

HEDGING IN TED TALKS: A CORPUS-BASED PRAGMATIC STUDY

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Abstract: Hedging is a communicative strategy and a form of pragmatic competence which plays a central role in delivering the intended message of the speaker. Commonly observed in two-way conversations, hedges as hedging devices are also present in monologues. This study investigates the most common hedges used in popular monologues TED Talks as well as observes the various communicative strategies they denote. 130 transcripts of the talks, taped from 2002-2019 taken from the official website of TED (ted.com), are collected to build a corpus of 337,302 tokens. Through corpus-based analysis using concordance software AntConc 3.5.0, 48 most common hedges are inserted for frequency search. The search hits show that the most frequently-used hedges in the corpus are 'just,' 'could,' 'you know,' 'actually,' 'I think,' and 'kind of' with the numbers of occurrence 1107, 554, 541, 530, 390, and 309 respectively. From the analyses of the functions of the most frequent hedges, it can be concluded that each of the hedges serves distinctive pragmatic strategy which contributes in the communicative processes of the talks.

Keywords: corpus, hedging, pragmatic strategies, TED Talks

INTRODUCTION

TED Talks belong to TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design), an organization curated by Sapling Foundation, a nonprofit established by publishing entrepreneur Chris Anderson. Under the slogan "ideas worth spreading" TED was founded in

1984 as a live conference to disseminate innovative ideas in front of live audiences. Once an elite conference accessible only to limited amount of viewers who had to pay a certain amount of money, TED Talks have been posted online to reach a broader audience since 2006.

TED Talks speakers come from various background both academic and non-academic. Many of them are scientists, artists, authors, entrepreneurs, and social innovators. They also come from different countries and speak a significant number of English varieties. Among the notable speakers are Microsoft founder Bill Gates, Tesla's Elon Musk, and fashion designer Isaac Mizrahi.

In terms of topics, TED now has a wider range of topics beyond technology, entertainment, and design. Popular issues such as gender, environmentalism, poverty, and religion are accommodated in the various platforms of TED. Other than the main TED Talks, the TED organization also airs TEDx and TEDGlobal as initiatives to house ideas from all corners of the world. Still, more than 30% of TED talks, as pointed out by Sugimoto and Thelwall (2013), are about science and technology. With such percentage, many consider TED as one of the most successful science popularization tools (Theunissen, 2014).

TED Talks, despite the monologue nature, are categorized as interactional discourse performed in the presence of a live audience (Theunissen, 2014). Coulthard and Montgomery (1981) argued that even though a monologue presents a single speaker, it is deliberately designed interactively. Thus, a monologue is more than a medium of informing audience, or in other word – lecturing. There is also interactional and interpretive intents from the side of the speaker which emphasizes the importance of audience.

The audience of TED talks is non-specialized with different social backgrounds and different educational levels. Nonetheless, the audience of TED has high expectation which forces speakers to meticulously prepare for successful talks. Besides the physically present audience, there is also online viewers who watch the talks

through various online platforms. The talks are available on ted.com, YouTube, AppleTV, and also iTunes. Moreover, since 2009, subtitles are added to online video through its open translation project to reach larger non-English speaking viewers around the world including Indonesia.

Like other scientific conferences, TED talks are not fully spontaneous. The talks are professionally prepared and delivered. Many of the speakers also use audio-visual aids to convey the message. The unspontaneity is visible from the language that the speakers use. They deliver well-composed sentences rather than what Frobenius (2014) defined as syntactic fragments commonly found in spoken utterance. Therefore, audience of the talks might wonder whether some speakers memorize the scripts in their talks. Aside from the unnaturalness of the speech, many speakers insert humors and fillers to engage with audience. They also use various hedges in their speech for different communicative purposes and strategies.

Hedges as lexical communicative properties in hedging process appears in various linguistic forms including verbs (mental and emotive), adjectives, adverbs, modal, and conjunctions (Hinkel, 2004). They function differently for various rhetorical and social purposes. The study explores whether speakers in TED Talks use common hedging devices as pragmatic strategy, by examining what hedges are frequently used and for what communicative purposes the hedges are asserted.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of hedging is first familiarized by Weinreich (1966) when discussing metalinguistic device such as 'strictly speaking' and 'like.' However it is G. Lakoff (1972) who popularizes the term 'hedging' in his analysis of the properties of words such as 'rather' or 'sort of.' He notices that these words are used to create elusive sense of vagueness. For Lakoff, hedging is a pragmatic phenomenon, not a semantic one. His view on hedging is not only to some words which lessen the force or commitment

by the speaker but also to ones which intensify speaker's commitment on their utterances.

