

HEDGES AS A CONVERSATIONAL STRATEGY IN WOMEN'S GOSSIP IN THE BOLD TYPE SEASON 1

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the functions of hedges employed in women's gossip by all female characters in *The Bold Type Season 1*.

This study applied Coates' (1996) classifications of hedges functions combined with two other functions proposed by Rabab'ah and Rumman (2015) to investigate the hedges function. The researchers employed a descriptive-qualitative method and collected the data by highlighting the transcript of the series to identify the conversations categorized as women's gossip. The data were then analyzed in several steps; identifying by giving codes, classifying, interpreting or discussing, and making a conclusion. The study revealed that all four hedges' functions by Coates and two functions by Rabab'ah and Rumman are found in female characters' utterances in their gossip. Based on the study's result, using hedges as a conversational strategy in female characters' utterances smoothens their conversation during gossip. It can facilitate them to convey precise ideas when they exchange information and prevent them from delivering exaggerated information during gossip. It also helps them maintain solidarity and friendship between the participants, which is the overall function of female gossip. To conclude, hedges or hedging can be an influential conversational strategy in women's gossip.

INTRODUCTION

In interaction, people can use different conversational strategies to make the language used can be meaningfully accepted. This difference can also be influenced by gender. As Holmes (2013) explains, men tend to apply a competitive style, while women tend to apply a cooperative style in a conversation. R. Lakoff (1975, p. 54) supports that women mostly avoid appearing strongly assertive because they believe it makes them look unfeminine. Therefore, they tend to reduce the assertion in their speech to make their language acceptable to conversational partners.

One of the conversational strategies that participants can use to convey the force of the claim less assertively is hedges or hedging. Hedging or hedges is the term that refers to linguistic devices that are used to modify a statement to be “fuzzier or less fuzzy” (G. Lakoff, 1973, p. 471). It includes some expressions such as “perhaps,” “possible,” “might,” and so forth. The use of hedges indicates a less strong claim. Therefore, hedges are commonly associated with uncertainty, doubt, politeness, indirectness, and vagueness.

It is commonly believed that women and men use hedging devices differently (R. Lakoff, 1975). Hedges are one of the women’s linguistic features, and it is generally believed that women tend to use hedging expressions more than men. Coates (2004, p. 88) supports that since women’s speech is usually defined as “tentative,” there are claims that women apply more hedges in their speeches. The different topics men and women choose in their conversation is a possible reason that affects the different usage of hedges in men’s and women’s conversations (Coates, 2004, p. 90). To sum up, hedges are commonly considered a linguistic device that tends to be used by women.

Hedges are an essential device in the use of language for interacting in social life. Several forms of hedges can serve affective functions that can build a more relaxed situation and minimize social distance with the participant in a conversation (Holmes, 1990). Hence, using hedges can help show solidarity and establish closeness between the speakers in conversation. Based on this statement, using hedges as a conversation strategy needs to be learned to establish good communication. Hence, hedges may also be a significant element in women’s gossip since maintaining solidarity in women’s gossip is a significant goal.

Gossip itself is one of the forms of language use. It is a form of interaction that we often encounter in everyday life and has become a part of the culture in society. Therefore, it is worth to be analyzed to provide insight into the use of language in everyday social interactions. Although both women and men can perform gossip, gossip is considered a specialized

characteristic of women's communication in Western society (Holmes, 2013, p. 316). Based on this reason, the researcher is interested in examining the use of hedges in women's gossip since hedges are believed as a conversational strategy that is mostly used by women and can serve affective functions, which also can facilitate women's gossip as a highly interactive conversation that can build relationship and solidarity.

