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HEDGES AND INTENSIFIERS USED BY THE FORMER
FINANCIAL SECRETARY IN HONG KONG

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Hedges and Intensifiers Used by the Former Financial Secretary in Hong Kong

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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(Signed)

Abstract

HEDGES AND INTENSIFIERS USED BY THE FORMER FINANCIAL SECRETARY IN HONG KONG

This study examines the types, frequencies and functions of hedges and intensifiers used by a Hong Kong former Financial Secretary (FS) in all his public speeches from 2003-2007. Hedges are defined as expressions of uncertainty, possibility, tentativeness, or approximation. The use of hedges is to mitigate a speaker's utterances to show his/her non-committal or self-protective attitude, or to show solidarity between interlocutors. They denote a lower degree from the assumed norm of a scale continuum. Intensifiers are devices for adding force or commitment to a proposition with confidence or making a strong claim. They denote an upper degree from the assumed norm of a scale continuum. The use of hedges and intensifiers in academic writing has been examined to some extent, but not in spoken discourse such as the speeches of a senior government official. This study aims to analyse all the lexical and syntactic hedges and intensifiers used by the FS in his speeches. In addition, semantic preference, one of the five categories of a co-selection (Sinclair, 1996, 2004a), is used to identify the discussion topics in the speeches where the FS uses hedges or intensifiers. Obtaining the answers from the analysis can help financial practitioners to have a better understanding of the different types of hedge and intensifier and the discussion topics they can apply when giving a speech, which has a similar nature to the speeches given by the FS. To this end, the data are comprised of 85 speeches, and the speeches are grouped, by communicative purposes, into ordinary (CORDS), business (CBUSS), and budget speeches (CBUDS). All the data were subjected to quantitative and qualitative analysis and the following major findings are the result.

The findings indicate that hedging occurs quite frequently in the FS's speeches, but the distribution is uneven. The same is the case for intensifiers. CBUDS has the highest frequency of hedges followed by CBUSS and CORDS. The results of the analysis of intensifiers show that CORDS has the highest frequency. The frequencies

are lower in CBUSS and CBUDS. The findings therefore indicate that the types, frequency of hedges and intensifiers are dependent on the communicative purposes of the speech events. The analysis of semantic preferences indicates that hedges are typically used when the topics are related to such as expressing gratitude at the end of the speeches, predictions of financial data, and the possibility of the introduction of policies and measures. Intensifiers are frequently used when the discussions are related to such as expressing gratitude at inaugurating the events, highlighting the favorable developments of some business activities, expressing high degree of economic or financial contribution of certain industries and upholding governing principles.

This thesis contributes to the study of hedges and intensifiers in spoken discourse, particularly in speeches given by senior institutional professionals. The findings can raise the general awareness of the crucial roles of hedges and intensifiers to modify the force of the utterances in a speech and their contexts of use.

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Sinclair, J. (2004a). *Trust and Text. Language, Corpus and Discourse*. London: Routledge: London.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background

A hedge is a linguistic device used to soften the force or directness of a proposition, or mitigate the commitment of the speaker, and/or minimize the possibility of “face threat” to facilitate successful communication (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Holmes, 1995; Hyland, 1996b). Intensifiers are linguistic devices that indicate “certainty and emphasize the force of the propositions: (Hyland & Tse, 2004c: 168).

There has been an evolutionary trend in studies of hedges. In the early studies, the term hedges was applied to linguistic resources used to describe different degrees of similarity or non-similarity between different members of a given category (Lakoff, 1972; Rosch & Mervis, 1975). Therefore, hedging was introduced with regard to its semantic function to make things either more or less fuzzy (Lakoff, 1972, 1973). In this sense, hedging was used to “define the ideational component of an utterance” (Vass, 2004). Since then, hedging has been examined by sociologists and pragmatists as a means to mitigate face-threatening behaviours and by linguists to examine the “speaker’s confidence in the truth of a proposition” (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Holmes, 1982; Hyland, 1996c: 477; Hyland, 1998a; Prince, Frader, & Bosk, 1982). Channell’s (1990, 1994) studies on vague language, which is classified as a sub-category of hedging in this study, can be seen as expressing a greater precision in communication. In light of this, hedging is viewed as having a pragmatic phenomenon. Salager-Meyer (2000: 176) states that hedging has become “socially constructed over time” so that hedging is a linguistic resource which is socially acceptable in accordance with the norms established by a “given culture or sub-culture”. The use of hedges is also a strategy to develop a relationship with the hearer(s), by “addressing affective expectations in gaining acceptance” of the claims made by the speaker (Hyland, 1996c: 479; Hyland, 1998a: 256-257). Hyland (2005a) also states that hedges are “explicit textual devices” (p. 28) used to “withhold complete commitment to a proposition” (ibid.: 52). Hedges can also be used in expressing indirect claims or denials (Cheng & Warren, 2003; Hinkel, 1997a), modifying or hiding the attitude or truth-value of what is being said, appearing modest, foregrounding the author’s own

precise statements of measurement (Markkanen & Schroder, 1987: 48), and an indication of “an epistemic status” with a lower level of certainty (Crompton, 2012: 60). In other words, hedging has social or interpersonal aspects.

The use of hedges in academic writing such as scientific discourses and research articles written by professionals have been extensively studied (Crompton, 1997; Hyland, 1994, 1998a; Lewin, 2005; Markkanen & Schroder, 1997; Myers, 1989; Varttala, 1999). By using hedges, academics and researchers are able to indicate an appropriate level of caution and doubt when presenting their views or claims. Certain studies claim that hedging is more commonly used for persuasion in research articles when writers require readers to accept the observations of their findings (Varttala, 2001: 67). The application of hedges is also a common topic in other research areas, for example, politeness strategies in interpersonal communications (Brown & Levinson, 1987), defensive strategy for economic debates (Dudley-Evans, 1993: 150), and so on. Different researchers suggest that hedges may also frequently appear in other discourses such as political speeches (Fetzer, 2009, 2010; Schaffner, 1998), and philosophical texts (Markkanen & Schroder, 1987). There are studies focusing on the use of a particular hedge such as *I think* in spoken academic discourse (Kaltenbock, 2010; Karkkainen, 2010; Poos & Simpson, 2002; Reiekkinen, 2009). Hyland (1998a) points out that the study of hedging in different kinds of discourse has been described as “a huge meadow of research”. Hedging in other types of spoken communication does not appear to have been fully explored.

