Hedging and Gender in the Political interviews

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Abstract

This paper aims at investigating the use of hedging strategies, their distribution and their types within concept gender in the political interviews specifically the interviews with the American politicians. A descriptive analytical method is adopted by the researcher. The data is analyzed according Martin-Martin model (2008) of strategies of using hedges. The results shows that there are significant differences in using hedging strategies usage within concept of gender (male, female).

Keywords: Hedging, hedges, gender, political discourse

1. Introduction:

Language is a tool to conduct communication and exchange ideas. The strategies of hedging are used to make the proposition content indeterminate. Hedges can be " particles, words or phrases that modify the degree of membership of a proposition; the membership is partial or true only in certain aspects, or that it is more true and complete than possibly might be expected". There are certain strategies are used to achieve functions of hedges and the indetermination and mitigation of the proposition. The distribution strategies is different according to text type, gender, status and context. Hedging is considered as a politician's craft. Hedging strategies are used by male and female. The present paper aims at investigating the use and the distribution of hedging strategies in political interviews the relation to gender.

2. Aims and Scope of the Study

This paper aims at investigating the use and the distribution of hedging strategies in the political interviews and the scope of this paper is limited to excerpts of two interviews of politicians. The analyzed speech is that of the politicians only.

Literature Review:

3. The Concept of Hedging:

To define hedges and hedging, this term is commonly used to refer to a phenomenon of interactional. Broadly speaking, the words hedges, and hedging can be defined as referring to a barrier, limit, defense, or the act or means of protection defense (Oxford English Dictionary)

Lakeoff (1972:195) defines hedges as "words whose jobs is to make things more or less fuzzy". Hyland (1998:1) states that straightforward definitions of the notions are rare, and the existing characterizations reveal that these terms are used in different ways by authors. From a linguistic point of view again, hedging has been viewed by different researchers according to their views whether they are pragmatic or semantic ones. The differences are also exist in terminology relating to linguistic area, terms other than hedge and hedging being used to describe some of the linguistic phenomena elsewhere described as hedges. Notions like stance marker (e.g., Atkinson,1999) , understatement (Hubler, 1983), down-toner (Quirk et al., 1985) and down-grader (House and Kasper, 1981) at times appear in literature where the term hedge might be used by other scholars.

To achieve the interactional phenomenon of hedging, the produced hedges by the addresser must be interpreted by the addressee. Thus, "intuition" plays a key role production and interpretation of a hedge (Salager-Meyer & Sales, 1991:36).

The effective intuition should be based on lexico-grammatical and pragmatic background knowledge. This must arise from a complete understanding of discourse. The hedging strategy is important to show the relationship between language forms, messages, and language users (ibid).

4. Taxonomy of Hedges:

Hedgesare of different types, one can use different strategiesto hedge a statement.   As Salager-Meyer (1997) mentions that there is alist of strategic stereotype for hedging strategies which are put under different grammatical forms such as:

a- Model auxiliary verbs. These verbs are used for hedging like may, might, can, could, would, should....etc. e.g.,

b- Modal lexical verbs: those verbs are used to perform acts such as doubting and evaluating, such as: to seem, to appear, to believe, ….etc.

c- Adjectival, adverbial, and nominal modal phrases: such as probable, possible, …etc.

d- Approximators: approximators are considered as hedges. They include approximators of degree, quality, quantity, frequency and time.

e- Introductory phrases such phrases as : you know, it is our view that, I believe, to our knowledge, …etc

f- If clauses: these clauses can be regarded as a type of hedges, such as if true, if anything …etc.

g- Compound hedges : this is the last group of hedges which includes :

1- a modal auxiliary combine with a lexical verb with a hedging content, e.g., *it would appear.*

2- A lexical verb followed by a hedging adverb or adjective e.g., *it seems reasonable.* (Salager-Meyer, 1997: 109-10).

5. Gender and Hedging:

The gender has great effect in the using hedges. Lakoff (1975b: 45) says that "the difference in language between man and women is a consequence of male dominance and female subordination".   women are a suppressed minority group as Lakoff looks at. The use of hedging devices is one area of an investigation in which this argument has found support.

Lakoff confirms that women's speech lacks authority, this is to become "feminine" women must learn to adopt an unassertive style of communication. This means their statement must be deprived of declarative force. Lakoff invents the phrase "women's language" to refer to a group of linguistic devices that serve this function, including hesitation, intensive adverbs, empty adjectives. Hedges form part of this group. Hedging have characterized distinguishly in research on gender and communication. Thus, researchers who follow him have made distinct theoretical claims that women's language is hesitating and insufficient in quantity and force (Lakoff, 1975b: 46).