In recent years, there has been growing interest in the study of how gender affects the way people gossip, such as the study to analyze several aspects of women's gossip (Mangul & Mirahayuni, 2013; Sari et al., 2015), a study on men's gossip (Mohajer, 2013), and study that compared the types and functions of men's and women's gossip (Nabilah, 2019). In line with this, hedges in written gossip or gossip articles have also been analyzed (Hasanah & Wahyudi, 2015; Wulandari, 2016). Besides, the use of hedges in several kinds of spoken interaction also has been studied by several researchers, such as in talk shows (Miladiyah & Ariyanti, 2018; Saputra, 2013), in speeches (Arifianto & Widyastuti, 2014) and presidential debate (Nariansyah, 2020). All the studies above focus on using hedges as the conversational strategy in building relationships and solidarity in verbal gossip by women. The use of hedges in gossip can be found in interactions and learned from various media, including television series. Thus, the researcher uses ten episodes of a drama series entitled *The Bold Type Season 1* since the series contains a lot of daily conversations in women's groups that may also reflect the phenomena of gossip and can be used to reveal the use of language by female characters in gossip. Based on the explanation above, this study aims to examine the functions of hedges used in women gossip by female characters in *The Bold Type Season 1*.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Gossip

Gossip is one of the varieties of language usage. (Holmes, 2013, p. 316) defines gossip generally as a relaxed talk in an informal context done by a group. It is a form of conversation that allows participants to do positioning relationships and builds solidarity as they explore shared normative judgments to maintain the social group values (Mangul & Mirahayuni, 2013, pp. 1–2). Jones (1980, p. 194) describes gossip as women's talk in an intimate style with a personal setting and topic in their roles as women. To sum up, gossip is a relaxed talk or idle talk in a personal setting about daily life, personal matters, and personal experiences, as well as evaluations of third parties in an intimate style that can build solidarity as the participants share validation and judgments or evaluations.

Women's Gossip

Gossip is commonly associated with women's talk. According to Holmes (2013, p. 316), gossip is commonly known as a specialized characteristic of women's communication in Western society. Jones (1980, pp. 194–197), who considers gossip as women's talk, classifies several elements of gossip. First, the cultural setting in gossip is usually personal and private, with places such as a house, cloakrooms, women's toilets, supermarkets, hairdressers, corridors, tea rooms, etc. Second, the participants in gossip are women as members of the social group. Third, women's role is reflected in the topic of gossip. The topic is usually about personal experience, which can be about third parties and speakers' lives.

Furthermore, there are generally some formal features to give positive responses to each other and give validation to each other's opinions in gossip, such as paralinguistic responses. Last, the functional categories of gossip are house-talk (sharing of resources and information related to women's roles), scandal (criticizing other people's behavior), bitching (complaining about their restricted role), and chatting (sharing and commenting on each other's feelings by taking turns retelling each other's experiences and incidents in women's daily lives in an evaluative process that also provides emotional supports). In women's gossip, they also give sympathetic responses to each other by validating or confirming other participants' reactions or attitudes, developing, and responding to each other's topics discussed. They also frequently give agreements and even complete each other's speeches. Thus, gossip carried out by women builds relationships and solidarity between the participants involved (Holmes, 2013, p. 316).

Conversational Strategies

The term conversational strategies refer to linguistic strategies used by people in conducting a conversation. Coates (2004, p. 86) affirms that in conversational interaction, men and women speakers characteristically employ different strategies. Women tend to be cooperative conversationalists, while men tend to use a competitive style (Holmes, 2013, p. 314; Coates, 2004, p. 126). Based on Holmes (2013, p. 315), the influence of the pattern in society and the context causes women and men to use different strategies in conversations. To sum up, conversational strategies in interaction can be influenced by the patterns and norms that emerge in society and the context.

Hedges

The term "hedges" or "hedging" was first introduced by George Lakoff in 1973. He describes hedges as a linguistic form used to make a statement "fuzzier or less fuzzy" (G. Lakoff, 1973, p. 471). Based on Coates (2004, p. 88), hedges are linguistic forms such as "I

think,” “you know,” “I’m sure,” “perhaps,” “like,” and “sort of” that can be used to indicate the speaker’s uncertainty or certainty regarding the thing that is discussed. Likewise, (Salager-Meyer, 1997, p. 106) states that hedges are verbal and adverbial expressions that are related to degrees of probability, such as “perhaps,” “may,” “can,” “suggest,” etc. This strategy allows the speaker to express controversial views by making the line less strong or critical (Saputra, 2013). By hedging, a speaker can reduce a statement’s truth, assertion, or perceived negative effect on the interlocutors. The use of hedges can bridge the factual interpretation of the user about the proposition information and the proposition information itself (Salager-Meyer, 1997, p.106). Therefore, it is considered an interactive element essential to good communication.

