



Analysis on the Features and Functions of Hedges in the CCTV Program “Anchor Talks the Broadcast”

Yongning Zhang^(✉)

Communication University of China, Beijing, China
yongning0228@gmail.com

Abstract. The analysis of the hedges in “Anchor Talks the Broadcast” by the corpus method shows that the frequency of the variable hedges in this column is much higher than that of the moderate hedges. Among them, the degree-changing hedges have the highest frequency, followed by the range-changing type, and the direct moderating type with the lowest frequency. Male anchors and female anchors have the highest frequency of using varying hedges, but female anchors use indirect moderating hedges more than direct moderating hedges, indicating that the anchor’s gender will affect the choice of hedges. Hedges can make words express both rationality and sensibility, and can also shorten the distance between anchors and netizens.

Keywords: “Anchor Talks Broadcast” · Hedges · Context · News commentary · New media

1 Introduction

On July 29, 2019, the News and New Media Center of the Central Radio and Television Station launched the short video news commentary program “Anchor Talks the Broadcast. As a derivative column of the news program “CCTV News”, “Anchor Talks the Broadcast” has carried out secondary processing and secondary dissemination of “CCTV News” in the form of short video dissemination, such as Tik Tok, Kuaishou, Weibo, WeChat, etc. The content of “Anchor Talks the Broadcast” closely follows hot current affairs, and the anchor comments on major events and hot news of the day in plain language.

Anchors often use hedges when commenting on current events and expressing their opinions. Hedges were first coined by George Lakoff [1], referring to “words whose job is to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy”. He Ziran [2] believes that hedges can amend the content of the utterance in terms of the true degree or the scope of the utterance, and can also indicate the speaker’s direct subjective observation of the content of the utterance, or put forward an objective basis to make an indirect evaluation of the utterance. Hedges can reflect different pragmatic values in context. Scholars have studied hedges in different discourses. Huang Ping [3], Gao Jieying [4] and others studied hedges in legal discourse;

Zhang Yanjun [5], Wang Jingjing, Lv Zhongshe [6] and others studied the vaguely restricted language in academic terminology; Zhu Meihui [7], Wu Huijuan [8], and others studied hedges in conversational discourses; Zeng Zheng [9] and others studied hedges in advertising discourse; Tao Xuecheng [10], Chen Mingzhu and Xie Qun [11] studied hedges in news discourse. Judging from the literature, there are relatively few studies on hedges in news discourse, and the research on hedges in news commentary discourse in new media has not yet been carried out.

The most influential classification of hedges is that of Prince, Freder, and Bosk [12]. From the perspective of pragmatics, they divided hedges into approximators and shields. Variable hedges can affect the truth-conditions of propositions, while moderates do not affect the truth-conditions of propositions, but reflect the speaker's attitude toward the propositions. On this basis, He Ziran [13] further subdivided hedges. He divided variable hedges into degree variable hedges (such as: especially) and range variable hedges (such as: about); and he divided the moderating hedges into direct moderating hedges (eg: I think) and indirect moderating hedges (eg: as reported).

Referring to the classification of hedges by Prince et al. and He Ziran, this paper discusses the use characteristics and functions of hedges in "Anchor Talks the Broadcast" through self-built corpus, compares the similarities and differences between male and female anchors in the use of hedges, and analyzes their functions, in order to provide a reference for improving the discourse communication effect of new media news commentary programs.

2 Corpus Sources and Research Methods

This article selects a total of 52 news commentary articles on "Anchor Talks the Broadcast" published on the "CCTV News" WeChat public account platform from May 1 to June 30, 2021. Among them, there are 26 comment texts by male anchors, with a total of 10,829 characters, and a total of 26 comment texts by female anchors, with a total of 10,615 characters. The male anchors involved in the corpus are Kang Hui, Gang Qiang, Pan Tao, Yan Yuxin, and Guo Zhijian; the female anchors are Hai Xia, Li Zimeng, Bao Xiaofeng, and Zheng Li.