Intensifiers are elements that denote an increase in intensity (Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, & Finegan, 1999; Huddleston & Pullum, 2002). Holmes (1982; 1990) and Hyland (1998c; 2000a; 2000b) state that intensifiers are devices for adding force or commitment to a proposition with confidence or making a strong claim. Crismore, Markkanen and Steffensen (1993: 52) claim that what they term “certainty markers”, a sub-category of interpersonal metadiscourse, are similar to the phenomena of hedging - the degree of “commitment to the truth of the proposition” (Crismore et al., 1993: 52), but at the opposite end of the continuum, i.e. indicating a higher or full certainty about the proposition. Other studies state that intensifiers usually “function as the modifiers of an adjective or adverb” (Mendez-Naya, 2003: 372) and express various degrees of

intensification to the words they modify (Bauer & Bauer, 2002; Lorenz, 1999; Milton, 2001). Greenbaum & Quirk (1990: 179) argue that intensifiers are used not only to “increase the intensity” of meanings, but also “decrease the intensity”, vis-a-vis the assumed norm. In this sense, intensifiers are “capable of imposing a reinforcing or attenuating force on the elements they modify” (Athanasiadou, 2007: 560), i.e. they add a “higher or lower” intensity to the meaning from the “assumed norm” for the following adverb or adjective (Mendez-Naya, 2003: 373). Intensifiers may also be used when a speaker wants to show his/her verbal skills to the audience as intensifiers are “subject to fashion” (Peters, 1994: 271) or a speaker may want the expressions to have “versatility and colour” (Bolinger, 1972) for evoking interest of the audience (Tagliamonte & Roberts, 2005: 281).

Previous studies have examined on the historical development of individual intensifiers (Mendez-Naya, 2003; Partington, 1993a; Peters, 1994). Some studies have focused on the use of a particular intensifier (Gonzalez-Diaz, 2008; Tao, 2007). Biber (2000: 21) considers the use of intensifiers to be a concomitant feature of the use of hedges (e.g. *I guess*, and *I think*). Some studies have examined both intensifiers and hedges (Holmes, 1990; Holmes, 2009; Hosman, 1989). Hyland (1998c; 2000a; 2000b), studying the use of both hedges and intensifiers¹ in academic writing discourses, describes how both hedges (e.g. *may*, *would*, *possible(ly)*, *could*, and *indicate*) and intensifiers (e.g. *clear(ly)*, *actually*, *indeed*, and *always*) are used by writers in the disciplines of applied linguistics, marketing, philosophy, sociology, physics, electrical engineering, mechanical engineering, and microbiology. Hyland (1998c) finds that writers in humanities and social sciences tend to display a greater preference than writers of engineering or physics for the use of both hedges and intensifiers. The reasons for higher use of hedges and intensifiers in soft domains are that hedges can

¹ Hyland (1998a: 352) names the term “boosters” to refer to lexical items that can “emphasize the force of propositions and display commitment to statements”. In other words, they have the same functions as intensifiers. For consistency, the term “intensifiers” is used in this study. However, when referring to other researchers’ studies, the terms boosters, certainty markers, emphatics are used. All these are synonyms.

help writers express more cautiously and reduce commitment as they are “more interpretative”, “research is often influenced by contextual vagaries”, and research outcomes are more diversified (Hyland, 1998c: 361). The higher usage of hedges can also help writers to persuade readers to follow their reasoning (Hyland, 1998c: 361). The reason for the higher use of intensifiers is that they can function as a strategy of positive politeness, allowing the writers to create a feeling of solidarity as it is necessary for writers in soft domains to obtain “support for particular assumptions or conclusions” from the readers (Hyland, 1998c: 368). In hard disciplines such as engineering and physics, it is a common practice for scientists to avoid “personal involvement in the rendition of findings or a commitment to that reading”. The less frequent use of hedges and intensifiers is a way that helps writers to minimize their presence so that it allows the facts or lab experiments to interpret for themselves more objectively and neutrally (Hyland, 1998c: 364). All these findings suggest that the frequencies of the use of hedges and intensifiers depend on linguistic preferences, social, or conventions of the specific community. However, to the best of our knowledge, research on the use of both hedges and intensifiers in public speeches has yet to be conducted.

Terms such as hedges, hedging devices, mitigators, downtoners, stance markers, and understatements are used for the notion of a hedge in most of the studies referred to above. Other terms are mitigation (Stubbs, 1983), tentativeness (Holmes, 1983), evidentiality (Chafe, 1986), hesitation markers (Erman, 2001; Gilquin, 2008), pragmatic markers (Aijmer, 2002; Andersen, 2010), vagueness (Channell, 1994; Egge & Klinedinst, 2011) and indirectness (Hinkel, 1997a). Intensifiers are also called amplifiers, boosters, certainty markers, degree words (Bolinger, 1972), degree modifiers, emphasizees, emphatics, intensive adverbs, or reinforcers (Allerton, 1987; Biber et al., 1999; Crismore et al., 1993; Grabe & Kaplan, 1997; Holmes, 1990; Hyland, 2005a; Paradis, 1997, 2000; Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, & Svartvik, 1985; Stoffel, 1901). This study examines both the hedges and intensifiers used by a former Hong Kong Financial Secretary (FS) in his speeches. In this study, hedges are defined as linguistic devices which can soften the force of the speaker’s utterance, denoting a lower degree from the assumed norm of a scale continuum. They are expressions for

indicating inexactitude, mitigating the assertiveness, modifying the degree of commitment or hiding the attitude or responsibility of the speaker, appearing to be modest, mitigating face threatening acts (FTAs), and building solidarity. Intensifiers are defined as linguistic devices that can strengthen the force of the speaker's utterance, denoting a degree higher than the assumed norm. They are linguistic devices for exaggerating the actual claims or viewpoint, reinforcing the truth-value of the proposition, intensifying the claims more certainly, enhancing the politeness or showing interest.

Most studies look at hedges and intensifiers as discrete items. However, hedges and intensifiers may be co-selected by the speakers or writers as part of the extended units of meaning. This study seeks to extend our understanding of hedges and intensifiers by examining what else is co-selected when they are used. The co-selections studied in this study are the collocates, the clusters to which they belong, if any, and the semantic preferences of the most frequent hedges and intensifiers used.

1.2 Extended units of meaning of a lexical item

This study accounts for Thomas' (1995) observations that meaning is "dynamic". In this sense, the meaning of language in use is formed from a particular context and through negotiation between the interlocutors. Sinclair (1996; 2004a: 142) states that the "creation of meaning in language is through phrase-based rather than individual words". That is, the extended units of meaning of a lexical item are "created through combinations of co-selections and not by individual words" (ibid.: 113).