Types of Hedges

(Salager-Meyer, 1997, pp. 109–110) categorized the hedges into seven types, called “strategic stereotypes.”

Table 1: Salager-Meyer’s Classifications of Hedges

Types of Hedges	Expressions
Modal Auxiliary Verbs	<i>can, might, may, could, would, should.</i>
Modal Lexical Verbs	<i>to appear, to seem, to speculate, to argue, to believe, to suggest, to assume, to estimate, to tend, to propose, to indicate, etc.</i>
Probability Adjectives, Adverbs, and Nouns	<i>probable, unlikely, and possible, also nouns such as possibility, suggestion, assumption, estimate, claim, and adverbs (included in non-verbal models) such as possibly, practically, maybe, probably, nearly, likely, apparently, presumably, and perhaps.</i>
Approximators of Degree, Quantity, Frequency, and Time	<i>roughly, often, about, somehow, sort of, approximately, a lot of, occasionally, usually, generally, somewhat, kind of, etc.</i>
Introductory Phrases	<i>I think, I believe, to our knowledge, we feel that, it is our view that, etc.</i>
If Clause	<i>if anything, if true, etc.</i>
Compound Hedges	<i>it would appear, it seems reasonable/probable, it seems somewhat unlikely that, it may appear somewhat speculative that, etc.</i>

Functions of Hedges

Coates (1996, pp. 154–162) classifies four functions of hedging devices in spoken interaction. Furthermore, to provide detailed classifications of the functions of hedges, the researcher also combines the theory by adding two other functions from the theory by Rabab’ah and Rumman (2015), which also proposed several functions of hedges in non-scientific discourse.

The Expression of Doubt and Confidence

The first function, or the hedges’ basic function, indicates that a speaker is not committed to something they said. Therefore, people use hedges when they lack confidence about the truth

of the claim or the proposition that they deliver in their utterance (Coates, 1996, p. 154). Several forms of hedges, such as “maybe,” “I think,” or auxiliary verbs such as “might” and “may,” are hedges forms that generally can be used to signify a doubt (Coates, 1996, p. 155).

Besides being able to signal doubts about a claim or statement, hedges can also be used to communicate the speaker’s relative confidence in a claim (Coates, 1996, pp. 155-156). For example:

Giselle: “Bet Anna already know her sister will come.”

Irene: “Yeah, they probably already told her.”

In this conversation, the speakers talk about Anna, who most likely knows her sister will come. Irene uses “probably” as the hedging device, indicating that her statement is closer to confidence than doubt. Thus, the speaker uses the word probably, indicating she is almost certainly confident that “they” have told Anna.

Sensitivity to Others’ Feelings

Hedges can be used to modify the strength of a proposition in an utterance. The other major function of a hedge is that it also can be used to consider the conversational partner’s feelings (Coates, 1996, p. 156). As an example, the forms such as “sort of” and “kind of” as in “she looks very sort of um - kind of matronly really” indicates that the speaker is not forcing her/his proposition about “she looks matronly.”

Searching for the Right Word

Hedges can also indicate that the speaker is having trouble finding the proper words or searching for the ideal words to communicate the speaker’s meaning. This function commonly can be seen from the pause after using hedges in the speaker’s utterance. Several forms that are mostly used to achieve this function are “sort of,” “kind of,” “you know,” etc. (Coates, 1996, pp. 158-160). Hence, by using hedges for this function, a speaker can minimize the possibility of making mistakes in word choice when they deliver an idea.

Avoiding Playing Expert

Hedges can also be used as a strategy to avoid the appearance of playing expert. Based on Coates (1996, p. 160), the term ‘playing expert’ here means “where participants take it in turns to hold the floor and to talk about a subject which they are an expert on.” Using hedges with this function can make the different social distances between the speaker and the interlocutor more subtle and, thus, make sentences sound more familiar and friendly to interlocutors (Coates, 1996, pp. 161-162).