3 Analysis of the Use Characteristics of Hedges in "Anchor Talks the Broadcast"

3.1 Statistics on the Frequency of Use of Hedges

The researchers manually marked the hedges in the discourse of "Anchor Talks the Broadcast", and classified and counted them, and obtained a total of 483 hedges. On this basis, the researchers standardize the hedges according to the frequency of each 1000 words, as shown in "Table 1":

Table 1. The frequency of hedges per 1,000 words in the discourse of “Anchor Talks the Broadcast”

	Male anchor discourse	Male anchor discourse	Female anchor discourse	Female anchor discourse	Footing	Footing
	Frequency (Number)	Normalized frequency	Frequency (Number)	Normalized frequency	Frequency (Number)	Normalized frequency
Approximators	218	20.13	161	15.17	379	17.67
Shields	50	4.62	54	5.09	104	4.85

It can be seen from “Table 1” that the total standardized frequency of discourse-variant hedges is about 17.67 per thousand words, and the total standardized frequency of moderate hedges is about 4.85 per thousand words. The former is 3.6 per thousand words of the latter. This shows that in the discourse of “Anchor Talks the Broadcast”, anchors use variable hedges much more frequently than moderate hedges.

Relatively speaking, the frequency of male anchors using variable hedges is higher than that of female anchors, and the standardized total frequencies of using variable hedges are 20.13 and 15.17 per thousand words, respectively. On the contrary, the frequency of male anchors using moderating hedges is lower than that of female anchors, and the total standardized frequency of using moderating hedges is 4.62 and 5.09 per thousand words, respectively.

Variable hedges are related to the truth-value of discourse, either changing the original meaning of the discourse structure or modifying the original meaning of the discourse to some extent. The anchors use a lot of variable hedges in “Anchor Talks the Broadcast”, indicating that they are more cautious when stating news events and conveying their opinions, avoiding too subjective and arbitrary opinions, and focusing on persuading netizens to accept their opinions in a decent way. Relatively speaking, male anchors pay more attention to maintaining the objectivity of their words. For example:

Example 1: It should be said that the need to protect the ecological environment and wild animals has now almost become the “standard” of each of us, and to a certain extent, the captive breeding of animals has been cancelled, and more and more zoos have adopted the stocking model. More and more nature reserves have experienced substantial growth in wildlife populations. (Yan Yuxin, May 9, 2021).

In Example 1, the male anchor Yan Yuxin inserted two degree-variable hedges “almost” and “to a certain extent” when he stated his views on caring for the environment and wild animals. When he expressed his views on sensitive issues, his tone was relatively gentle, and his assertions were also weakened the degree of affirmation, leaving more room for his words and enhancing the acceptance of netizens. In addition, because the ecological environment and wildlife protection also involve certain scientific issues, the use of degree-variable hedges in an attitude of self-inquiry and negotiation can reduce their responsibilities and avoid unnecessary controversy on the Internet.

Female anchors are relatively sentimental, and they will pay more attention to the use of relaxing hedges. By introducing their own or third-party views to explain their

Table 2. Frequency and proportion of different types of hedges appearing in the discourse of “Anchor Talks the Broadcast”

	Male anchor discourse	Male anchor discourse	Female anchor discourse	Female anchor discourse	Footing	Footing
	Frequency	Proportion	Frequency	Proportion	Frequency	Proportion
Adaptors	114	42.54%	102	47.44%	216	44.72%
Rounders	104	38.81%	59	27.44%	163	33.75%
Direct shields	25	9.33%	23	10.70%	48	9.94%
Indirect shields	25	9.33%	31	14.42%	56	11.59%

views, the tone is relatively gentle, which can increase interaction with netizens. For example:

Example 2: In an era when there are pictures but not necessarily the truth, how can we get closer to the truth and understand today’s China? I think it is very important to do things with heart, be attentive, and have a sincere heart. When you read the word “懂 (understand)”, it has a “↑ (a variant of the word ‘心 heart’ as a radical)”. (Zheng Li, June 22, 2021).

In Example 2, when the female anchor Zheng Li mentioned how foreigners should understand China, she used the direct moderating hedge “I think”, which is a speech act that expresses “suggestion”. On the one hand, it expresses personal opinions more perceptually, giving people a feeling of intimacy, and on the other hand, it also weakens the feeling of being imposed on others.

It can be seen from “Table 2” that in the discourse of “Anchor Talks the Broadcast”, the adaptor hedges have the highest frequency, accounting for about 44.72%, followed by the rounder hedges, accounting for about 44.72%, and the next is the indirect shield hedges, accounting for about 11.59%, and direct shield has the lowest frequency, accounting for about 9.94%.

Male anchors and female anchors have the highest frequency of using adaptor hedges. The most commonly used adaptor hedges are: more, very, most, very, basically, specially and so on. For example:

Example 3: Such a lion is powerful, but very humble; has the ability to roar, but chooses to be gentle. Is such an image of China more vivid? And each of us can also contribute to such an image, and we can also meet a better self from this. (Kang Hui, June 1, 2021).