Sinclair's (1991, 1996) model of an extended unit of meaning has five categories which account for the internal structure of a lexical item. The first four categories are called "four types of co-occurrence relations in extended lexico-semantic units" by Stubbs (2001a: 64). Stubbs (2001a: 64ff) further explains that a collocation is the frequent co-selection of word forms (e.g., *thunderous applause*). A colligation is the co-selection of grammatical categories (e.g., *cases* is frequently associated with the quantifier *some*). The regular set of co-selected items which shares a semantic feature is called semantic preference (e.g., the word-form *large* is frequently associated with words for *quantity and size*). A semantic prosody is a set of word-form displays "a

subtle element of attitudinal, often pragmatic meaning” (Sinclair, 2004a: 145) (e.g. the word-form *cause* has a tendency to be associated with unpleasant events (Stubbs, 2001a: 65)). The fifth category is the *core*, which “is invariable, and constitutes the evidence of the occurrence of the item as a whole” (Sinclair, 2004a: 141). Sinclair (1996: 94) states that the analysis of the categories of a co-selection shows how to “widen our horizons” and shows how the units of meaning can be “much more extensive and varied than is seen in a single word”. Many extant corpus studies use the five types of relation to analyse their data such as Cheng’s (2006) study of SARS² spoken discourses and Stubbs’ (2001a) study of words and phrases used in the Brown Corpus.

1.3 Purposes and approaches of the study

The Financial Secretary in Hong Kong is a senior government official but does not belong to any political party³. His major functions are to assist the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong SAR Government in overseeing policy formulation and implementation of financial, monetary, economic, trade and employment matters. He is also responsible for preparing and presenting the Government Budget. In this regard, he is a key politician in the Hong Kong financial community. In addition to the annual budget policy speech, he is often invited to different events to deliver speeches on various financial and economic issues. Although the speeches or reports are meant for a group of audiences, they matter to some other interest parties, such as investors in the financial markets. The speeches are usually studied by different influential market players including the government, the financial services and business sectors, the media, academics, economists, participants in the financial

² SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) is a viral respiratory illness that caused about eight thousand people worldwide infected and 299 people died in Hong Kong (Cheng, 2003).

³ In Hong Kong, the Chief Secretary, Financial Secretary, and Secretary of Justice are civil servants and appointed by the Chief Executive of SAR. In order to avoid conflict of interest, they are not allowed being a member of any political party.

markets, as well as the wider public. They then become widely circulated in specialized and general media such as the Financial Times magazine or Commercial Radio HK, and are obviously used as information by different market players. It can be argued that the pronouncements made by the FS may have a substantial impact on people's economic and financial decisions. It is because of his political status and the fact that his speeches are always delivered publicly, depending on the nature, his speeches can be regarded as either political or public speeches.

There is also the possibility that different individuals may have different interpretations of his speeches or policies mentioned, but nonetheless his speeches likely influence their investment decisions. If the audiences/readers interpret his speeches erroneously, making inaccurate decisions and taking irrelevant actions, the result may be monetary losses. Obviously, the FS is fully aware of the fact that his pronouncements may affect the economic and financial activities. It is presumed, therefore, on the one hand that the FS may want to pass on or share some of the responsibility for his statements, or qualify the exactness of some financial data because he may not have the exact data on hand when presenting the speeches, or may wish to avoid revealing some information regarding the matters under discussion. On the other hand, he may express a high degree of engagement and solidarity with the audience, or emphasize the exactness of some financial data, or emphasize the claims made for indication of certainty on some issues discussed. As a result, he may use different hedging and intensifying strategies in his speeches.

In view of the fact that only the study of hedges and intensifiers in academic writing are well documented for data authentication, but so far the nature, functions, frequencies and patterns of the use of both hedges and intensifiers in speeches of a financial policy-maker have not been fully investigated. It is of the fact that the public and media always criticize the FS's budget predictions are under/over-estimates when compared with the actual figures. The FS usually defends by saying that precise predication is impossible because there is always an element of uncertainty about future.

One of the professional duties of the author of this study has been to study the speeches of the FS in Hong Kong for advising the management of his company

about any likely adverse impacts of the government's new measures or policies on the company. For example, if there was any indication in the speeches that the Government would increase mortgage interest rates, the author of this study was required to inform the concerned departments so that they estimate the impact on income. In the course of these studies, it was found that his speeches consisted of a number of features that could be characterized as hedges and intensifiers. The author believed it was worthwhile to conduct an empirical study on the use of hedges and intensifiers in public speeches such as the speeches delivered by the FS in Hong Kong.

Furthermore, in the context of business communications, some people may ask "what academic preparation is needed by business administration students if they are to become successful executives in an information society" (Bennett & Olney, 1986: 13). As such, some attention has been directed to address the importance in spoken business communications and conversational management (Li, Zhu, & Li, 2001; Steuten, 1998). However, written communications are still more popular than spoken communications (Bhatia, 2004; Bhatia, Langton, & Lung, 2004). Chew (2005: 430) indicates that it could be that business professionals use more of writing than speaking in their business communications because their source documents such as research reports, bank documents and financial services reports are all in written texts. Only recently some attention has been paid to spoken business communications such as presentation skills of managers (Rotondo & Rotondo, 2002), effective public speaking (Jones, 2004; Lucas, 2012), and business meetings (Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris, 1997). Chew (2005: 432) claims that many new entrants to the financial industry in Hong Kong feel the needs to improve their skills in spoken communications. They would like to receive training in English in presentation skills, negotiation skills and business conversations (ibid.: 432). Evans (2011: 308) also indicates that Chinese people with Bachelor's or Master's degrees have a "lack of confidence" in their English spoken ability".

Although hedges and intensifiers are important and effective communicative resources, no comprehensive study examining their use in the speeches of a senior Hong Kong government official has been reported. Therefore, the aim of this study

is to analyse all the hedges and intensifiers used by Mr. Henry Tang in all his speeches delivered on various occasions throughout his tenure as the Financial Secretary of Hong Kong from 2003 to 2007, which is the entire collection of his speeches. The frequencies as well as the purposes of use of the seven types of lexical and syntactic hedges and five types of lexical and syntactic intensifiers are examined. Lexical hedges and intensifiers are items that carry a lexical content such as modal auxiliaries, nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and phrasal items. Syntactic hedges and intensifiers are expressions that carry hedging or intensification in meaning such as if-clauses, agentless passives, and compound hedges or intensifiers. This study also aims to use the application of Wmatrix to compare the relative frequency of hedges and intensifiers in the three different corpora with the spoken sub-corpus of the Hong Kong Financial Services Corpus (HKFSC)⁴. In doing so, the comparison can increase the general awareness of hedges and intensifiers of speakers when delivering speeches in their professional domains. In addition, by using the concept of an extended unit of meaning, it also examines the collocates, clusters and semantic preferences of the most frequent hedges and intensifiers. The taxonomy developed in this study can provide a reference for other researchers in the field. The analysis of the collocations and semantic preference of the co-selections of a lexical item can help to explore our further understanding of hedges and intensifiers by examining what other things are co-selected when they are used. For example, the study of the semantic preferences and their co-text can identify the specific discussion topics which are linked to the use of hedges and intensifiers.