Avoiding Direct Criticism, Especially When Predicting Future Events or Consequences

Based on Rabab'ah and Rumman (2015, p.178), the other function of hedges is to soften the statement. It protects the speaker from criticism, especially when mentioning something that may happen in the future. As an example, the use of hedges in a statement such as “I think if she goes there, it will give a big contribution to the company” indicates that the speaker uses the introductory phrase “I think” to modify the force of the statement and imply that the statement is merely from the speaker’s personal view. Thus, it protects himself/herself from being criticized by others if what is said does not appear to be true in the future.

Requesting the Listeners’ Involvement

Based on Rabab'ah and Rumman (2015, p. 179), some hedging forms can be used to get the listener involved in the speaker’s utterance. The use of introductory phrases or the expression which indicate the speaker’s doubt and direct involvement, such as “*we know,*” “*we think,*” “*we believe,*” “*you know,*” etc. are some hedging forms that can be used to make the listener involved in the things that are being discussed.

Example:

“We know she is that kind of person.” “As you know, She is making progress.”

METHOD

The researcher applied the descriptive qualitative method in this study because the researcher undertook this study to understand, analyze, and interpret the data. The data source of this research was ten episodes of an American drama series, *The Bold Type Season 1*. The researcher also downloaded the subtitles to get the transcripts. Since the research data were obtained from all the conversations conducted by all 12 female characters that can be labeled as women gossip, all female characters in *The Bold Type Season 1* were the subject of this research. This study’s instrument was a human instrument, the researcher herself. Data collection techniques were conducted by searching and downloading the English subtitle, converting the subtitles files into Word files, watching the series, highlighting the conversation in the transcript to identify the conversations labeled as women’s gossip, and watching the series again to verify the highlighted data. The data analysis is then undertaken in several steps; identifying by giving codes, classifying, interpreting or discussing, and making conclusions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings

Findings from the data analysis of this study show that from 87 of 93 conversations that can be labeled as gossip in 10 episodes of *The Bold Type Season 1* series, the female characters used hedges in their utterance during gossip 298 times. The following sections further show the classification results and several examples of the data.

Functions of Hedges

All six functions are found in the female characters' utterances during gossip in *The Bold Type Season 1* series. The table below shows the finding of the hedges' functions in the series.

Table 2: Hedges' Functions in Women's Gossip by Female Characters in *The Bold Type Season 1*

Code	Hedges Functions	Frequency
F.EDC	Expression of Doubt and Confidence	172
F.SOF	Sensitivity of Other's Feelings	47
F.STR	Search for the Right Words	8
F.APE	Avoiding Playing Expert	4
F.ADC	Avoiding Direct Criticism	27
F.RLI	Requesting Listener Involvement	40
	Total	298

Expression of Doubt and Confidence

Datum 1

Ex-FIT Student : "He made me cry **at least** three times. I thought everyone hated him."

Sutton : Well, it was like a love-hate relationship, you know?"

In the datum above, Sutton and a female Scarlet employee in the fashion department who graduated from the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) are having a gossip about Peterson, who is a design lecturer at FIT. In the ex-FIT Student's statement, she uses a hedging device as an approximator of quantity through the word "at least" to indicate that she is unsure of the accuracy of the information she has conveyed about how many times Petersen made her cry. Through the use of an approximator, the ex-FIT student's utterance becomes weaker. Therefore, the ex-FIT student uses a hedging device to modify her proposition and make the truth in the information she conveys in the gossip more precise based on her understanding.

Datum 2

Cassie : "She was from 'Porch and Garden,' wasn't she? **I guess** they started layoffs too. I want to go back for the wool."

Sutton : "Cassie, we're gonna be fine."

Cassie and Sutton are gossiping about a female employee who is crying and carrying her stuff in the same elevator as them. Due to the layoff rumors spread in the company, Cassie suspects that the female employee is also getting laid off from her job. The words “I guess.” In the excerpt above is a hedging device with the pronoun “I” which expresses personal doubt and indicates direct involvement. Using the hedges, Cassie weakens her statements and indicates that what she said is merely a personal assumption. That way, the statement does not sound too assertive.

