

Hedges and Boosters Lesson Plan

General Information	
Lesson Title	Hedges and Boosters
Class/Student Information	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. upper-level undergraduates in an ecology or physiology course OR 2. multi-major undergraduates in an introductory or advanced technical writing course OR 3. multi-major graduates in a writing-intensive course
Length of Class/Activity	26 mins
Overall Instructional Goal	To teach students how to hedge or boost the claims in their writing based on various discipline applications.
Lesson Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the primary functions of hedges and boosters. • Identify when to hedge and boost claims in professional writing. • Distinguish between how certain words function as both a hedge or a booster (depending on context) as well as which words are more common in professional writing than professional speech.
How will you measure each objective?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The in-class activities measure if students can identify the functions of hedges and boosters. • The homework assignments measure if students can (a) identify how certain words are used to hedge and boost claims and (b) independently identify hedges and boosters that are more appropriate to professional or technical writing.
Justification for Lesson	<p>Students need to understand how to hedge and boost their claims. When used effectively, the application makes the writer seem reasonable and credible to readers.</p> <p>However, misapplications of hedges can make a writer appear indecisive or weak, and misapplications of boosters can make a writer appear arrogant and full of bluster.</p>
Materials	<p>You will need access to the following –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This file, which outlines the lesson. 2. Presentation slides for the Orientation and Presentation stages (URLs linked in Canvas). 3. In-class activities for the Engagement stage (on pink paper) 4. Homework file for the Expansion stage (DOC file linked in Canvas). 5. Fact sheet for the Expansion stage (URL linked in Canvas). <p>In addition, students will use AntConc, the Professional Writing data set, and the Professional Speech data set for this unit.</p>

The Lesson Plan	Why and How
<p>Orientation (5 min.) Before the lesson begins, ensure that AntConc as well as the Professional Writing data set and the Professional Speech data set are available to students (NOTE: Data sets will be housed in the My Documents folder of TECM lab computers).</p> <p>Display Slide 1 of the presentation as students enter the lab or as you orient students to the lesson (see below). Distribute a copy of the in-class activities (printed on pink paper).</p> <p>Announce the topic of the lesson. Orient students to the examples of hedges and boosters on the first slide. Ask students what function hedges and boosters serve in technical and scientific communication.</p> <p>Your students might be unfamiliar with the terms <i>hedge</i> and <i>booster</i>. Hedges could best be described as a “cushion” that softens the impact of a particular claim or statement. On the other hand, boosters augment that claim or statement. There are situations in writing when both are necessary, and there are also situations when both can be misapplied. Misapplications of hedges can make a writer appear indecisive or weak, and misapplications of boosters can make a writer appear arrogant and full of bluster.</p> <p>There is also evidence that suggests that females typically use more hedges than males, particularly in speech communication. Therefore, this is something to consider in your own future writing purposes as well as for the people who you are communicating information to.</p>	<p>Students work in pairs for the “Data Digging” activity, so one student will complete it with the Professional Writing data set and the other with the Professional Speech data set. If possible, these data sets can be preloaded for students.</p> <p>Hedges are booster are language patterns students might be unfamiliar with, so it’s important to define them in this stage of the lesson.</p> <p>Empirical data suggests that females hedge more than males, particularly in speech communication. There are several studies that have examined female’s use of hedges in claims in decision-making meetings (e.g., This <i>could</i> be a good approach, or I <i>believe</i> this <i>might</i> work). Of course, these are only typical patterns, but part of the value of DDL is getting students to connect with the content as well as realizing language patterns they may be more biologically disposed of using. This will (hopefully) get students to consider how they have used hedges and boosters in the past and make them more aware of how they apply them in the future.</p>
<p>Transition</p> <p>“Let’s start by analyzing a few examples. Turn to the “Take a Look” activity on your pink sheet.”</p>	