R. Lakoff (1975) distinguishes three different uses of hedges. First, hedges are used when the speaker is not sure of the information. Second, hedges help mitigate potential unfriendliness or unkindness of utterance when speaking. The third usage is not related to uncertainty, but more of linguistic component to express apology for making certain assertion.

Hedging is closely related to politeness which plays an important role in verbal communication. When speakers hedge their utterances, they intend to sound less direct or less rude. Such an act in Brown and Levinson's terms is called doing 'facework' (1978, 1987). In analyzing politeness, they point out that 'face' or reputation is what people are universally concerned about. Reputation can be well-maintained through positive strategy, which is used whenever a speaker wants to avoid disagreement with the hearer. Hosman (1989) in his study of speech styles reveals that a message delivered without hedges and hesitations is considered the most authoritative, while a message containing high level of hedges and low level of hesitations is allegedly most sociable.

According to Fraser (2010), hedging ability is part of pragmatic competence through which speakers are able to communicate in any socio-cultural context and to interpret intended message effectively. By using hedges, speaker communicates that they have somewhat a limited conviction to any matter communicated by their utterance. How people use various hedgings to show concerns about their reputation and to preserve politeness in various social norms also proves their pragmatic competence in verbal communication in general.

Since hedging is one of strategies used to succeed ones' conversation, the research conducted in this subject mainly done for two-way conversations (Schneider (2011), Prokofieva & Hirschberg (2014), Makejeva (2017), etc). Still, other study on this matter is also intended for one-way conversations. Research on

hedgings used in speeches or monologues are conducted by Hosman and Siltanen (2006), Neary-Sundquist (2013), and Teng (2015). Hedging is a communicative strategy which is observable in formal monologues such as scientific presentation, business talks, and highly popular talks like TED Talks.

METHODS

The study is based on the exploration of a corpus which consists of 130 official transcripts of TED Talks. The total number of tokens in the corpus is 337,302. Each of the transcripts included in the corpus incorporates information on the title of the talk, the name of the speaker, as well as the timeline of the speech. Other information such as place and date of the talks is omitted to minimize the number of unnecessary tokens in the corpus.

The talks used for this study were taped from 2002 to 2019. As stated by its official website, 2002 was a milestone for TED. The year witnessed the transfer of leadership from its co-founder Richard Saul Wurman to Chris Anderson as well as the shift of TED organization from for-profit into non-profit. The 17-year time range from 2002 to 2019 assures the richness of the corpus in terms of topics and the speakers' backgrounds. In choosing the talks for the corpus, the researcher typed the intended year onto the search bar of the website. For each specific year, seven or eight talks were selected based on the top appearance on the search result page.

The study employs frequency-based corpus search to find out the number of occurrence of hedges in the corpus. As a part of linguistic study, corpus-based study examines how language analysis is conducted toward a collection of texts composing the corpus (Meyer, 2002). In corpus linguistics, frequency-based method is mainly chosen to explore the tendency of occurrence of certain linguistic aspect which reflects the common and typical usage. Anderson and Corbett (2009) emphasize that meticulous analysis of corpora is insightful in observing the real use of language, not the typical use of language as commonly conveyed by dictionary or textbook. McEnery, Xiao, and Tono (2006)

highlight that a corpus has better machine-readable for both written and spoken texts.

The TED Talks transcripts to build the corpus can be digitally stored and therefore are machine-readable. Researchers may easily copy and import the text into a computer and analyze them with concordance software. The typical uses of hedges in TED Talks are proven by the number of occurrence in the corpus which can be observed using concordance software which will show the frequency of concordance hits for any lexical items or tokens inserted. This study utilizes free concordance software AntConc 3.5.0 developed by Laurence Anthony from Waseda University, Japan.

For concordance analysis, the TED transcripts are put into single .txt file and the file is imported to the concordance software. By clicking the CONCORDANCE button and inserting the intended hedge into the SEARCH TERM tool we will see the frequency of occurrence and the context in which the hedges belong to. The search results will create concordance line with the hedge highlighted in the center as key words in context (KWIC). The concordance tool will also display the left context and the right context of the key words to observe the phrase, clause, or sentence appearing before and after the key words. Besides frequency of the searched words, the query also displays the strings of sentences containing the key words. By clicking the string of sentences, we can quickly jump from one sentence to another to locate the source text.