Sensitivity of Others' Feelings

Datum 3

- Jane : “But two guys? I mean, when I get froyo, I get one topping, one flavor. I definitely don’t do side by side, And I definitely don’t do the swirl ’cause then the flavors, they get all mixed...”
 Sutton : “Okay, **I feel like** the analogy could stop there.”

Jane and Sutton are conversing in the fashion closet and discussing how Jane will manage to be involved with two men simultaneously. To explain this, Jane uses an analogy about when she buys frozen yogurt. Sutton then asks Jane to stop talking about the frozen yogurt because she wants to get the point of Jane’s explanation by saying, “I feel like.” By using introductory phrases or personal doubt and direct involvement expression, Sutton’s words indicate sensitivity to Jane’s feelings as she softens her words to ask Jane to explain the point directly. Sutton could immediately tell Jane to stop talking about the analogy, but she used the expression “I feel like.” That way, she also protects herself from making a too-forceful statement. Thus, her suggestion sounds more polite, and the solidarity in gossip is maintained.

Datum 4

- Kat : “Why do you still wear a hijab? Isn’t it **kind of** contradictory?”
 Adena : “I choose to wear the hijab. It does not oppress me...”

In the datum above, Kat employs a hedging device by using approximators of degree “kind of” in her question about why Adena still wears a hijab despite her sexual orientation, which contradicts her religion’s rule. The word “kind of” in Kat’s sentence is used to limit the force of her claim and protect herself from conveying a controversial claim in her question since her question might be a sensitive topic for Adena. Moreover, Kat is unsure how Adena will respond to her question. To sum up, the hedge softens Kat’s sentence and makes the claim more acceptable and polite.

Searching for the Right Word

Datum 5

- Kat : “I have an audience of almost 2 million people like right at my fingertips. I can do so much with that. So much more than I could wandering around **some**... Foreign country without even so much as a change of underwear.”
- Sutton : “Really? That’s gross.”

Kat, Jane, and Sutton are on their way to work while talking about what Kat can do with Scarlet’s social media followers that she manages. Kat uses hedging expressions when she is having trouble searching for the proper word to say. Kat uses a hedging expression in the word “some,” followed by a pause before she continues her words to make an analogy about what she can do with the social media followers. Hence, the presence of hedges in Kat’s sentence indicates that Kat is looking for the ideal words to deliver her meaning. By using the hedging expression, Kat also protects herself from making mistakes in delivering information during their gossip.

Datum 6

- Kat : “You okay?”
- Adena : “I had **a bit of a** ... hard day, but I’m okay.”

Adena and Kat chit-chat and talk about their daily lives and personal matters. Adena uses the hedging expression “a bit of” in her sentence, followed by a pause before she continues talking. It indicates that, during the pause, Adena is looking for the most suitable word to deliver her meaning. This is may also because English is not Adena’s first language. Therefore, using hedging expressions in Adena’s sentence helps her provide the information in gossip without making mistakes in her word choice.

Avoiding Playing Expert

Datum 7

- Jane : “Also, why is that?”
- Kat : “Something technological. Blah, blah, blah. **Apparently**, hormones play a part in how we interpret images.”

Kat and Jane are having an idle talk in the fashion closet about a VR application for Scarlet magazine that Kat is working on as Scarlet’s social media director. Kat includes words that make her sentence sound vague through the word “apparently” above. Through the use of the hedging device, her sentence sounds less authoritative, more familiar, and more friendly to Jane, who is not an expert on the topic that Kat is talking about. That way, it reduces the social

distance between Jane and herself and can also maintain solidarity between Jane and Kat as the two speakers of the gossip.

Datum 8

Kat : “Anyway, I wrote a **little** something about it for the digital site, tweeted it out with the title, ‘Hey, VR Bros, Don’t Forget the Female Gaze.’”

In the same context as datum 7, Kat uses the word “little” followed by “something” when explaining to Jane what she does about her job, which she is an expert on. Kat tried to include vague words in her utterance. Through hedging, it implies that Kat is trying to make her sentences familiar, not too complicated, and easy for Jane to understand. Thus, through the use of hedges in her sentence, Kat tries not to appear like an expert in front of Jane.