⁴ HKFSC is a 7.3 million words corpus which is publicly accessible in the website of the Research Centre for Professional Communication in English (RCPCE) in HK Polytechnic University. The corpus is for the benefit of researchers who study the language of financial services industry. The HKFSC_Spoken Section consists of 83 speeches (0.22 million words) which were presented by guest speakers at different events such as at luncheon meetings, conferment ceremonies, annual dinners of associations, shareholders meetings, business conferences and so on.

1.4 Research questions

Although research on hedging has received some attention, corpus-based studies have mainly focused on scientific and academic discourses (Hinkel, 2005; Hyland, 1994; Hyland, 1996a; Koutsantoni, 2006; Meyer, 1997; Salager-Meyer, 1994; Vassileva, 2001). The study of intensifiers, so far, is mainly found in informal communication research such as in the speech between male and female speakers (Holmes, 1990), and in patterns of London teenage talk (Stenstrom, Andersen, & Hasund, 2002). Research on usage of both hedging and intensification in specialized discourse in areas other than educational conference papers (Holmes, 2009) or academic writings (Hyland, 1998c; Hyland, 2000a) has been rare.

This study examines both hedges and intensifiers in three types of speech delivered by the former FS. The speeches are classified into ordinary speeches (CORDS), business speeches (CBUSS) and budget speeches (CBUDS). Ordinary speeches are speeches delivered in events such as inaugural ceremonies, presentations of awards, or celebrations of an anniversary. The purposes of CORDS are inaugural or ceremonial in nature. However, in order to increase the interest of the audience, recent economic or business developments, which are related to the specific purpose of the events, may be mentioned. Business speeches are speeches made at business events for different local and overseas professional associations, or potential overseas investors. The speeches in CBUSS are for informing the audience about the latest economic or business developments in Hong Kong such as business cooperation between Hong Kong and the Mainland, and the possibility of the introduction of new policies and measures. Another main purpose of CBUSS is to persuade potential overseas investors to invest in Hong Kong. Budget speeches are major annual speeches made in the Legislative Council, describing next year's financial forecasts and plans. The main purpose of the budget speeches is to persuade the Legislative Councillors to endorse the budget proposals. Although the purposes of each speech are different, the speeches are delivered by the same person. In view of the specific purposes of the events, the language used may be context-specific. This study aims to answer the following research questions:-

1. What are the relative frequencies of hedges and intensifiers?
2. What are the relative frequencies of hedges and intensifiers when compared with the spoken section of the HKFSC in Wmatrix?
3. What are the variations in the forms of hedges and intensifiers?
4. What are the major collocations, clusters and semantic preferences co-selected with the most frequent lexical hedges and intensifiers?

1.5 Significance of the study

Obtaining the answers to the above questions can help readers to gain a better understanding of the different types of hedge and intensifier used in a specific event. The answers may lead to a better understanding of the importance of the use of hedges and intensifiers in speeches. The analysis of collocations and clusters can provide users with some frequent multi-word lexical strings associated with hedges and intensifiers for use in similar types of speech. The analysis of the semantic preferences can extend our understanding on the association of formal patterning with a semantic field for hedges and intensifiers. The results of this study contribute to filling the gap in the literature regarding the use of hedges and intensifiers in specialized discourse, such as public speeches.

1.6 Outline of this study

Following this introductory chapter, a closer account of enumeration of the concepts of hedges and intensifiers and their related topics in previous studies are reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3. A brief description of the co-selections of a lexical item is in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 is a description of the scope and aims of this study. It then describes the methodology, data sources and the procedures used. The analytical frameworks and taxonomies used to identify and analyse the hedges and intensifiers in the corpora are developed in Chapter 6. Chapters 7 and 8 provide in-depth analysis and findings in the use of hedges and intensifiers by the FS in his three different types of speech. Chapter 9 provides an analysis and discussions of the findings of the collocations, clusters and semantic preferences of the most frequent hedges and intensifiers. The significant findings in this study are discussed in Chapter 10. Chapter

11 gives the conclusions and limitations of this study and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2 Literature review of hedging/hedges

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses some key concepts related to hedging/hedges from the previous studies. The original study of hedges and their uses can be traced back to 1960's. Since then, many definitions have been suggested and proposed. When studying the definitions and their suggested uses, it can be seen that the notion of hedging has gone through the logic, semantic, pragmatic, and interpersonal stages. The following sections discuss the dictionary definitions of hedging, different stages in the evolution of hedging, functions of hedges, review on the studies of hedging in other disciplines, and the linguistic realizations of hedges/hedging.

2.2 Dictionary definitions of hedging/hedges

Dictionary definitions of the word hedging or hedge include: 1) an act or means of preventing complete loss of a bet, an argument, an investment, or the like, with a partial counterbalancing or qualifying one; 2) to protect with qualifications that allow for unstated contingencies or for withdrawal from commitment (e.g. *He hedged his program against attack and then presented it to the board*); 3) using a cautious or evasive statement; and 4) to avoid a rigid commitment by qualifying or modifying a position so as to permit withdrawal (dictionary.com). Collins Cobuild (2006) Dictionary defines a hedge as “if you hedge or hedge a problem or question, you avoid answering the question or committing yourself to a particular action or decision”. All these definitions share a common element, that is hedging those expressions in language which make messages indeterminate, that is, convey inexactitude, or mitigate the strength of the assertions that the speaker or writer makes, for example:

- 1) I *believe* that, strikes a proper balance between keeping taxation low and enhancing government services (extract from the 2006 budget speech).

- 2) There *might* even be some scope for reducing other taxes (extract from 2006 budget speech).
- 3) The banks *probably* still get the lion's share (extract from the speech given at a luncheon meeting dated 13th April 2005).

In these examples, the FS uses different hedging expressions (*italicized*) to convey attitudinal behaviours such as uncertainty about the state of affairs, non-commitment to a proposition, and lack of awareness of the knowledge.