Fishman (1978: 399) mentions that differences concerning gender in communication reflect and reproduce variable irregularities between the sexes. In addition, Holmes (1986: 21) confirms that affective hedges are most common in all female talk and least common in all male talk.

Gender differences in the frequency using of hedging, Holmes thinks that men and women use hedging in distinct ways. Women always employ them as strategies of "positive politeness" (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 117). For instance, women generally use the hedge sort of to fulfill emotional functions that means to soften statements in a way that shows concern for others feelings (For more information, see Boe, 1987: 272).

Holmes (1988b: 85) asserts that women tend to use the hedging strategies as " you know" as a facilitative device. Whereas Men use hedges such as (sort of, you know, on the other hand, generally) to serve goals of an epistemic nature, that is, men use hedging in order to indicate degrees of verbal hesitancy and uncertainty.

Holmes (1995: 101) specifies the relationship which connects gender and communication. Holmes challenges the beliefs that women are uncertain communicators. Holmes clarifies that women's language as sensitive and compassionate rather than deficient.

6. Hedging and Social Implications:

Social factors, such as politeness, play an important role in the verbal communication. As Brown and Levinson (1978) mention that when utterances threaten the face of the addresser or the addressee, in this case, hedging can convey to the addressee that the addresser is concerned with the interests of that person. When an utterance threatens the addresser own face e.g., having to admit his/her own failure…etc. the addresser can protect his/her face by using hedging. On the other hand, the addresser can soften the threat and so the addresser can protect his/herself from damaging the relationship with the addressee. Thus, "face" may be a universal concept, and might be a universally held assumption (Brown & Levinson, 1978:13) .

Any face-threatening utterance must be appropriately hedged in a given context since too much or too little hedging can be impolite. Here, cultural aspects play an important role since the appropriate amount of social hedging varies from culture to culture.

Now, social functions of hedging , in being polite, are not only explicitly conveyed to the addressee but also implicitly conveyed. In most contexts, the implication is derived by an utterance interacting with contextual information (Brown & Levinson, 1978: 60-1).

7. Functions of Hedges

A great attention is paid to clarify the functions of hedges. Salager-Meyer (1997: 106-8) says that hedges express the attitude of the addresser towards the proposition and the relation of the proposition to the truth conditions, in addition , there are linguists who analyze hedges in terms of politeness. The are two main models that express the functions of hedges. These are:

A: Politeness model:

It is very important to shed light on the connection between politeness and hedges. The relation between hedges and politeness is interwoven. Several writers focus on this relation such as Mayer (1985,1989), Brown and Levinson (2000) . those linguists consider hedging as a sign of politeness. It is worth to mention that most linguists say that politeness and hedges go together in a spoken discourse.

Cameron (2003:69) mentions that when something is said, something is done. Even though politeness deals with other feelings of the people, at the same time it is a mean to achieve some goals (Valeika and Verikaite, 2010: 64) . Hence, the face of the addressee (i.e. a kind of public self- image) has to take into account. There are two types of face : negative and positive face (Yule, 1996:60).

B: Poly-pragmatic model:

Markkanen and Schroder (1997: 9)show that instructing, informing, entertaining, moving and enhancing are considered as parts of the text. Additionally, a text should also emphasize the reliability of the author as well as move the reader emotionally. The last two functions are closely connected with phenomenon of hedging eventhough hedges are not inherent characteristics of the texts. However, one of the reasons why texts are are hedged is due to the author-reader relationship.

Hyland (1996:437) mentions that hedges can range of different meanings; hence, the proposed model is not stringent as it is not always possible to distinguish between the meanings or to relate one linguistic form to a scientific function. A hedge is not always permit a single, unequivocal pragmatic interpretation; thus, the poly-pragmatic model was created.

There are four variables in determining the sub-parts of the poly pragmatic model, specification, verification, agentivity, and cooperation (Hyland, 1996:439).

The first one "specification" is associated particularly with attribute hedges, they deal with the preciseness of the propositional context. Verification, on the other hand, refers to the confidence of the addresser. It refers to the acknowledgement of doubt and uncertainties about the proposition. As a result, it is associated with the reliability hedges. Agentivity refers to how the action or state describe in the proposition is associated with writer; therefore, it is associated with reader-oriented and content oriented hedges. Cooperation offers alternative and reference to other assumptions and thus indicates the extent to which the writer involves the reader in the interpretation of the claim.