Avoiding Direct Criticism, Especially when Predicting Future Events or Consequences

Datum 9

Sutton : “**I think** it’s gonna be my networking lifeline.”
Jane : “That’s cool.”

Sutton, Kat, and Jane gather in the pantry and have an idle talk about Sutton who found a digital message board for fashion assistants that can help to make more connections. Sutton predicts that the digital board may be a place where she can network with fashion people in the future. Sutton uses the word “I think,” which indicates that the sentence she said is merely her opinion and something that comes from her point of view. The word “I think” above is a hedging device that makes Sutton’s sentence sound less authoritative and forceful. By using this hedging device, Sutton also protects herself from criticism from others if, in the future, what she said about the high tea does not appear to be happening.

Datum 10

Jane : “Yeah, but he’s gonna find out eventually.”
Kat : “How? How is he gonna find out?”
Jane : “He **could** ask to see her diploma.”

When they talk, Sutton and Kat gather in the fashion closet and gossip about an absent third party. They are talking about Oliver, the head of Scarlet’s fashion department, who misunderstood and thought Sutton had graduated from the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT). Kat suggests Sutton pretend not to know about the misunderstanding to be easily recruited into the Fashion department. However, Jane tries to prevent Sutton from listening to Kat’s advice. In her sentence, Jane uses the word “could” to soften her statement about Oliver, which may ask Sutton about it and may find out about the lie in the future. It implies that Jane

is not entirely sure and only surmises the possibility of the consequences that will happen in the future. Therefore, the modal auxiliary verb “could” in Jane’s sentence mitigates her argument and make it sounds less strong.

Requesting Listener’s Involvement

Datum 11

- Jane : “Well, **we know** that’s not who you are.”
Kat : “Yeah, **we know** you better than anybody.”

At the fashion closet, Sutton talks about her problem with Oliver, the head of Scarlet’s fashion department, who discovered that Sutton lied about being a FIT graduate. Jane and Kat then provided supportive feedback and comforted Sutton. Jane and Kat use the word “we know,” which can be categorized as personal doubt and direct involvement expression. Through the use of this hedging device, Kat and Jane involve each other in their sentences. Therefore, they get validation from each other regarding the claims they convey, which can also build solidarity in their gossip.

Datum 12

- Kat : “Yeah, **we were just thinking, you know,** while you’re there, maybe you could, um... ask the doctor about getting the test. Our insurance covers it now.”
Jane : “I got to go. Love you guys.”

Kat, Jane, and Sutton are having chit-chat while Jane is waiting in front of the lift to meet a doctor and obtain some information for Alex’s article about women’s breast health. Kat, who knows that Jane has the BRCA gene from her mother, suggests that Jane should do a test when she meets the doctor. When she conveys her idea, Kat uses hedging in her words, “we were just thinking” and “You know.” Using these expressions, Kat shows her direct involvement and attempts to involve Sutton as the other gossip partner in her sentence by using the pronoun “we” and “you.” Thus, she also seeks Sutton’s agreement as her gossip partner regarding her advice to Jane.

Discussions

According to the findings, hedges are used as a conversational strategy in female characters’ utterances during women’s gossip in 10 episodes of *The Bold Type Season 1* series, a total of 298 times. However, only 8 of the 12 female characters in the series use hedges during their gossip. Those eight female characters are Jane, Sutton, Kat, Jacqueline, Adena, Noelle, Cassie, and Ex-FIT Student. This is because although the other four minor characters (Lauren,

Victoria, Mia, and Jenny) also often have conversations in the women's group, the four characters do not have many conversations that can be categorized as gossip. This is also because they have fewer appearances in the series than the other eight characters.

The results of the study show that the female characters use all six hedges functions from the theories in their gossip. Based on the finding, several hedges can serve the same function. Hedging expressions in female characters' utterances in gossip are mostly used to indicate less confidence, uncertainty, doubts, and inaccuracies in delivering information. This function is mostly found because female characters tend to make guesses or utter information without commitment during gossip.