The study limits the list of 48 hedges for the key words in context search (Table 1). The list is generated from previous studies of hedges in various spoken discourses by Kaltenbock, Mihatsch, & Schneider (2010); Riekkinen (2009); Salager-Meyer, (1994); and Neary-Sundquist (2013). As mentioned previously, hedges come in various linguistic forms. Table 1 displays hedges in the forms of adverbs, modals, and mental verbs. These 48 hedges are normally used in two-way conversational structure. This research

specifically explores whether their presence is also substantial in formal monologues.

Table 1. List of hedges

No	Hedge	No	Hedge	No	Hedge	No	Hedge
1.	a bit	13.	hopefull y	25.	largely	37.	relatively
2.	a little	14.	I assume	26.	let's say	38.	seems
3.	actually	15.	I don't know	27.	look like	39.	should be
4.	almost	16.	I feel	28.	maybe	40.	slightly
5.	anyway	17.	I guess	29.	more or less	41.	somewhat
6.	around	18.	I hope	30.	mostly	42.	sort of
7.	as far as	19.	I think	31.	particularl y	43.	suggest
8.	basically	20.	I wonder	32.	perhaps	44.	supposed
9.	can be	21.	in a way	33.	possibly	45.	technicall y
10.	could	22.	isn't it	34.	pretty much	46.	tend
11.	could be definitel	23.	just	35.	probably	47.	usually
12.	y	24.	kind of	36.	rather	48.	you know

Each of the hedges in Table 1 is inserted into the search bar of AntConc 3.5.0 one by one. The number of concordance hits is observed and noted to categorize the most frequent hedges in the corpus. Even though the discussion involves frequency of occurrence, this study is qualitative in nature. In corpus linguistics, frequency refers to the 'arithmetic count of the number of linguistic elements within a corpus' (McEnery, Xiao, and Tono, 2006). The frequency can be statistically interpreted for quantitative research. However, qualitative analysis on the linguistic elements as well as the discussion on the usage are significant in investigating the main data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The frequency-based corpus study results in the number of occurrence of hedges. The hedges are sorted based on the number of concordance hits. Table 2 below illustrates the frequency from

each of the 48 hedges from the largest to smallest number. It is seen that hedge 'just' outnumbers other hedges, almost twice the number of its closest associate 'could,' making it the most frequently-used hedge by speakers of TED Talks. Hedges, 'isn't it,' 'largely,' and 'let's say,' have zero occurrence in the concordance hits.

Table 2. Sorted frequency of hedges in the corpus

No	Hedge	Frequenc y	No.	Hedge	frequenc y
1.	just	1107	25.	I feel	36
2.	could	554	26.	I hope	32
3.	you know	541	27.	particularl y	31
4.	actually	530	28.	mostly	26
5.	I think	390	29.	hopefully	25
6.	kind of	309	30.	slightly	25
7.	around	296	31.	in a way	24
8.	a little	223	32.	tend	22
9.	sort of	194	33.	I guess	20
10.	maybe	192	34.	possibly	18
11.	can be	123	35.	relatively	14
12.	probabl y	100	36.	pretty much	13
13.	rather	91	37.	suggest	12
14.	almost	106	38.	somewhat	12
15.	basicall y	86	39.	definitely	10
16.	should be	80	40.	technicall y	10
17.	perhaps	68	41.	more or less	9
18.	I don't know	67	42.	as far as	9
19.	anyway	49	43.	I wonder	5
20.	suppose d	43	44.	could be	5
21.	seems	43	45.	I assume	1
22.	usually	41	46.	isn't it	0
23.	a bit	40	47.	largely	0
24.	look like	38	48.	let's say	0

From the 48 hedges inserted into AntConc 3.5.0, six most frequent hedges are chosen for the usage analysis. The top six hedges are analyzed for their significant number of occurrence in the corpus. The focus on the top six hedges are also related to the nature of corpus-based study which discussed most frequently occurring linguistic phenomena. The following parts discuss the different uses of these six most frequent hedges in different contexts.

Just

Hedge 'just' appears 1107 times in the corpus, making it the most frequently used hedging device in TED Talks. As a monosyllabic hedging device, 'just' has flexible syntactic positions in sentences. It can be inserted after subject, before preposition, between 'to' and infinitive, and in other possible locations in a sentence.

