impact to the crowd when talking*

“Theo **thiền ý**, thời đại mới đòi hỏi mỗi cá nhân phải tự bộc lộ rõ để đóng góp vào cái chung. Nhưng tự bộc lộ ngôn từ đến mức nào là đúng mức, là phải?” (Tam, 2006, para 3)

Or: **In my humble opinion**, the new era requires each individual should be clearly disclosed to contribute to the general, but to what extent should we reveal the language properly and accepted ?

- iii. *To be modest and friendly to the listeners*

E.g.

Xin các đồng chí chú ý, **thiền ý** của tôi là muốn đem vấn đề này bàn bạc thật kỹ trong đơn vị. (Tam, 2006, para 4).

My comrades, your attention please! **My humble opinion** is to bring this matter carefully discussed in the unit

iv. *To prepare listeners before giving scolding and criticism*

E.g.

Là bạn bè nên tôi mới có ý kiến, bạn nên quan tâm đến việc học tập hơn.

As a friend of you I want to remind you that you should pay more attention to your study.

In brief, the researcher concludes that Vietnamese hedges are used to prolong the good relationship among people. The listener's face saving is often concerned. This function of hedges seems to appear in Vietnamese and not in English.

The variety of hedge expressions that Vietnamese uses

Hedge expressions are very limited and boring in literature works of Vietnamese writers. In other word, the hedge is rarely applied by Vietnamese writer, and in the aspect of vocabulary, hedge expression has a repetition of certain familiar words like “chắc, có lẽ, hình như” or “must, may, seem”. To illustrate the presented ideas, the researcher selected a few works which contain conversational hedges.

i. Through referring to the whole collection “tuyển tập truyện ngắn Nam Cao, 2009” or “Nam Cao's collection of short stories”, there are two works that hedges are used. Nam Cao used hedges to describe the inner voice of his characters. First, a Lao Hac told a “ông Giáo” that “*Có lẽ* tôi bán con chó đây ông giáo ạ!” or “Ong giao, maybe, I will sell the dog!” That hedge is on quality maxim with the purpose of emphasizing his character's love toward the dog and the hesitation when Lao Hac decided to sell it. Another hedge on the maxim of quantity is also taken effected “Ông giáo để tôi nói... *Nó hơi dài dòng một tí*... Và lão kể, Lão kể nhỏ nhẹ và dài dòng thật...” or “... **it is a little bit long**...” This hedge is a normal instruction about the length of the story Lao Hac was going to tell. The other work “Đời thừa” or “A nonsense life”, a sorrow wife was always afraid of her husband's anger which was mainly caused by the material shortage. Từ said to Hộ, her husband, that “*Có lẽ* hôm nay là mồng hai, mồng ba rồi mình nhỉ?” or “Honey, **maybe** today is the second or the third lunar day!” to indirectly remind him the monthly expenditure.

ii. Novelist Nhat Linh used a lot of hedges in his work “Đôi bạn” or “Two best friends”. In this work, however, there is no new form even of hedge. Those words are familiar. Instead of enriching the expressions, Nhat Linh reused such hedges as “*chắc, chắc là, hình như, tưởng, có lẽ, có thể*” or “**may, maybe, seem, believe, can**” for difference utterances of his characters.

In English

American's behavior style

Knowing the cultural communication feature of American is very important to English learners. It provides cues for people to really enter the target language. No longer do learners feel embarrassed or worried about avoidable cultural mistakes such as asking personal questions like the salary, the marriage condition, as well as the weigh when they contact with the native people. In addition, the uncooperative conditions between Vietnamese and the foreigners are reduced in case Vietnamese understand that American prefers competition

attitude, confidence, and directness; especially, American people highly evaluate the individualism because of their country's political institution.

All the mentioned elements that American people take notice of make a great contribution to American's typical behavior style. With the style, people understand that individual have to do their best as if they were in a sporting competition, or else they can be left behind and their chances are caught by the more talented individual. Along with individualism, Americans assume that confidence is a significant factor for people to advertise their capacity and prove it in reality. They do not hesitate to identify proudly their strong points; this does not mean they are not modest. American people also criticize the act of "beating around the bush" because it is thought to be a kind of time wasting; however, "there are limits to the degree of directness a person is allowed to express" (Deena, Mara & Adelman, 1982, p. 20).

The purpose of English hedges' usage

In fact, the researcher found six main points about the English hedges' purposes through the introduction of Carter and McCarthy (2006) and all of them are used to observe the cooperative principles.

i. Softening expressions (base on the quality maxim)

"Vague language softens expressions so that they do not appear too direct or unduly authoritative and assertive." (p. 202)

E.g.