2.3 The evolution of hedging/hedges

In line with the definitions, the concept of hedging has gone through several logic, semantic, pragmatic, and social or interpersonal stages.

Zadeh (1965; 1972: 4) suggests some linguistic hedges such as “*very, more or less, and essentially* may be viewed as a operator”, which act on the fuzzy set “representing the meaning of its operand”. Another early exploration of the linguistic hedging phenomenon was carried out by Lakoff (1972: 196) who defines hedges as “words or phrases whose job is to make things fuzzy or less fuzzy”, implying that writers are less than fully committed to the certainty of the referential information they present in their writing. A speaker can state a proposition as a fact (e.g. *this medicine helps you recover quickly*) or can use a hedge to distance from statement (e.g. *I believe that this medicine could help you recover quickly*). The introduction of hedging by Zadeh (1965) and Lakoff (1972) was basically logical and semantic and, dealing with propositions and their degrees of fuzziness.

Soon later, the use of modals and semi-modals as hedged performatives has been explored by Fraser (1975). The performatives have an effect on the illocutionary acts in which they can relieve the speaker from some of the responsibility. Prince, Frader, and Bosk (1982: 89) treat hedges as a means of signalling uncertainty and a less than fully commitment to the truth of a proposition. Hedging has received some attention as a feature of spoken discourse mostly in casual conversations. The use of hedging as an indication of imprecision and vagueness has been discussed in Salager-Meyer's (1994) study. In their studies of metadiscourse, Vande Kopple (1985), Crismore, Markkanen & Steffensen (1993) and Hyland (1999b, 2005a) find that hedges are used

to show lack of full commitment of the speakers. In these studies, hedging has drawn scholars' attention from the pragmatic perspective.

Along the semantic and pragmatic functions of hedging, Brown and Levinson (1987: 145) claim that hedging is an important element in face-to-face communication because "ordinary communicative intentions are often potential threats to cooperative interaction" and therefore have to be mitigated. The use of hedging is a politeness strategy to mitigate face-threatening act (FTA) (ibid.: 146). Myers (1989) applies Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory to a study of biology research articles. Myer (1989) accounts for that hedging can serve as a negative politeness strategy in making the communications more rationale and objective between the authors and readers. The findings of Salager-Meyer's (1997) study also claim that the use of hedges is a threat minimizing strategy in social interactions and negotiation between writers (or speakers) and readers (or listeners). Hedging is also a way of qualifying categorical commitment and facilitating conversations and discussions (Hyland, 1996b; Hyland, 1998a). Research on academic writing has repeatedly shown that the use of hedges is crucial because they are "a central rhetorical means of gaining communal adherence to knowledge claims" (Hyland, 1994: 241; 1998a; Meyer, 1997; Myers, 1989; Salager-Meyer, 1994). Hyland (1998a:155) underlines "the importance of hedging in structuring scientific communication" and emphasizes "the variability of the means used to express" them to show deference to readers. Salager-Meyer (2000: 176) remarks that hedging is a linguistic resource which is socially acceptable in accordance with the norms established by a "given culture or sub-culture" for mitigating face threats. In this sense, the concept of hedging has been extended to an interpersonal politeness strategy to modify the social relationships between the interlocutors. Therefore, the concept of hedging has gone through semantic, pragmatic and interpersonal stages.

As hedges have become an interesting area of study, many researchers examine their forms and functions within the field of semantics, pragmatics, and interpersonal politeness perspectives. In each of these research areas, the term hedging is referred to in a different way. In the next section, there is a discussion on the concepts and key studies related to hedging in the three stages.

2.4 Hedging from the fuzzy logic perspective

The research on hedging dates back to the 1965s when Zadeh dealt in his article “Fuzzy Sets” with aspects of the fuzzy set theory. He notes that some objects of the natural world do not easily fit into the available linguistic categories for describing precisely the criteria of the objects (Zadeh, 1965:338). According to him, a fuzzy set is “a class with unsharp boundaries in which the transition from membership to non-membership is gradual rather than abrupt” (Zadeh, 1972: 4). His assumption is based on the fact that everything consists of a degree on the sliding scale such as truth, height, beauty, or anything that is affected by the language interpretation (Zadeh, 1972: 4). In this sense, “the class of tall men is a fuzzy set, as are the classes of beautiful women, young men, and so on” (Zadeh, 1972: 4). It is in view of the important role that such imprecisely defined “classes” play “in human thinking, particularly in the domains of pattern recognition, communication of information and abstraction”, that Zadeh (1965: 338) proposes his fuzzy set theory. The fuzzy set is “characterized by a membership function, which assigns to each object a grade of membership ranging between zero and one” (ibid.: 338). In his theory, an object may belong to the set partially rather than completely belonging to the set or not belonging to the set at all. “The transition of an object from membership to non-membership is gradual” (Zadeh, 1972: 4-5). It lies somewhere in the interval from zero to one. Zadeh (1972:7) lists an example to illustrate the fuzzy set of “middle-aged”. “If U is the set of ages from zero to 100, then the fuzzy subset of U corresponding to the term ‘middle-aged’ may be expressed as” in the following table (Zadeh, 1972: 7).

U(age)	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55
Degree of Compatibility	0.3	0.5	0.8	0.9	1	1	1	1	1	0.9	0.8	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.3

In this example, a number indicates the degree of compatibility of a membership. Here “1” in the “degree of compatibility” row indicates full membership of “middle-aged”, while “0” means non-membership. Numbers such as 0.3, 0.4...0.9 represent different degrees of compatibility of the category membership. Ages younger than 43 or older than 49 are gradually grouped into “young” and “old”

categories. These numbers cannot be regarded as exact, especially when vagueness in the meaning of the word is put under the fuzzy set theory. Zhang (1998b: 51) emphasizes that “these numbers are used to express a kind of relationship”, which properly reflects the behaviours of humans’ language.

Zadeh (1972: 22) suggests that certain linguistic hedges such as “*very, more or less, essentially, and slightly*” might be viewed as “operators acting on the fuzzy set” and “representing the meaning of its operand” (Zadeh, 1972: 4). For example, the term *very tall man*, the operator *very* acts on the fuzzy meaning of the term *tall man*. Accordingly Zadeh (1972: 22) postulates two types of hedge that can be used to convey fuzzy meaning:-

Type I. Hedges in this category can be represented as operators acting on a fuzzy set; examples of this category are *very, more or less, slightly, and highly*.