Salager-Meyer (1994) argue that "'just' is used for pragmatic purpose as shield to soften the utterance of the speaker." The verb 'soften' here indicates that 'just' may function to tone down the intensity of utterance as well as to keep the nuance in moderate level. Shown in the transcript excerpt below, 'just' is used twice in a talk about coping with grief and sorrow. Nora McInerny describes how in 2014 she had to bravely face her second miscarriage and the deaths of both her father and husband. In order not to sound miserable in her talks, McInerny even hedges a term for terminal illness which refers to brain cancer with the word 'just.'

00:04 So, 2014 was a big year for me. Do you ever have that, **just** like a big year, like a banner year? For me, it went like this: October 3, I lost my second pregnancy. And then October 8, my dad died of cancer. And then on November 25, my husband Aaron died after three years with stage-four glioblastoma, which is **just** a fancy word for brain cancer (McInerny, 2018).

Another example below points out how Susan Cain softens her utterance by using 'just' three times in one sequence of talk to make her experiences sound ordinary.

2:30 Now, I tell you this story about summer camp. I could have told you 50 others **just** like it all the times that I got the message that somehow my quiet and introverted style of being was not necessarily the right way to go, that I should be trying to pass as more of an extrovert. And I always sensed deep down that this was wrong and that introverts were pretty excellent **just** as they were. But for years I denied this intuition, and so I became a Wall Street lawyer, of all things, instead of the writer that I had always longed to be partly because I needed to prove to myself that I could be bold and assertive too. And I was always going off to crowded bars when I really would have preferred to **just** have a nice dinner with friends. And I made these self-negating choices so reflexively, that I wasn't even aware that I was making them (Cain, 2012).

In the second sentence, Cain uses 'just' as if she were apologizing for her habit of telling people her childhood experience having an introverted lifestyle. In the third sentence, 'just' helps Cain soften her opinion that introverts were actually excellent people. 'Just' in the sixth sentence moderates Cain's self-negating choice when actually she would rather have nice dinner with friends than going to crowded bars.

As a hedging device, 'just' also functions as a 'modal adjective' to express some kind of limitation of the scope of the utterance (Hyland, 1994). In his first sentence below, Ron Eglash tries to limit his closing statement to only a few words with the hedge 'just.' His second use of 'just' also gives scope to the ability of the applications to only run in the browser of the website.

14:05 So let me end with **just** a few words about applications that we've found for this. And you can go to our website, the applets are all free; they **just** run in the

browser. Anybody in the world can use them. The National Science Foundation's Broadening Participation in Computing program recently awarded us a grant to make a programmable version of these design tools, so hopefully in three years, anybody'll be able to go on the Web and create their own simulations and their own artifacts. We've focused in the U.S. on African-American students as well as Native American and Latino ... (Eglash, 2007).

Could

'Could' is one of modal auxiliaries related to the concept of hedging to represent epistemic possibility which is concerned with the speaker's assumption and to "express tentative possibility in affirmative context" (Hardjanto, 2016). In the following excerpt of his talk, Scott Dinsmore challenges his assumption whether he is able to do certain things by using 'could' twice in his second sentence. In the fourth sentence, Dinsmore reflects on his chance of doing something by asking what he is not possibly able to do.

13:35 The people change everything, and this is why you know, you ask what was going on. Well, for four years, I knew nobody in this space, and I didn't even know it existed, that people **could** do this stuff, that you **could** have movements like this. And then I'm over here in San Francisco, and everyone around me was doing it. It became normal, so my thinking went from how **could** I possibly do this to how **could** I possibly not. And right then, when that happens, that switch goes on in your head, it ripples across your whole world. And without even trying, your standards go from here to here. ... (Dinsmore, 2012)

In similar sense, Fraser (2010) takes 'could' as hedging device to express presupposition. In the following example, Iqbal Quadir presupposes his capability of connecting bank branches in rural areas of Bangladesh with mobile banking.

0:11 I'll just take you to Bangladesh for a minute.

...

0:57 And anyway, to cut the time short so I started I first went to them and said, "You know, perhaps I **could** connect all your branches and make you more efficient." But you know, they have, after all, evolved in a country without telephones, so they are decentralized. I mean, of course there might be other good reasons, but this was one of the reasons they had to be. And so they were not that interested to connect all their branches, and then to be and rock the boat (Quadir, 2005).