The Lesson Plan	Why and How
<p>Engagement (4 min.)</p> <p>Read the “Take a Look” instructions to students: “Examine the concordances below. What are the meanings/functions of <i>I think</i> and <i>entirely</i>?”</p> <p>Discuss the <i>I think</i> concordances before moving on to the <i>entirely</i> concordances.</p> <p>The key takeaways for this activity are listed in the right-hand column.</p>	<p>The concordance lines for this first in-class activity are provided in a paper handout to focus students’ attention on the content rather than engaging them with the content AND the technology.</p> <p>Watch the YouTube tutorial on how to do this activity in AntConc: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2DwoAYlmdU</p> <p>Below are the key takeaways for this activity:</p> <p><i>I think</i> is a hedge that is primarily used to convey caution. The concordances show the writers/speakers offering opinions, but the hedge stops the opinion from being presented as a definitive claim (e.g., Lines 3, 5, and 9). <i>Think</i> is also used to buffer an opinion (e.g., Lines 2, 6, and 7).</p> <p>In contrast, <i>entirely</i> is a booster that expresses confidence (e.g., Lines 1-2). This booster can also be used to draw contrast or extremes between ideas (e.g., Lines 4, 7). Notice too that <i>entirely</i> tends to associate with negative words, including <i>neglected</i>, <i>false</i>, <i>ignored</i>, <i>amiss</i>, and <i>accidental</i>. In other words, the writers/speakers are purposely augmenting a negative idea for a specific rhetorical purpose.</p> <p>Students might also observe a more conversational style in the <i>I think</i> concordances. This is because <i>think</i> appears to associate more with conversation and <i>entirely</i> appears to associate more with professional writing and possibly professional speech.</p>
<p>Presentation (4 min.)</p> <p>Transition to Slide 2 in the presentation, which details the two primary functions of hedges as well as gives examples. Hedges are typically used to convey caution and generalize information.</p> <p>Transition to Slide 3, which details the two functions of boosters as well as gives examples.</p>	<p>Students gravitate toward expressive language patterns, such as hedges and boosters. However, their use of these patterns is more common/acceptable in speech, so emphasize to them how these patterns are used (often differently) in professional and technical writing.</p> <p>Students might get distracted trying to write down all the example hedges and boosters. All this information is on the related Fact Sheet.</p>

The Lesson Plan	Why and How
Boosters are typically used to express certainty and persuade readers.	
<p>Transition</p> <p>“We see that hedges and boosters can vary in professional speech and professional writing. Find a partner (i.e., the person to your right) and continue to explore this idea in AntConc with two different data sets.”</p>	
<p>Engagement (5 min.)</p> <p>Review the “Data Digging” instructions with students (see the pink paper).</p> <p>“See how much of this activity you can complete in 5 minutes. Make sure you write down your findings and share them with your partner as you work.”</p>	<p>Let the student pairs work through this activity on their own but prompt them to write down their findings as they complete the activity. You also want student pairs to interact with each other, so you may need to prompt them to share their findings with each other before they get too far into the activity.</p> <p>As students work, walk around the classroom to help them stay on task and to troubleshoot technology issues. The RA can also help troubleshoot technology issues and answer individual questions.</p> <p>Give students about 5 minutes to work through this activity. It’s okay if students don’t have time to analyze all three words. Some students will spend more time on a specific word, reading and laughing at the associated concordance lines – this is a good thing and is engaging them with the material. Others will just run through the activity and log the frequencies. This is fine too – you can’t engage everyone!</p>
<p>Transition</p> <p>“Let’s discuss some of your findings.”</p>	
<p>Evaluation (6 min.)</p> <p>Lead the class discussion.</p> <p>The key takeaways for this activity are listed in the right-hand column.</p>	<p>When reviewing this activity, open AntConc twice on your instructor computer (just click the AntConc icon to open the program again) Load the Professional Writing data set on the right and the Professional Speech data set on the left. This will make writing-to-speech comparison easier to discuss.</p> <p>Choose how to lead this discussion. For example, you could stand in front of the class and facilitate responses as the RA types the search terms into AntConc. Conversely, you could engage with the</p>

The Lesson Plan	Why and How
	<p>technology yourself and enter the search terms as you facilitate the discussion. Students will often type the search terms into AntConc as you review them, so the RA can also walk around the lab the ensure students are not having technology issues.</p> <p>Watch the YouTube tutorial on how to do this activity in AntConc: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FILXcZ-1C5M</p> <p>Below are the key takeaways for this activity. Again, it's okay if you don't address every single finding. It's also fine if you jump around because your discussion of one finding prompts a student to comment on another finding.</p> <p><i>Really</i></p> <p>a) Appears in the professional speech data set 4,439 times and in the professional writing data set 213 times. <i>Really</i> is used more in conversation than in writing.</p> <p>b) In the professional speech data set: When sorted by 1R/2R/3R, <i>really</i> functions primarily as a booster, collocating with negative words like <i>angry</i> (Lines 269-271), <i>bad</i> (Lines 274-302), <i>critical</i> (Lines 673-768), etc. (other words could be <i>commitment</i>, <i>extreme</i>, <i>intensive</i>). In most of these instances, <i>really</i> is used to amplify an observation or statement.</p> <p>However, when sorted to the left (1L/2L/3L), there are several examples when <i>really</i> is preceded by a negation (e.g., Lines 1710-1896 not really, Lines 3197-3382 don't really). In these examples, <i>really</i> functions more as a hedge. I don't really agree cushions that you don't, in fact, agree.</p> <p>Finally, examples like uh really (Lines 3858-3873) and um really (lines 3874-3889), illustrate that the word is often used as a filler, even in professional speech.</p> <p>In the professional writing data set: When sorted to the right, we see some neutrality</p>