Type II. Hedges in this category require a description of how they act on the components of the operand; examples in this category are *essentially, technically, actually, strictly, in a sense, practically, virtually, and regular* (Zadeh, 1972: 22). The effect of Type II requires “a description of the manner in which they affect the components of the operand” (ibid.: 31).

In summary, Zadeh (1965) was the first scholar to study the fuzziness of natural language. According to him, not only objects but also languages in the real world do not have sharply defined boundaries. An object may belong to the set partially rather than having to belong to the set completely or not at all; “the transition of an object from membership to non-membership is gradual, rather than abrupt” (Zadeh, 1972: 4). According to this definition, it allows a proposition not only to be either completely true or completely false, but also partially true or false to a certain degree, and this degree of membership is within the interval zero and one (ibid.: 4-5). He further suggests some “linguistic hedges may be viewed as operators, which act on the fuzzy set representing the meaning of its operand (ibid.: 4).

Fuzzy set theory is grounded on a logic and semantic level. It does not take into account the fact that the meaning of a word may change over time and the degree of

fuzziness may change too. The theory also does not take into account pragmatic or politeness perspectives where the degree of fuzziness may shift in terms of the meaning when interpersonal interaction exists or according to the contextual meaning.

2.5 Hedging from the semantic perspective

Lakoff (1972, 1973) is considered to be one of the early scholars to study linguistic hedges. He agrees with the phenomenon mentioned in Zadeh's (1965) fuzzy-set theory. He points out that natural language is vague and the boundaries are not clear (Lakoff, 1973). In a fuzzy set, some members do not simply belong to or not belong to a set, but belong to a certain degree (for instance, any number between 0 and 1 represents a certain degree). He takes "height" as an example (Lakoff, 1972; 1973: 463). If a man is over 6.3ft, he is a tall man. If a man is below 5.3ft, "he is not tall to any degree" (Lakoff, 1973: 462). He further explains that if a man is 5.7ft or 5.9ft or 5.11ft, some words like *sort of* can be used to indicate fuzziness. For example, if a man is 5.9ft, some words, such as "he is sort of tall" can be used to heighten the intermediate value of "tall" (Lakoff, 1973: 471).

Lakoff (1973: 471) defines hedges as "words whose job is to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy". According to him, the hedge words "*sort of* is a predicate modifier" (Lakoff, 1973: 471). The degree of truth changes when the hedge words *sort of* are added to the category membership of bird. Below are examples.

Hierarchy of birds, "sort of" is added	Degree of truth
(4) A robin is <i>sort of</i> a bird	False – it is a bird
(5) A chicken is <i>sort of</i> a bird	True, or very close to true
(6) A Penguin is <i>sort of</i> a bird	True, close to true
(7) A bat is <i>sort of</i> a bird	Still pretty close to false
(8) A cow is <i>sort of</i> a bird	False

(Lakoff, 1973: 471)

Lakoff (1973) claims that the judgment of the speaker is based on critical features of category membership. Through the phenomenon of fuzziness, Lakoff (1973) arrived at the concept of hedges. But he also points out that hedges distinguish

not only the “degree of category membership” in a class but are also “more about meaning” (Lakoff, 1973: 473). Frequently, he cites the examples:

- (9) Esther Williams is a fish.
- (10) Esther Williams is a *regular* fish. (Lakoff, 1973: 473)

Literally, (9) is false because “Esther Williams is a human being and not a fish”; (10) with the hedge *regular*, seems to be true. It means that Esther Williams swims well as “she has certain other characteristic properties of a fish” (Lakoff, 1973: 474). Thus, it refers to her skills. The use of *regular* in (10) “seems to assert the connotation” of the word *fish* which made (10) true to some degree (Lakoff, 1972: 474; 1973). He also states that “the truth value of a sentence as a whole depends not upon the literal meaning of the predicates involved, but strictly depends upon their connotations” (Lakoff, 1973: 474). He further concludes that “the semantics cannot be taken to be independent of pragmatics, but the two are inextricably tied together” (Lakoff, 1973: 474).

In Lakoff’s (1972: 196; 1973: 473) definition, a hedging device can be used to make things semantically “fuzzier or less fuzzy”. The idea of making things fuzzier is also mentioned in other studies. According to Salager-Meyer (1994: 150), hedges are used to “convey (purposive) vagueness and tentativeness”. This view is in line with Lakoff’s postulation that:

Natural language concepts have vague boundaries and fuzzy edges and that, consequently, natural language sentences will very often be neither true, nor false, nor nonsensical, but rather true to a certain extent and false to a certain extent, true in certain respects and false in other respects (Lakoff, 1973: 458).

On similar lines, Brown & Levinson (1987: 145) also indicate that a hedge can be used to “modify the degree of membership of a predicate or noun phrase in a set”. In this sense, hedges can be used to describe the true meaning of a predicate on the spectrum between absolute true and false.

The other interpretation that hedges can make thing less fuzzy is endorsed by other studies. Rounds (1981) takes the view that natural language may not be able to give the exact interpretation of reality. Hedges can be used to cover insufficiency by providing the right amount of information on the state of affairs under discussion (Salager-Meyer, 1994: 151). The appropriate use of hedges can achieve greater preciseness (ibid.). The less fuzzy theory is associated with Hyland's concept of "content-oriented hedges". As stated by Hyland (1996b; 1998a: 156, 162), some devices can be used to "hedge the correspondence between what the writer says about the world and what the world is thought to be like". The "accuracy-oriented hedges", a sub-category of "content-oriented hedges" are used to hedge "the writer's desire to express proposition with greater precision" on the basis of "plausible reasoning or logical deduction in the absence of full knowledge" (Hyland, 1998a: 162-163). In these perspectives, hedges can be used to indicate a certain degree of exactitude on the proposition under discussion. In other words, hedging contributes to the ideational component of an utterance.

2.6 Hedging from the pragmatic perspective

Along with the semantic function, hedges can also have pragmatic functions to mitigate the degree of commitment, modify the certainty of a statement, and indicate a tentative assessment of the truth-value of the proposition of the speaker or writer. This pragmatic phenomenon is described in many studies, for example,

2.6.1 Hedging and performatives

In addition to the concern on logical properties of words and phrases like *rather*, *sort of*, *largely*, *technically*, *strictly speaking* and their ability "to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy", Lakoff (1973: 490-491) also mentions that some verbs can be used for performatives. However, the concept is fully explored by Fraser (1975). In his article "Hedged Performatives", he analyses modal verbs or semi modals from the point of view of pragmatic hedges and finds that some modals or semi modals can be used to modify the illocutionary forces of performative verbs by emphasizing the inevitable obligation of the speaker, for example,

(11) I *must* advise you to remain quiet.

