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## **Hedging: linguistic politeness strategy in English language acquisition at the tertiary level**

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The present paper aims to research modern Business English textbooks from the perspective of pragmatics. The theoretical part deals with the concept of hedging and linguistic politeness being part of pragmatics; it considers the importance of indirect use of language in business communication. The research investigates the teachability of hedging and linguistic politeness when modern textbooks of Business English are used in the language acquisition process. The assumption that linguistic and grammatical language acquisition alone does not guarantee success in communication leads to the investigation of these concepts. The theory is referred to the Business textbooks to identify if the pragmatic aspects that characterize the construction of indirect meaning in communication are applied in the textbooks under analysis. Leech's (1983) and Brown and Levinson's (1987) theoretical contributions are considered to construct the theoretical framework of the article. Hyland's (1994) and Fraser's (2010) theoretical writings frame the discussion of the hedging categories. For the purposes of this article, the field of the research is narrowed, and the above-mentioned theoretical contributions are applied when doing the analysis in the Writing section of the textbooks. Discourse analysis as a research method is used in the empirical part of the paper, which contains ESP textbooks. The conclusions drawn are based on a triangulation principle, where such research instruments as observation, students' job application letters and questionnaires are used. The study has demonstrated that the use of textbooks potentially helps students develop pragmatic skills in formal writing in the business context. However, the findings demonstrate that the investigated textbooks contain an implicit pragmatic input. Finally, based on the research findings, the recommendations on the language acquisition of pragmatic competence are provided. The data analysis shows that hedging plays an important role in developing politeness strategies and thus increases the effectiveness of business communication.

**Keywords****strong text:** Business English textbooks, pragmatic competence, hedging, linguistic politeness, language acquisition

### **Biographical note(s) of the author(s)**

Her research interests include pragmatics in the area of language acquisition.

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