The Lesson Plan	Why and How
	<p>with the words that collocate with <i>really</i>, including <i>bad</i> (Lines 22-25), <i>cute</i> (Lines 52-53), <i>fit</i> (Lines 82-82), <i>nice</i> (Lines 155-156), and <i>relevant</i> (Line 173).</p> <p>When sorted to the left, we also see the negation observed in the professional speech data set (e.g., Line 37 I don't feel <i>really</i>, Lines 155-159 don't <i>really</i>, and, not <i>really</i> (Lines 101-103), <i>shouldn't</i>, etc. Overall, the function of the word remains the same as in professional speech, but they are far less common in published professional writing.</p> <p>c) Alternatives to <i>really</i> as a booster could be <i>actually</i>, <i>likely</i>, <i>typically</i> or <i>entirely</i>. Alternatives for <i>really</i> as a hedge could be <i>fully</i>, <i>completely</i>, and <i>in all honesty</i> (e.g., I don't <i>completely</i> agree with this statement).</p> <p><i>Totally</i></p> <p>a) Appears in the professional speech data set 208 times and in the professional writing data set 27 times. <i>Totally</i> is more common to speech than written communication.</p> <p>b) In the professional speech data set: When sorted to the right, <i>totally</i> is often used as an intensifier to show extremes (e.g., Lines 110-113 <i>totally</i> kicked butt, Line 114 <i>totally</i> kill you) Line 122 shows that <i>totally</i> functions beyond just being an intensifier. Line 122 shows an alternative use of <i>totally</i> (i.e., you totally can make this point, you're entitled to make this point) When sorted to the left, Lines 59-76 suggests that <i>totally</i> is often used to present an opinion or as a hedge cluster (just <i>totally</i>, like <i>totally</i>).</p> <p>In the professional writing data set: <i>Totally</i> is used less frequently and often to replace <i>completely</i>. There are also a few instances of <i>totally</i> used to quote speech (Lines 3, 8). The word is not used to pose an opinion in the way it is in speech communication.</p>

The Lesson Plan	Why and How
	<p>c) Possible alternatives include <i>certainly</i>, <i>completely</i>, <i>fully</i>, and <i>exhaustively</i>.</p> <p><i>Literally</i></p> <p>a) Appears in the professional speech data set 71 times and in the professional writing data set 21 times. <i>Literally</i> is more common to speech than it is written communication.</p> <p>b) In the professional speech data set: <i>Literally</i> means <i>actually</i> in several examples (Line 32, 38, 49). There are also examples where <i>literally</i> means fully inclusive (Line 34). The word is used less to make judgement about people and more about processes or objects.</p> <p>In the professional writing dataset: Similar patterns are found but in less frequency. Lines 1, 5, 11, and 13 could sub for the word <i>actually</i>. Line 3 could be replaced with an organizational phrase like <i>overall</i> as its use is making a more inclusive interpretation.</p> <p>c) Possible alternatives include <i>actually</i>, <i>in fact</i>, <i>in sum</i>, <i>overall</i>, and <i>simply</i>.</p>
<p>Summary Statement(s)</p> <p>All three of these words appeared in the professional speech data more frequently than in the professional writing data.</p> <p>Hedges and boosters are certainly used in writing, but you need to be aware that both are used with less frequency than in speech.</p> <p>You should also note that these language patterns are often used as filler. We use them in speech communication because we're trying to buy some time to think about what we're going to say next, but in writing, overusing hedges and boosters can clutter the clarity of our ideas.</p> <p>Finally, you'll notice that why it's acceptable to use words like <i>really</i>, <i>totally</i>, and <i>literally</i> in professional speech, we should find more formal alternatives to use in our professional writing.</p>	
<p>Expansion (2 min.)</p> <p>Tell students there is a brief homework assignment associated with this lesson, which they can find linked on Canvas (as a Word document).</p>	<p>The first homework assignment was designed to measure if students can identify how specific words are used to hedge or boost a claim or idea.</p> <p>The second homework assignment was designed to measure if students can identify hedges and</p>

The Lesson Plan	Why and How
<p>The homework should only take 15-20 minutes to complete, but the first activity will require students to use AntConc and the Professional Writing data set. Make sure students know where these files are stored in the Canvas section.</p> <p>Refer students to the Fact Sheet for this task. Students can consult this sheet when working on homework and assignment drafts.</p>	<p>boosters that are more appropriate for professional and technical writing.</p> <p>The Fact Sheet for this unit should provide students with all the information they need to complete the homework.</p>