(12) I *wish* to permit you to try that. (Fraser, 1975:187-188)

(11) is an example of “strong performative” as it is “easily seen as counting as the act denoted by the performative verb in the sentence” (Fraser, 1975: 188). However, (12) is an example of “weakly performative” because its performative use is not certain. (11) seems to convey the performative that *I have the obligation to advise you to remain quiet*, while (12) is an unusual way to try to convey the performative that *I permit you to try that*. It only has the meaning of *I am wishing*.

According to Fraser (1975), by expressing an “obligation” in the example (11), the speaker implies that no other alternatives in the matter and that if there are other choices he/she might not perform that act. It implies that an expression indicates the desire of the speaker to avoid responsibility for performing the acts of advising, admitting, and promising. This is an act of hedging.

Fraser (1975: 188) also states that there are other modal clauses that can be used on hedged performatives. For example, *can* is sometimes used to express uncertainty of the speaker’s ability.

(13) I *can* promise you that I will not squeal. (Fraser, 1975: 201)

(The use of *can* expresses the speaker’s uncertainty about his/her ability to do something. This implies that the speaker does not want to commit fully in his/her utterance.)

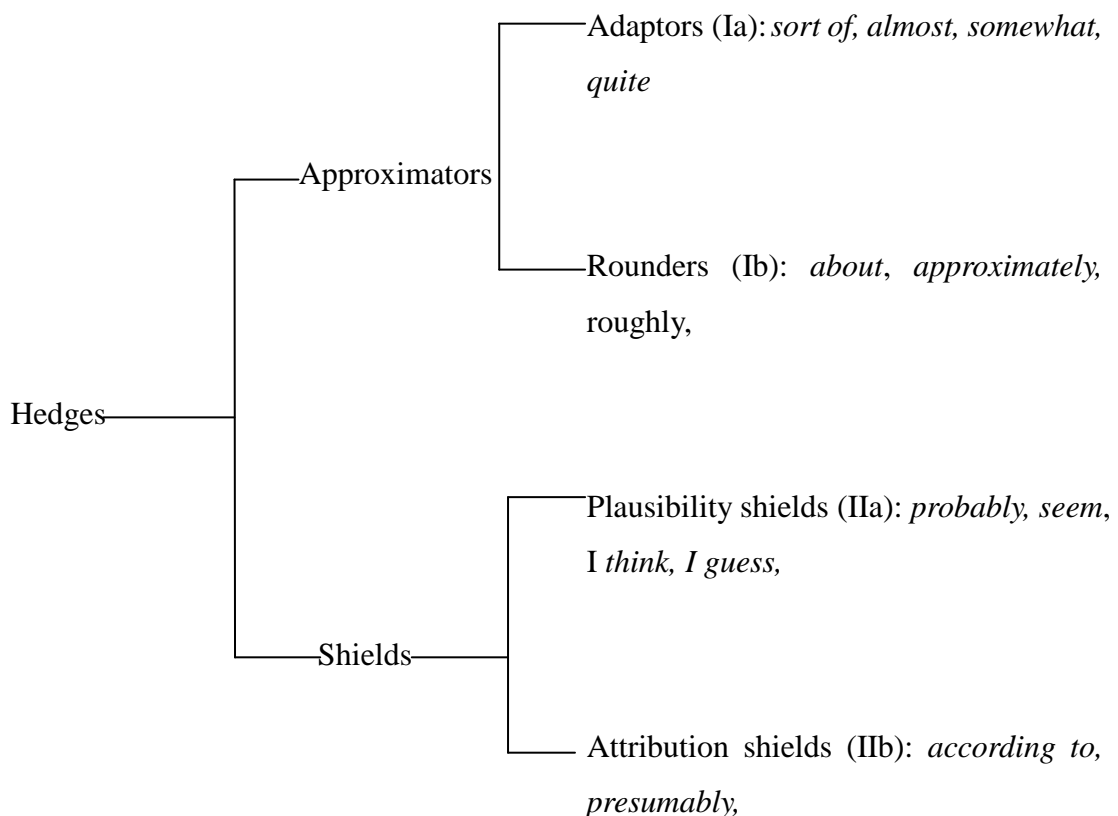
In sum, Fraser (1975) recognizes the effect of certain modals and semi-modals have on the illocutionary act denoted by a performative verb in an utterance such as the use of *must* in *I must advise you to remain quiet*. Fraser (1975) claims that the use of modals or semi-modals in an utterance to relieve the speaker from responsibility is called “hedged performative”. After Fraser’s (1975) study, Brown and Levinson (1978: 152) also postulate the concept of performative hedges, i.e. the “hedges on illocutionary force”. According to them (1978: 152-167), performative hedges (e.g.

such as adverbs *really* and *merely* or clauses such as *it is said* and *I wonder*) are used to hedge propositional content. They are of the view that performative hedges are used to hedge the speaker's commitment or affecting the propositional content. In this sense, hedges constitute a pragmatic phenomenon.

2.6.2 Hedging as shields or approximators

After the analysis of the salient features of hedges in using the data of physicians' interactions via Intensive Care Units, Prince, Frader, and Bosk (1982) illustrate the types of hedge in the following taxonomy.

Figure 1: Prince, Frader, and Bosk's (1982: 86-91) model of hedging



Approximators “affect the propositional content, either by (Ia) adapting a term to non-prototypical situation” (Adaptors), or by (Ib) “indicate that some terms are a rounded-off representation of some figures” (Rounders) (Prince et al., 1982:93). *Shields* “do not affect the truth conditions of the propositions associated with them”

(Prince et al., 1982: 89). The only effect is that the speaker has (IIa) “implicated that s/he is not fully and personally committed in the usual or ‘unmarked’ way to the belief that the relevant state of affairs actually obtains” (Plausibility shields) (Prince et al., 1982: 89), or that (IIb) s/he has no direct knowledge but is attributing “the belief in question to someone other than the speaker” (Attribution shields) (ibid.: 89). Prince et al. (1982:85-91) also give the following examples.

Ia. His feet are *sort of* blue.

Ib. I and O was *about* ten fifty over five fifty.

IIa. And I *think* we can *probably* just slow him down...

IIb. There was *presumably* no uh acute decrease in heart ...