You know

Language scholars give different labels to the phrase 'you know.' Brown calls it a verbal filler (1977) while Crystal and Davy mark it as a softening connective (1975). Additionally, it is conversational greaser in the words of Wong-Fillmore (1976). Lakoff (1975) and Brown & Levinson (1978) categorize 'you know' as a hedging device. Holmes (1986) and Ostman (1981) highlight the specific functions of 'you know' for conjoining mutual knowledge, empathizing, intensifying or boosting the speech act, stressing speaker's confidence, and reassuring the audience regarding the validity of the speaker's proposition. For Torres-Martinez (2014), 'you know' characterizes speech spontaneity and indicates synchronous real-time discourse.

Stefan Sagmeister utilizes 'you know' to conjoin mutual knowledge with his audience and to boost his confidence. As seen in his last sentence, 'you know' is used to self-assure that creating certain design is not a big deal to accomplish for him.

6:19 Now, what I took away from the exhibit was that maybe with the exception of the mandala most of the pieces in there were actually about the visualization of happiness and not about happiness. And I felt a little bit cheated, because the visualization that's a really easy thing to do. And, **you know**, my studio we've done it all the time. This is, **you know**, a book. A happy dog and you take it out, it's an aggressive dog. It's a happy David Byrne and an angry David Byrne. Or a jazz poster with a happy face and a more aggressive face. **You know**, that's not a big deal to accomplish (Sagmeister, 2004).

The number of 'you know' in the following sequence of talk by Maira Kalman shows how she spontaneously exploits 'you know' to boost her speech, and at the same time to reassure her audience regarding her freedom in writing the content of her column in a popular magazine like The New York Times.

0:31 Who knows? The New York Times Select, the op-ed page, asked me to do a column, and they said, you can do whatever you want. So, once a month for the last year, I've been doing a column called "The Principles of Uncertainty," which, **you know**, I don't know who Heisenberg is, but I know I can throw that around now. **You know**, it's the principles of uncertainty, so, **you know**. I'm going to read quickly and probably I'm going to edit some, because I don't have that much time left a few of the columns. And basically, I was so, **you know**, it was so amusing, because I said, "Well, how much space do I have?" And they said, "Well, **you know**, it's the Internet." And I said, "Yes, but how much space do I have?" And they said, "It's unlimited, it's unlimited." OK (Kalman, 2007).

Actually

Tognini-Bonelli (1993) asserts that 'actually' is a common device a speaker uses to emphasize her/his perspective beyond any general view. 'Actually' also serves as a device to convert what Tognini-Bonelli calls 'the interpretative angle' of the audience. Aaron Koblin in the following excerpt intends to alter audience's viewpoint that computer is not a super machine which can do everything.

3:52 So now on to something completely different. Some of you may recognize this. This is Baron Wolfgang von Kempelen's mechanical chess playing machine. And it's this amazing robot that plays chess extremely well, except for one thing: it's not a robot at all. There's **actually** a legless man that sits in that box and controls this chess player. This was the inspiration for a web service by Amazon called the Mechanical Turk named after this guy. And it's based on the premise that there

are certain things that are easy for people, but really difficult for computers (Koblin, 2011).

Lenk (1998) discusses three different discourse functions of 'actually.' The first is to state a personal opinion. As transcribed from Rutger Bregman's talk below, he expresses his opinion concerning basic income guarantee and poverty in the US.

0:51 But let's talk about the elephant in the room. How could we ever afford a basic income guarantee? Well, it's **actually** a lot cheaper than you may think. What they did in Dauphin is finance it with a negative income tax. This means that your income is topped up as soon as you fall below the poverty line. And in that scenario, according to our economists' best estimates, for a net cost of 175 billion --a quarter of US military spending, one percent of GDP --you could lift all impoverished Americans above the poverty line. You could **actually** eradicate poverty. Now, that should be our goal (Bregman, 2017).

The second use according to Lenk (1998) is for the expression of a correction or contradiction of something that was previously said. Zander in his talk below corrects his statement about the term 'experiment' which he should not call 'experiment' because he already knows the outcome.