It contrasts Wulandari's research (2016), which found modal verbs often used when gossiping on the *buzzfeed.com* website. The contrast can also see in Hasanah and Wahyudi (2015), who analyzed gossip at the *Jakarta Post*. Hasanah and Wahyudi's research found that the approximator hedges "about" are often used in gossip. The results of these studies can be different from Wulandari (2016) and Hasanah and Wahyudi (2015) because the study uses different theories to look at the same thing. Theories are like different ways of thinking about something, and they can lead to different results from this research and others because these studies focus on different things and ask different questions. Each theory provides researchers with a different framework for looking at a subject, which can influence how studies collect and analyze data and ultimately influence the results they find. Wulandari (2016) used the theory of Irigiliati (2007), while Hasanah and Wahyudi (2015) used Holmes (1990).

Although there are differences in expressing hedges, the function of hedges is almost the same. The function of hedges is mostly found in female characters who tend to make guesses and utter information that lacks commitment and accuracy during their gossip. Thus, they use hedges to be careful in expressing their ideas and make their statements less firm. Moreover, this study showed that the seven types of hedges could serve this function. Female characters also use hedging devices in gossiping to imply sensitivity to other gossip participants' feelings. By using hedging for this function, the female characters protect themselves from delivering too strong judgments, complaints, or controversial claims during gossip. This can create a more relaxed relationship and enhance solidarity between the gossip participants. Hedges are also widely used to indicate that they are requesting the involvement of the other gossip participants. Through the use of hedging expressions for this function, the female characters attempt to seek validation and agreement from the other participants in the gossip. Hedges in the female characters' utterances are also used to indicate that the female characters are looking for the most suitable and proper word to express their meaning when they deliver information in

gossip. By using hedging devices for this function, the female characters prevent themselves from conveying inaccurate information in gossip. Moreover, female characters' utterance also contains hedging devices that are used to avoid direct criticism when the female characters talk about consequences or predictions of future events in their gossip. Last, the use of hedges to avoid appearing like experts that can reduce the social distance between gossip participants is found with the least frequency, possibly caused by the female characters that mostly work in a similar field.

According to these findings, hedging in female characters' utterances helps them smoothen their conversation during gossip. By hedging, they can exchange information and ideas accurately and precisely as their understanding without making exaggerated uncertain claims during gossip and maintain a good relationship and solidarity between the gossip participants. For this reason, hedges, as the conversational strategy used by female characters, can play an important role in their gossip.

Based on the findings, it can be seen that gossip is not always negative since, through gossip, people can maintain solidarity as they talk and share information about each other's ideas, experiences, feelings, and problems, as well as give advice and suggestions to each other. The use of hedging can help to prevent us from sharing exaggerated information in gossip. In addition, hedging also prevents us from conveying too assertive arguments, advice, or controversial ideas that may offend others. However, gossip that contains talk about the badness of others or criticism of other people who are not present when the conversation occurs is considered bad behavior in our society, especially in our religion. Therefore, that kind of conversation should be avoided as much as possible.

CONCLUSION

This study is aimed to examine hedging used in gossip by female characters in the drama series *The Bold Type Season 1*. From 10 episodes of the series, the researcher found a total of 298 occurrences of hedges in female characters' gossip. The findings reveal that female characters most frequently used hedges to express uncertainty, doubts, and relative confidence when they delivered information during gossip. Based on the findings, hedges as a conversational strategy in female characters' utterances smoothen their conversation during gossip as it can facilitate them to convey precise ideas when they exchange information during gossip and avoid delivering exaggerated information. It also helps them maintain the intimate style, solidarity, and friendship between the participants, which is the overall function of female

gossip. In conclusion, hedging expressions employed in female characters' utterances can play an important role in their gossip.

Suggestion

As the present research is limited to examining the use of hedges as a conversational strategy in female gossip, the researcher would like to suggest that future researchers explore the use of hedges in male gossip or compare the use of hedges as a conversational strategy in male and female gossip. Furthermore, future researchers can also examine hedges as a conversational strategy in real-life non-scripted gossip instead of scripted gossip as in drama series. Therefore, further study of hedges and gossip can fill the gap in this study.

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