8. **Strategies of Using Hedging**

Martin-Martin (2008:138-9) mentions the strategies of using hedging, in these strategies, the use the linguistic devices at lexico-grammatical and syntactic level shows the function of hedges. The following basic strategies of the hedges are:

1- Strategy of indetermination: by giving a proposition a colouring of lesser semantic, qualitative and quantitative explicitness as well as of uncertainty, vagueness, and fuzziness. This strategy may comprise:

A- Epistemic modality, which can be realized by means of :

- Modal auxiliary verbs expressing possibility, such as may, might, can
- Semi-auxiliaries such as : to seem, to appear.
- Epistemic lexical verbs such as: to struggle, to speculate, to assume
- Verbs of cognition such as to believe / to think
- Modal adverbs (perhaps, possibly, probably)
- Modal nouns: possibility, assumption, suggestion)
- Modal adjectives: possible, probable, likely)

B- Approximators of quantity, frequency, degree and time. Such as generally, approximately, most, relatively, frequently, various …etc. which indicate an unwillingness to make precise and complete commitment to the proposition expressed.

C- "if clauses" : this strategy is used to refer to the strategy of hedging as Salager-Meyer (2007:109-10) suggests. Here, it is used to show uncertainty or doubt concerning a condition. E.g., if true / if nothing .

D- "Interrogative constructions" are also be used in hedging. Hyland (1998:143) says that question are treated as one form of non-lexical hedging, they are used to refer to the limitation of knowledge. For example: do you agree with me?

E- Attributive shields: these are expressions which are used to attribute the responsibility of the proposition to someone other than the addresser . there are two types of attributives
 - Personal attributives : for example: according to him
 - Impersonal attributives: for example: according to the reports.

2- Strategy of subjectivisation: this strategy include:-

A- The use of personal pronouns (I/we) followed by verbs of cognition (think / believe) or performative verbs (suppose / suggest) that can be interpreted as addressers' signaling that what they say is simply their personal / subjective opinion. In this way, the addressers show respect for the addressees' alternative opinion and invite the addressee to become involved in the communicative situation. In this subcategory Martin-Martin has also included those linguistic devices which express the addresser's personal doubt and direct involvement such as (to our knowledge/ in our view, in my experience ….etc.)

B- Quality- emphasizing adjectival and adverbial expressions, such as: extremely interesting, particularly important. These emphatic expressions that is Hyland (1998) names "boosters) and which are equivalent to what Salager-Meyer (1991;1994;1998) terms as " emotionally-charged intensifier" which are used to convince the addressees of the importance/ truth of the propositions expressed by revealing the addresser's emotional state. At the same time, these expressions can be considered as positive politeness strategy (Myer,1989) as they show solidarity with the discourse community by exhibiting responses that assume share knowledge and desires.

C- Introductory phrase: introductory phrases are also used in hedging strategies. They are considered as a device to engage the addressee with conversation such as : " you know" .

3- Strategy of depersonalization: this strategy refers to those cases in which the addressers diminish their presence in the texts by using various impersonal agentless and passive construction in order to relieve themselves of responsibility for the truth of the propositions expressed. This strategy is syntactically realized by means of :

A- Agentless passive and impersonal constructions such as: an attempt was made to see / it seems / appears that

B- Impersonal active constructions: in which personal subject is placed by the same non-human entity such as: findings/ results/ data. Consider these examples:

      The findings suggest/reveal …

9. Material and Methods

The selected materials are excerpts of political interviews with politicians namely Nancy Pelosi and Barak Obama. It is worth mentioning that the number of the words of the both interviews are about to be identical.The followed method is analytical descriptive one based on Martin-Martin (2008) model of analyzing hedges strategies.