A: she doesn't like coffee

B: Well, she can have an orange juice *or something*. (p. 202)

ii. Shifting expression (base on relation maxim)

With the expected or projected directions and responses which have not been anticipated the speaker can use "well". These are the model example

A: *Do you enjoy the film?*

B: *Well, we enjoy the first half but after that I am not sure*

(B feels the question cannot be answered by just yes or no because his real emotion is in another direction)

A: *What do we do about the traffic?*

B: *Well, how about leaving earlier so we miss the worst of it?*

(Against the anticipation, B suggests avoiding being involved in the problem) (p. 219)

ii. Resuming expressions (base on relevance maxim)

E.g.

A: Is that your writing?

B: No. Don't know why that's there. Cos I put that on. But I lent it to this...Do you know that girl I hate; I can't remember her name, whatever. *So, what was I saying?*

A: That annoying one, Joan.

B: Yeah. So he went to this thing and presented all these proposals that he'd got.

(Resuming the main topic after trying to remember someone's name) (p.220)

iii. Reformulation expressions (basing on the maxim of manner)

With this function, Carter and McCarthy (2006) said hedge is used to indicate that “the speaker has not selected the most appropriate way of expressing things and is adding to or refining what they say with a more apt words or phrase” (p. 220).

The below example will help a better understanding of their usage.

The hotel simply hasn’t done its job properly. **In other words**, we’re very unhappy and we’d like a refund. (pp. 220- 221)

iv. Monitoring shared knowledge (base on the quantity maxim)

For example,

You see, since I’ve damaged my back in that fall, I find it difficult to climb the stairs without help.

(“You see” in this example projects the assumption that the listener may not have the same state of knowledge as the speaker) (p. 221).

vi. Closing expression (base on the maxim of relation)

People often use to signal that they want to stop the conversation.

A: **Well**, I’d better go and finish this lunch

B: **Okay then**. See you later (p. 215).

In addition, hedges are also used to mark the speaker’s idea in the conversation. This function serves the quality maxim. George (1998) gave examples

As far as I know, they’re married

He couldn’t live without her, **I guess** (p.38)

All in all, the researcher assumes that there are seven main functions of English hedges. They are used “to mark the speaker is in danger of not adhering the cooperative principle”, (George, 1998, pp. 37- 38) said. This means American people mainly aim at observing the four conversational maxims of Grice when using hedges. Different from Vietnamese, in English it is the speakers’ face saving that is highly concerned by the speakers themselves.

4.2.2.3. The variety of hedge expressions that American uses

Carter and McCarthy (2006) confirmed that “hedge is a lexical rather than a grammatical category” (p. 209), as well they said that “they are best considered as a class in their own right” (p. 209).

English		Vietnamese	
Nouns	belief	Nouns	sự tin tưởng
	disbelief		sự không tin tưởng
Adjectives	believable	Adjectives	đáng tin
	unbelievable		không đáng tin
Verbs	believe	Verbs	tin

Graph 4. A comparison between part of speech in English and Vietnamese

We use hedges to soften what we say or write. Hedges are an important part of polite conversation. They make what we say less direct. The most common forms of hedging

involve tense and aspect, modal expressions including modal verbs and adverbs, vague language such as *sort of* and *kind of*, and some verbs.

Tense and aspect

I wondered if I could have a word with you? (less direct and more polite than *Could I have a word with you?*)

Modal expressions

The answer could be that the trees have some sort of disease. (less direct than *The answer is that ...*)

Maybe we should have a word with him about it? (less direct than *We should* or *we must have a word with him about it.*)

This is possibly the best performance in the Olympics.

Vague language

It's sort of difficult to say. (less direct than *It's difficult to say*)

Could you just post this letter for me?

Verbs (*feel*)

Some verbs (such as *feel*, *suppose*, *reckon*) can be used to hedge personal statements, that is, to make personal statements less direct:

We feel he should let them decide whether to buy the flat. (less direct than *He should let them decide ...*)

I reckon that's the best answer to the problem. (less direct than *That's the best answer to the problem.*)

Hedges in academic writing

We use certain types of hedging in writing, especially in academic writing, so that statements don't seem to rely simply on personal opinion.

We often use structures with *it* in the passive such as *it is argued that* and *it has been agreed that*:

It has been generally agreed that these new video phone technologies will transform everyday life. (a more cautious and less personal statement than *I agree that ...*)

CONCLUSION

The researchers will call the hedge that serves friendly relation among people as speech art hedge; the one which signals that people are trying to observe Grice's maxims is called as conversational hedge. The usage of hedges in both Vietnamese and English is similar in some ways. Clearly, the idea of protecting self- image is universal. From this point, the researcher proves that conversational hedges are used by both Vietnamese and American. Moreover, the form of hedges in both languages can be a word, a phrase, and a sentence.

There are differences in some ways between the two languages' hedge. First, what makes distinguished point between the two languages' hedges is the behavior style. Next, speech art hedges are used mostly by Vietnamese but they are rarely used by American. Last, Vietnamese hedge is not as various in vocabulary as English one is, but Vietnamese people are not bored with the fact, they diverse the hedges through the advantage of mono-phonology aspect so that a Vietnamese hedge can appears in different sentence structures.

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