Example 4: I noticed that the General Secretary also emphasized that there have been safety accidents in many places across the country recently. It is very important to comprehensively investigate all kinds of potential safety hazards, and it is very important to achieve eight words, that is, “inference from one case to another, and compact responsibility”. (Li Zimeng, June 13, 2021).

Examples 3 and 4 are broadcasts by Kang Hui and Li Zimeng, who use words of degree to further emphasize their points. Kang Hui said, “Such a lion is very powerful, but very humble.” The opposite of “powerful” and “humble” have been modified with degree-type hedges, so as to strengthen the lion, which are the two characteristics of China. Li Zimeng’s sentence first used an indirect moderating hedge, introduced General Secretary Xi’s speech, and added a degree-changing hedge “in particular” to highlight the rationale and authority of her views.

However, male anchors and female anchors differ in the frequency of using shield hedges. Female anchors use indirect shield hedges more than direct shields, accounting for about 14.42% and 10.70%, respectively, while male anchors use indirect shield hedges. The frequency of anchors using both is 9.33%. It can be seen that when female anchors broadcast news and comments, they prefer to quote the views of third parties and express their views more indirectly and euphemistically. They most often use “General Secretary Xi Jinping said” or “General Secretary said” to support their comments and increase the credibility of their comments by introducing the views of the top party and state leaders. In addition, female anchors are also willing to introduce the opinions of netizens or the general public, such as: as the saying goes, (everyone) says, we often say, etc., which can shorten the distance with the public. For example:

Example 5: We often say that remembering history is to create history, and what does it depend on to create history? In this regard, the general secretary pointed out that there are three things that “must never be lost”, never lose the spirit of revolution and hard work, never lose the tradition of modesty and prudence, guarding against arrogance and impetuosity, hard work, diligence and thrift, and never lose the courage to not be afraid of strong enemies, not be afraid of risks, dare to fight, and dare to win. (Bao Xiaofeng, June 26, 2021).

In Example 5, the female anchor Bao Xiaofeng inserted the often said “remembering history in order to create history” when broadcasting the party history study, and continued to express her views on this basis. This will improve the decency of what is said, make it more acceptable, and increase the strength and validity of persuasion.

4 A Functional Analysis of Hedges in the Discourse of “Anchor Talks the Broadcast”

Kang Hui, the anchor of “Anchor Talks the Broadcast” once said: “You should never be low-key when you are tall, and you should never be on the air if you are down-to-earth.” Different from “CCTV News” in the era of the big screen, “Anchor Talks the Broadcast” is a new media news commentary program based on network communication, and it is a decentralized new discourse platform [14]. Changes in the media have determined that the discourse of “Anchor Talks the Broadcast” should not only adhere to the traditional authority, but also allow more audiences to participate with a more open mind, so as to create an atmosphere of equal conversation. The use of hedges in “Anchor Talks the Broadcast” can help anchors increase the strength and validity of their opinions when delivering information.

4.1 Hedges Can Make Discourse Express Both Rationality and Sensibility

Compared with traditional TV news commentary, the short video news commentary “Anchor Talks the Broadcast” is to build a discourse mode that convinces people with reason [15]. The emotions conveyed change from single to multiple, and emotionally from pure rationality to both rationality and sensibility. This is reflected in discourse by using hedges as much as possible to adjust the scale of emotions and opinions conveyed, not only expressing one’s own views clearly through variable hedges, but also leaving room for stating facts and opinions, especially when it comes to sensitive information or topics, which can try to avoid being opinionated.

By using moderated hedges, anchors can express their views emotionally and appropriately, and can also build a clear and persuasive style for the column.

4.2 Hedges Can Shorten the Distance Between Anchors and Netizens

In the era of new media, the transmission of information and opinions is two-way, and the network can comment on the broadcast information of the anchor. The release platforms of “Anchor Talks the Broadcast” are mainly Weibo, WeChat, Tik Tok and other highly interactive social media, and the interaction with netizens is more obvious. The anchors introduce hedges, especially the moderating hedges, which can make both sides of the commentary shift to a “friend-like” perspective. This will help to enhance the dialogue of comments, narrow the distance with the public, avoid blunt preaching, improve the acceptability of information and opinions, and help “Anchor Talks the Broadcast” to build a popular column image.

5 Conclusion

This paper uses corpus and other methods to analyze the types and types of hedges in the new media commentary program “Anchor Talks the Broadcast”, the similarities and differences between male and female anchors using hedges, and analyze the functions of hedges, drawing the following conclusions:

In the program “Anchor Talks the Broadcast”, anchors use approximators much more frequently than moderate hedges. The frequency of male anchors using variable hedges is higher than that of female anchors, and the frequency of male anchors using moderating hedges is lower than that of female anchors.