10. The Results of the Two Interviews Analysis

The overall is frequency and percentages of each hedging strategy. The following table presents a complete list of strategies of hedging identified by the excerpt of the interview with American politician Barak Obama . The table shows that Obama has a tendency toward using hedging strategies on different levels

Obama interview by ABC News : 15 Nov. 2015

Hedging Form	Function	Type	Linguistic Realization	Freq.
A lot	Indetermination	Approximator	Deter.	4
Actually	Indetermination	Approximator	Adverb	1
Always	Indetermination	Approximator	Adverb	4
Assumptions	Indetermination	Epistemic modality	Noun	1
Big	Indetermination	Approximator	Adj.	1
Can	Indetermination	Epistemic modality	Mod. aux.	9
Completely	Indetermination	Approximator	Adverb	2
Could	Indetermination	Epistemic modality	Mod. aux.	2
Feel	Indetermination	Epistemic modality	Verb	1
Hope	Indetermination	Epistemic modality	Noun	1
Huge	Indetermination	Approximator	Adjective	2
I think/ I don't think	Subjectivisation	Personal pro.+ cognitive v.	Clause	23
If I'm down in …. If not perfectly If the house republicans	Indetermination	If- clause	Conditional clause	9

If there's a crack				
If there's carrier				
If they've got				
If we can				
If you have …				
If you take				
Just	Indetermination	Approximator	Adverb	5
Kind of	Indetermination	Epistemic modality	Noun	10
Like	Indetermination	Approximator	Adjective	5
Long	Indetermination	Approximator	Adjective	1
Majority	Indetermination	Approximator	Noun	2
May	Indetermination	Epistemic modality	Mod. aux.	2
Might	Indetermination	Epistemic modality	Mod. aux.	1
More	Subjectivisation	Emphatic	Adverb	2
More than	Indetermination	Approximator	Adverb	1
Much	Indetermination	Approximator	Adverb	3
Number	Indetermination	Approximator	Noun	1
Part	Indetermination	Approximator	Noun	2
Possibility	Indetermination	Epistemic modality	Noun	4
Potentially	Indetermination	Epistemic modality	Noun	2
Primarily	Indetermination	Approximator	Adverb	2
Primary	Indetermination	Approximator	Adjective	2
Principle	Indetermination	Approximator	Noun	1
Probably	Indetermination	Epistemic modality	Adverb	1
Reduce	Indetermination	Approximator	Verb	2
Same	Indetermination	Approximator	Adjective	1
Several	Indetermination	Approximator	Deter.	2
Should	Indetermination	Epistemic modality	Mod. aux.	1
Significantly	Subjectivisation	Emphatic	Adverb	1
So	Subjectivisation	Emphatic	Adverb	2
Some	Indetermination	Approximator	Deter.	4
Sort that	Indetermination	Epistemic modality	Noun	1
Sufficient	Indetermination	Approximator	Adjective	1
That aren't governed	Depersonalization	Passive voice	Clause	1
That a political …	Depersonalization	Passive voice	Clause	1
That can be relieved	Depersonalization	Passive voice	Clause	1
Think	Indetermination	Epistemic modality	Verb	3
Who was involved	Depersonalization	Passive voice	Clause	1
Would	Indetermination	Epistemic modality	Mod. aux.	9
You know	Subjectivisation	Introductory phrase	Clause	11
Total No.				139

Hedging Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
Indetermination	96	69.064 %
Subjectivisation	39	28.057 %
Depersonalization	4	2.877 %
Total No.	139	100 %

Table No.(1) Frequency of occurrence of using Hedging strategies of Obama

Table No. (2) presents a complete list of strategies of hedging identified by full interview with American politicianNancy Pelosi . The table shows that Pelosi has a preference toward using certain hedging strategies than others.

Pelosi interview 7 December 2014

Hedging Form	Function	Type	Linguistic Realization	Freq.
A lot	Indetermination	Approximator	Deter.	3
Always	Indetermination	Approximator	Adverb	5
Believe	Indetermination	Epistemic modality	Verb	1
Can	Indetermination	Epistemic modality	Mod. aux.	3
Consider	Indetermination	Epistemic modality	Verb	1
Could	Indetermination	Epistemic modality	Mod. aux.	5
Feel	Indetermination	Epistemic modality	Verb	1
Great	Subjectivisation	Emphatic	Adjective	3
Guess	Indetermination	Epistemic modality	Verb	1
He has been respected	Depersonalization	Passive voice	Clause	1
He is received	Depersonalization	Passive voice	Clause	1
He was elected	Depersonalization	Passive voice	Clause	1
He was re-elected	Depersonalization	Passive voice	Clause	1
He was tasked	Depersonalization	Passive voice	Clause	1
He was viewed	Depersonalization	Passive voice	Clause	1
Hope	Indetermination	Epistemic modality	Verb	1
Hopes	Indetermination	Epistemic modality	Noun	1
I believe	Subjectivisation	Personal pro.+ cognitive v.	Clause	1
I don't think/ I just think	Subjectivisation	Personal pro.+ cognitive v.	Clause	4
I mean	Subjectivisation	Introductory phrase	Clause	3
I think	Subjectivisation	Personal pro.+ cognitive v.	Clause	8
If they still .. If you take If your party has… If some of their people. If they have If your party If I have to say … If you look at our … If you are saying	Indetermination	If- clause	Conditional clause	10
It made permanent…	Depersonalization	Impersonal structure	Clause	1
It was all very positive	Depersonalization	Impersonal structure	Clause	1
It was going	Depersonalization	Impersonal structure	Clause	1