0:35 Now, there's a similar situation in the classical music world, because there are some people who think that classical music is dying. And there are some of us who think you ain't seen nothing yet. And rather than go into statistics and trends, and tell you about all the orchestras that are closing, and the record companies that are folding, I thought we should do an experiment tonight. **Actually**, it's not really an experiment, because I know the outcome (Zander, 2008).

Lenk's third utilization of 'actually' is for the introduction of a new topic or if there is a change in topic (1998). From the key word in context observation, this notion is absent in the corpus.

The limited amount of time allotted for the talk only allows specific topic to be presented, making a change in topic is highly unlikely to do.

I think

Holmes (1985) notes that 'I think' has deliberative and tentative functions. The first function puts 'I think' as a lexical device to express confidence and adding weight to the statement. Tentative function sets 'I think' as an item for expressing uncertainty or softening the force of the utterance. The following excerpt portrays how Vik Muniz expresses his confidence in saying that certain art work is not really about impression. He also adds weight to his opinion by using imperative 'see' at the beginning of his sentence.

14:15 See, **I think** it's not really about impression, making people fall for a really perfect illusion, as much as it is to make I usually work at the lowest threshold of visual illusion. Because it's not about fooling somebody, it's actually giving somebody a measure of their own belief: how much you want to be fooled. That's why we pay to go to magic shows and things like that. Well, **I think** that's it. My time is nearly up. Thank you very much (Muniz, 2003).

The example of tentative function can be observed from the following excerpt by famous author Amy Tan in which she tries to make her string theory concerning 11 levels of anxiety sound less serious by inserting 'I think.'

7:35 ... Now, I don't want to ignore the other side of what happens in our universe, like many of our scientists have. And so, I am going to just throw in string theory here, and just say that creative people are multidimensional, and there are 11 levels, **I think**, of anxiety. (Laughter) And they all operate at the same time (Tan, 2008).

Baumgarten and House (2010) list various uses of ‘I think’ in the discursive context of English as Lingua Franca which is applicable in this study. Those uses include expressing agreement, drawing conclusions, contradicting, expressing contrasting views, displaying knowledge, elaborating previous (own) utterance, sharing personal experience, rejecting other’s contribution, reinforcing own preceding claim, giving explanations, and conceding. The examples of the usage in the corpus as examined from AntConc 3.5.0 FILE VIEW are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Use of Baumgarten and House (2010) hedge ‘I think’ found in the talks

No.	Uses	Examples
1.	expressing agreement	7:18 I think that's true for many of us, and I want to give you two examples of how music is one of the most powerful interfaces we have, from ourselves to the outside world... (Machover and Ellsey, 2008).
2.	drawing conclusions	15:22 Which brings me to my last point, and what I think is kind of the most fun. I set up a website because I was getting so many questions about Molas and sunfish. And so I just figured I'd have the questions answered, and I'd be able to thank my funders, like National Geographic and Lindbergh... (Thys, 2003).
3.	contradicting	-
4.	expressing contrasting views	-
5.	displaying knowledge	15:12 Here's another example of stem-cell therapy that isn't quite clinical yet, but I think very soon will be. This is the work of Kacey Marra from Pittsburgh, along with a number of colleagues around the world (Russell, 2006).
6.	elaborating previous (own) utterance	7:05 So, in a way, the question is: on what grounds am I upbeat at all about history? And the answer is, first of all, on balance I would say people have played their games to more win-win outcomes than lose-lose outcomes. On balance, I think history is a net positive in the non-zero-sum game department (Wright, 2006).

7.	sharing personal experience	06:31 I think about the day often, and I have literally prayed that I did not do irreparable harm, because as a woman who used to be a little girl just like Regina, I know that I could have started the process of killing her confidence forever (Packnett, 2019).
8.	rejecting other's contribution	-
9.	reinforcing own preceding claim	0:58 So here's the good news. For six years, I've been hanging out with these guys. This is a group called Global Voices. This is a team of bloggers from around the world. Our mission was to fix the world's media. We started in 2004. You might have noticed, we haven't done all that well so far. Nor do I think we are by ourselves, actually going to solve the problem. But the more that I think about it, the more that I think that a few things that we have learned along the way are interesting lessons for how we would rewire if we wanted to use the web to have a wider world (Zuckerman, 2010).
10.	giving explanations	0:47 And ... As a matter of fact, I think a lot of my design ideas come from mistakes and tricks of the eye. Because I feel like, you know, there are so many images out there, so many clothes out there. And the only ones that look interesting to me are the ones that look slightly mistaken, of course, or very, very surprising (Mizrahi, 2008).
11.	conceding	0:11 This is very strange for me, because I'm not used to doing this: I usually stand on the other side of the light, and now I'm feeling the pressure I put other people into. And it's hard ... The previous speaker has, I think , really painted a very good background as to the impulse behind my work and what drives me, and my sense of loss, and trying to find the answer to the big questions (Aduaka, 2007).

