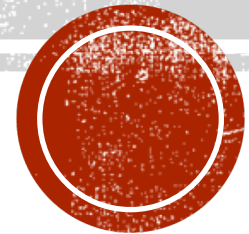


HEDGING

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B2.1



MAIN IDEA

- This ESL lesson teaches English hedging techniques. Hedging is an important writing skill because it shows ESL students how to express sophisticated ideas and avoid broad claims that, sometimes, can appear clunky. Learning English hedging techniques and vocabulary improves the student's ability to express reasonable arguments, sound more persuasive and communicate with greater precision.
- **What is Hedging?**
- Hedges are not used all of the time. Hedging is used for a purpose. Writers, and speakers, like *to hedge* in order to improve communication by presenting an idea or message in a package that makes it easy for the listener to receive. This packaging can have many purposes:
 - demonstrate **politeness** with indirect words;
 - show doubt about **probability** (e.g. likely), **frequency** (e.g. how often) and **quantity** (e.g. how much);
 - express **caution**;
 - **separate** the idea from the writer (e.g. **The data suggest** gas prices are going down);
 - show **modesty** by under-exaggerating.



WHY LEARN HEDGING?

- Understanding how to hedge is an important skill in classes that teach academic writing where the objective is to help students meet rigorous standards. In less demanding classroom settings, hedging helps students by introducing them to new words, phrases, and sentence patterns which they can use as models in their own development. Finally, there is a possible crossover benefit with oral communication.
- In Korea, where I live, ESL students often use the word “maybe” to hedge an idea or a fact. It’s often used incorrectly and many times causes doubt at the wrong time. Here is a simple dialogue that typifies those situations:
- Rob: Where is Hyun-chul? Is he coming to class today?
- Student: He is coming to school right now, maybe.
- Rob: Grrrrr.



COMMON HEDGING TECHNIQUES

- Most ESL students have had a few lessons in adverbs of frequency. These lessons teach words like **always**, **usually**, **sometimes** and **rarely**. Many of these words can be used to hedge an idea when talking about how often something happens, but they are not suitable for other ideas, like caution, quantity, probabilities, indirectness or modesty.
- Here is a list of different ways to do hedge:
- **1. Modal verbs (e.g. may, might, can, could, would)**
- It will rain tomorrow. — It **might** rain tomorrow.
- **2. Adjectives (e.g. possible, probable)**
- Gasoline prices will increase next month. — An increase in gas prices next month is **probable**.
- **3. Adverbs (e.g. probably, usually, possibly, perhaps, likely)**
- I will be late for dinner. — I will **probably** be late for dinner.
- **4. Introductory phrases (e.g. The data suggest ..., It can be concluded that..., It appears that)**
- There is life on Mars. — **It appears that** there is life on Mars.
- **5. Lexical verbs (e.g. assume, believe, suggest, seem)**
- Your answer is wrong. — **I think** your answer is wrong.
- **6. Nouns (e.g. assumption, possibility, indication)**
- There's no way she will pass the job interview. — **There is a possibility** that she won't pass job interview.