I've never thought	Subjectivisation	Personal pro.+ cognitive v.	Clause	1
Just	Indetermination	Approximator	Adverb	6
Kind of	Indetermination	Epistemic modality	Noun	1
Like	Indetermination	Approximator	Adjective	1
Long	Indetermination	Approximator	Adjective	3
Majority	Indetermination	Approximator	Noun	1
Many	Indetermination	Approximator	Deter.	6
Maybe	Indetermination	Epistemic modality	Adverb	2
Might	Indetermination	Epistemic modality	Mod. aux.	2
Minorities /Minority	Indetermination	Approximator	Noun	5
More	Indetermination	Approximator	Adverb	3
Most	Indetermination	Approximator	Adverb	3
Much	Indetermination	Approximator	Adverb	2
Numbers	Indetermination	Approximator	Noun	1
Part	Indetermination	Approximator	Noun	1
Possible	Indetermination	Epistemic modality	Adjective	1
Primary	Indetermination	Approximator	Adjective	1
Probably	Indetermination	Epistemic modality	Adverb	2
Reduce/Reducing	Indetermination	Approximator	Verb	2
Should	Indetermination	Epistemic modality	Modal aux.	1
So	Subjectivisation	Emphatic	Adverb	2
Some	Indetermination	Approximator	Determiner	7
Sometimes	Indetermination	Approximator	Adverb	1
Sound	Indetermination	Epistemic modality	Verb	1
That was expected	Depersonalization	Passive voice	Clause	1
Thought	Indetermination	Epistemic modality	Verb	1
Tremendous	Indetermination	Approximator	Adjective	1
Very	Subjectivisation	Emphatic	Adverb	11
Would	Indetermination	Epistemic modality	Modal aux.	10
You know	Subjectivisation	Introductory phrase	Clause	1
Total No.				156

Hedging Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
Indetermination	112	71.794 %
Subjectivisation	34	21.794 %
Depersonalization	10	6.420 %
Total No.	156	100 %

Table No. (2) Frequency of occurrence of using Hedging strategies

Using Hedging Strategies

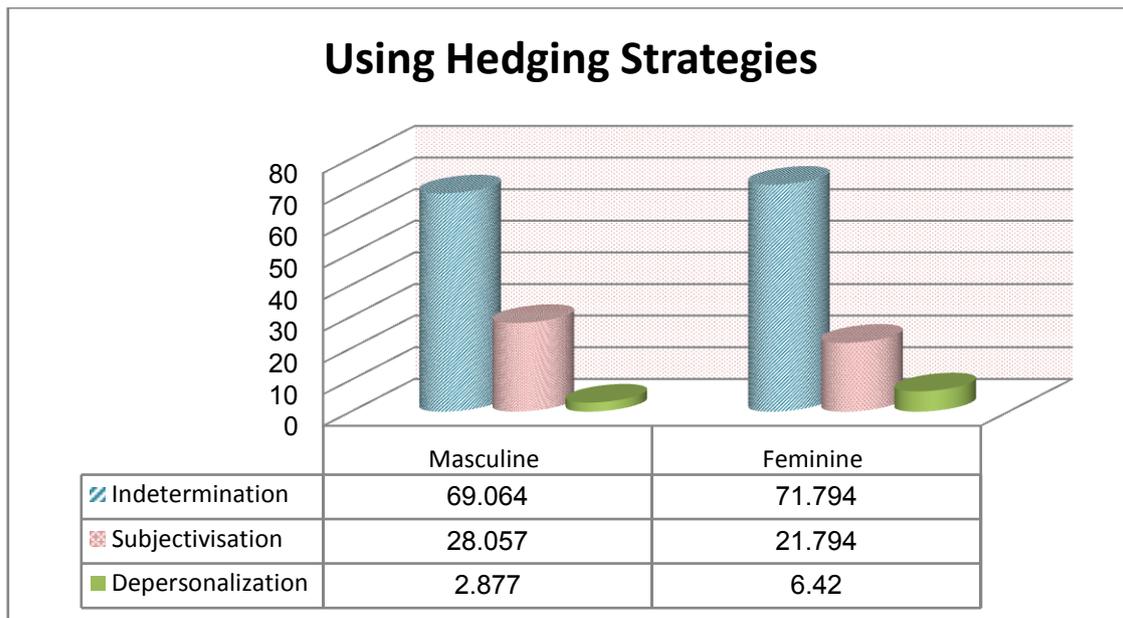|	Masculine	Feminine
Indetermination	69.064	71.794
Subjectivisation	28.057	21.794
Depersonalization	2.877	6.42