In the discourse of “Anchor Talks the Broadcast”, the adaptor hedges appear most frequently, followed by the rounder hedges, thirdly the indirect shield hedges, and the direct shield hedges with the lowest frequency. Male anchors and female anchors have the highest frequency of using adaptor hedges, but female anchors use indirect shield hedges more than direct shield hedges. This shows that the gender of the anchor will affect the choice of hedges.

The use of hedges can help anchors increase the strength and validity of their opinions when delivering information. Hedges can make words express both rationality and sensibility, and can also shorten the distance between anchors and netizens.

The shortcomings of this paper are mainly reflected in two aspects: on the one hand, the number of corpora the researchers choose is limited, and the samples have certain

limitations, which may affect the analysis results; on the other hand, the researchers' analysis of the phenomenon is not deep enough, for example, the researchers have not made a specific analysis of the hedges used in the comments.

In the future, it is necessary to expand the scale of the corpus, and at the same time increase the corpus of traditional news commentary texts for comparative research, and make an in-depth analysis of "Anchor Talks the Broadcast" as a hedge on behalf of new media news commentary discourse.

Authors' Contributions. This paper is independently completed by Yongning Zhang.

References

1. Lakoff, G. Hedges. A study in meaning criteria and the logic of fuzzy concepts [J]. Chicago Linguistic Society Papers 1972, (8): 183–228. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00262952>
2. He Ziran, Ran Yongping, A New Introduction to Pragmatics [M]. Peking University Press, 2009. (in Chinese)
3. Huang Ping, The Interpersonal Meaning of Hedges in Legal Discourse — Taking Chinese Judgments as an Example [J]. Academic Exchange, 2010, {4}(02): 159–161. (in Chinese)
4. Gao Jieying, A Relevance Theory Study of Hedges in Court Responses [J]. Journal of Jinan University, 2012, 34(06): 132–138. (in Chinese)
5. Zhang Yanjun, Interpersonal Meanings of Hedges in Academic Discourse [J]. Journal of Literature, History and Philosophy, 2005(06): 100–106. <https://doi.org/10.16346/j.cnki.37-1101/c.2005.06.015>. (in Chinese)
6. Wang Jingjing, Lv Zhongshe, A Study on Hedging in Chinese Doctoral Students' Academic Writing [J]. Foreign Language Education, 2016, 37(05): 52–56. <https://doi.org/10.16362/j.cnki.cn61-1023/h.2016.05.012>. (in Chinese)
7. Zhu Meihui, The Pragmatic Function of Hedges in Conversational Politeness [J]. International Business, 2002, {4}(05): 50–53+65. (in Chinese)
8. Wu Huijuan, A Study of Hedges Based on the Doctor-patient Communication Corpus [J]. Journal of Hefei University, 2018, 35(01): 102–105. (in Chinese)
9. Zeng Zheng, Pragmatic Functions of Hedging in English Commercial Advertising [J]. Journal of Guizhou Normal University, 2009(04):126–130. DOI:<https://doi.org/10.16614/j.cnki.issn1001-733x.2009.04.008>. (in Chinese)
10. Tao Xuecheng, Analysis on Hedges in English Sports News Based on COCA [J]. Henan University of Engineering, 2015, 30(02): 70–74. <https://doi.org/10.16203/j.cnki.cn41-1396/c.2015.02.015>. (in Chinese)
11. Chen Mingzhu, Xie Qun, A Study of Hedges in News Reports on the COVID-19 Outbreak — Taking People's Daily as an Example [J]. Journal of Hubei University of Economics (Humanities and Social Sciences), 2020, 17(09): 100–103. (in Chinese)
12. Prince E F, Frader J, Bosk C. On hedging in physician-physician discourse [J]. Linguistics and the Professions, 1982, 8(1): 83–97.
13. He Ziran, Hedges and Verbal Communication [J]. Foreign Languages (Journal of Shanghai International Studies University), 1985, {4}(05): 29–33. (in Chinese)
14. Han Haopeng, Cheng Wensheng, An Analysis of the Discourse Construction of "Anchor Talks Broadcast" under the Network Agenda Setting [J]. China Radio & TV Academic Journal, 2021, {4}(07): 112–115. (in Chinese)
15. Qiang Xinyue, Liang Xiangyi, The Four Turns of the Discourse Mode of Short Video News Comments — A Case Analysis of CCTV's "Anchor Talking" [J]. Modern Communication, 2021, 43(04): 61–67. (in Chinese)

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