A careful one-to-one scrutiny on the usages of 'I think' in the corpus shows that there is absence of hedge 'I think' which expresses contrast, contradiction, and rejection in the corpus. This phenomenon is largely due to the nature of TED Talks as monologues which focus

on sharing original ideas. Speakers do not directly challenge previous ideas nor do they deliberately question current notions of the same topics.

Kind of

Dating back to 1909, American author Ambrose Bierce complained that 'kind of' followed by an adjective like the phrase 'kind of good,' is "almost too gross for censure" (Kurutz, 2014), noting the widespread use of the hedging device at that time. Kurutz adds that Safire (1995) wrote in *The New York Times Magazine* about the massive use of 'kind of' (and also 'sort of') in the courtroom of the infamous O.J. Simpson trial, which was a formal setting of legal communicative process. Through the course of history, 'kind of' has been an inevitable hedging device used for both formal and informal speech situations.

In terms of functions, 'kind of' represents a lesser degree of commitment to the proposition and is commonly used as approximative expressions (Riekkinen, 2009). Torres-Martinez (2014) argues that the use of 'kind of' and 'sort of' is important in boosting speech fluency. He notes that those hedges "contribute to reduce reference specification without altering the structure of neighboring syntactic constituents, resulting in fluency increments" (Torres-Martinez, 2014).

In describing his book about the simplicity and design, John Maeda use 'kind of' to lessen the degree of his commitment to his own book and to avoid the notion that he was proud of his book.

0:43 But I really like that, so I wrote a book called "The Laws of Simplicity." I was in Milan last week, for the Italian launch. It's **kind of** a book about questions, questions about simplicity. Very few answers. I'm also wondering myself, what is simplicity? Is it good? Is it bad? Is complexity better? I'm not sure (Maeda, 2007).

Fashion designer Isaac Mizrahi uses 'kind of' to boost the fluency of his speech. If we omit the three 'kind of' phrases in the following sequence, there will be no alteration in terms of meaning and grammatical structure.

2:40 So I don't really know that. I don't really actually I do my own **kind of** research, you know. If I'm commissioned to do the costumes for an 18th-century opera, or something like that, I will do a lot of research, because it's interesting, not because it's what I'm supposed to do. I'm very, very, very inspired by movies. The color of movies and the way light makes the colors, light from behind the projection, or light from the projection, makes the colors look so impossible. And anyway, roll this little clip, I'll just show you. I sit up at night and I watch movies and I watch women in movies a lot. And I think about, you know, their roles, and about how you have to, like, watch what your daughters look at. Because I look at the way women are portrayed all the time. Whether they're **kind of** glorified in this way, or whether they're **kind of**, you know, ironically glorified, or whether they're, you know, sort of denigrated, or ironically denigrated (Mizrahi, 2008).

CONCLUSION

The study explores the communicative functions of hedges under pragmatic domain and investigates how the linguistic device subsists in the corpus of TED Talks transcripts. The study shows that the most frequently-used hedges observed in the corpus are 'just', 'could', 'you know', 'actually', 'I think', and 'kind of' with 1107, 554, 541, 530, 390, and 309 respectively. This significant number of occurrence in the corpus shows that pragmatic strategy using hedges is not only common in two-way conversations but is also extensively utilized in monologue-type speech.

On the whole, the talks contain hedges serving distinctive pragmatic strategies which are aligned with what have been proposed by previous studies (Holmes, 1985; Salager-Meyer, 1994; Hyland, 1994; Lenk, 1998; Riekkinen, 2009; Baumgarten and House, 2010; and Fraser, 2010). However, several communicative functions are nonexistent in the corpus. The utilization of 'actually' for the introduction of a new topic is absent in the corpus as TED Talks format limits the duration and topic delivered by speakers. In addition, a careful analysis of hedge 'I think' which expresses contrast, contradiction, and rejection reveals that this hedge does

not present in the corpus, largely due to the nature of TED Talks as monologues which focus on sharing original ideas.

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