Figure No. (1) using hedging strategies according to gender

11. Discussion:

In analyzing these two interviews of the politicians according to the distribution, the type and the percent of usage.The results show different hedging strategies are used by the participants. The differences are very little according to the strategies, but they are significant according to the kinds of hedging. It seems that female (Pelosi) tends to use morehedging strategies than male (Obama). The two persons use of hedging strategies with different frequencies, Pelosi uses indetermination strategy with a frequency of occurrence 112 amounting to 71.764 % whereas Obama uses the same strategy with a frequency of occurrence96 amounting to 69.064 % . Obama and Pelosi use indetermination strategy at high levels than other strategies. It is the most frequently used,this strategy includes different types such as epistemic modality, approximators, interrogative structureetc.This strategy allows the addresser to be fuzzy about the proposition content, and avoid face threatening acts, this formulates illocutions so as not offend the addressee. Concerning Epistemic modality. Obama uses the epistemic modality (Sub-type of indetermination) with a frequency of occurrence 48 times with 34.532% percent whereas Pelosi use the epistemic modality with a frequency of occurrence 35 amounting to 22.435 %. The number and the percent of this type aredifferent in the interviews of Obama and Pelosi. Concerning the approximators, Obama uses this type about 49 times amounting to 35.251%, while Pelosi uses it 52 times amounting to 33.333%. There is no a significant difference among them, it is only (1%) percent. Let consider another type of hedging strategy, which is "subjectivisation". It seems that Obama uses this strategy with a frequency of 39 times amounting to (28.057%) percent of all strategies, whereas Pelosi uses this strategy about 34 amounting to(21.794%) of all hedging strategies. This strategy includes sub-types such as personal beliefs, quality emphasis, and introductory phrases. The use of this strategy has a firm relation with positive and negative politeness strategy. The addresser presents the content of the proposition according to his

beliefs and allows the addressee to participate in conversation. In this strategy, one can see that Obama uses personal pronoun with cognitive verbs about 23 times amounting to 16.546% of all hedging strategies. Whereas Pelosi uses this sub-type 14 times amounting to 8.974%. Here there is a significant difference between the male and female usage. Concerning the introductory phrases, Pelosi uses them 4 times amounting to(2.564%), while Obama uses it 11 times amounting to(7.913%). The difference is significant. The last sub-category is quality emphasis type. It seems that Pelosi uses it 20 times with (12.820%) percent of all hedging strategies, while Obama uses it 5 times with (3.597%) percent of all hedging strategies.The last strategy is depersonalization.Using this strategy allows the addresser to describe the proposition content without direct personal attribution. The addresser neglects the personal attribution to the proposition and allows the addressee to participate in the conversation about the proposition because the inclusion of the personal pronouns leads to decrease the authorial presence in the proposition It appears that Obama uses this strategy 4 times with (2.877%) percent of all strategies. Whereas Pelosi uses this strategy 10 times with (6.420%) percent.

12. Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is to compare the frequency and the distribution of hedging strategies used by two different gender (male and female) politicians. The findings of this paper refers that female tends to use more hedging strategies than male. In addition, the female has tendency and preference to use certain types of these strategies more than other types as it appears in the use of depersonalization strategy. The use quality emphasis type of the strategy of subjectivisation in very high level reached to 12.820 % percent than male who use it with 3.597% percent. This type of strategy has direct relation with positive politeness strategy.

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Appendix : interviews titles:

President Barack Obama an interview ABC News' chief anchor George Stephanopoulos conducted with President Barack Obama on November 12, 2015 at the White House.

Nancy Pelosi Interview : CQ Roll Call's Emma Dumain interviewed Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., on Dec. **7** 2014