(Prince et al., 1982: 85-91)

Overall, Prince et al.’s (1982) study looks at hedging from a pragmatic perspective, which affects the propositional relationships and the writer’s commitment. However, the taxonomy has some limitations. For example, Prince et al. (1982: 89) group the parenthetical *I think* as a “shield”, signalling that the speaker is “not fully and personally committed in the usual or ‘unmarked’ way” to the proposition. Kaltenbock (2010: 262) comments that by taking the “parameters of position, prosody, scope and co-occurrence fact”, *I think* has shield, approximator, structural, and also intensifier functions depending on the situational context. Prince et al. (1982: 96) remark that the use of certain types of hedge is restricted to the physicians because they operate under conditions of uncertainty. Nevertheless, their model ignores another important function of hedges, the interpersonal dimension. Crompton (1997: 273) indicates that the prominent features of shields have linked to the concept of epistemic modality, another notion related to hedging.

Other researchers have also widened the concept of hedging and its pragmatic functions. For example, there are studies indicate that some functions of vagueness also have similar pragmatic functions of hedging such as avoiding commitment or purposely expressing imprecision (Channell, 1990, 1994; Hyland, 1998a; Trappes-Lomax, 2004). In this regard, vagueness is associated with hedging.

2.6.3 Hedging and vagueness

Vagueness is a common phenomenon in natural language and is usually associated with pragmatic study and may overlap with the notion of hedging as defined in this study (Overstreet, 2011).

As noted by Burns (1991: 3-4), the term vagueness is difficult to “characterize or define” since there are many concepts and predicates in natural language that have no definitions which clearly determine their use in every instance. Through the metaphor used by Frege (1970), Burns (1991: 3) states that “a non-vague” item is a device “which is sharply defined in the sense that it neatly divides objects into those contained in the term’s extension and those contained in the extension of its negation. A vague term is one whose correct definition permits the possibility of borderline cases”. Furthermore, she indicates that two conceptions of vagueness are characterized by: 1) “borderline case” vagueness, relating to “uncertainty concerns the fringes of application of a word”; and 2) indefiniteness “about the actual content of a concept or representation” (Burns, 1991: 16). She further states that indefiniteness in communication due to the lack of specific information may lead “the audience to reject such statement as vague” (Burns, 1991: 16-17). The context and the hearer’s expectations are the elements deciding whether an utterance is vague or not as Burns (1991: 10) indicates, “Actual usage is restricted to a limited range of circumstances and guided by *particular interests and purpose* and there is no saying how it would extend to further unconsidered circumstances”. The phrase in italic implies that in some situations, vagueness is used purposively.

Fara (2000), Kennedy & McNally (2005a: 356), and Kennedy (2007) indicate that some vague expressions that “involve gradable predicates” are contextually dependent. Egre and Klinedinst (2011: 5) give an example to explain the relationship between vagueness and context-dependence. The degree of vagueness of the gradable predicate *tall* “is context-sensitive in the sense that whether an individual is judged *tall* or not depends on an underlying comparison class”. For example, “whether a snowman counts as *tall* varies depending on whether it is built by a child or by a fraternity” (Egre & Klinedinst, 2011: 5). Egre and Klinedinst (2011: 2) state that vagueness has three distinctive features: “the existence of borderline cases, the lack of

a sharp boundary along the transition from clear counter-instances, and susceptibility to sorites arguments⁵”. Vagueness is also associated with some similar concepts such as imprecision, under determination, contextual variability, inexactness (Egre & Klinedinst, 2011: 7), and generality and ambiguity (Zhang, 1998). The existence and importance of vagueness in natural language have led to various pragmatic discourse studies in the use of vague language (VL).

The study of VL has increased in numbers since the 1960s. Different notions and terms were used, but those studies have touched VL briefly, “as part of an overall description of language” (Cutting, 2007: 5). For example, Lakoff (1973) applies Zadeh’s (1965) fuzzy set theory to distinguish between central and peripheral members of a category. These fuzzy set frameworks are grouped under the phenomenon of vagueness in language (Egre & Klinedinst, 2011).

In her book, Channell (1994: 3) indicates that the appropriate use of VL constitutes an important aspect of successful communication. What is important is to tailor the VL to “make it suitable to the situation”. Channell (1994: 165-195) finds that the deliberate use of VL by a speaker can function either as: “a) giving the right amount of information; or b) deliberately withholding information; or c) using language persuasively; or d) having no appropriate words and phrases to express; or e) lacking of specific information; or f) uncertain about what he/she wants to say; or g) safeguarding against being later shown to be wrong; or h) expressing deference and at the same time disagree with others”. These different uses to some degree may function like hedges. For example, functions like a), b), and e) can vary the degree of specificity of an utterance without flouting the maxim of quantity and quality. They allow the speaker to hedge in the sense that what is provided is just a reference point to the hearer and thus fits the notion of hedging. The ideational function is seen because the speaker expresses the reality, i.e. factual data. The VL can protect the speaker from

⁵ “Peter is bald”. [but in fact Peter still has some hair] (example extracted from Reboul, 1989: 287 by Franken, 1997: 137). A person (“X”) “accepts that a man with no hair is bald. If a man with one (0+1) hair, that man is still bald” (ibid.). Logically, if that man keeps on adding one hair at a time and ends up with a hairy head, X may still come to the conclusion that that man is still bald (ibid.).

being asked by the hearer some unnecessary questions. For example, functions f), g), and h) can allow the speaker to hedge the available evidence to avoid the possible face-threatening behaviours. In this respect, the pragmatic and the interpersonal functions are manifest as it addresses the speaker's commitment as well as the relationship with the hearer.

Since the study by Channell (1994), VL has been recognized as “a pervasive property of texts, and a property of considerable social importance” (Fairclough, 2003: 55) because it frequently appears in conversations. In fact, the ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions are salient in the use of VL. Although VL is not the same as hedging, many studies associate VL with hedging. For example, Franken's (1997) study indicates that vagueness is associated with Sperber and Wilson's (1986) Relevance Theory. Franken (1997: 136) states that in their study, Sperber and Wilson's (1991) claim that not many utterances are purely literal: “most instances of communication involve approximate or vague uses, figurative meaning or indirectness”. “Vagueness” (“looseness” in Sperber and Wilson terminology, 1991: 540) is often attributed to the imprecision of the information conveyed. The loose use of language indicates that some expressions are a less-than-literal interpretation as they only refer to some states of a phenomenon and only direct the hearer to interpret a set of assumptions in the utterance (Jucker, Smith, & Ludge, 2003: 1741). The use of VL through the application of “loose talk” phenomenon can allow the speaker to hedge against committing to the truth of the proposition (Franken, 1997: 137). However, in her further analysis, Franken (1997: 150) does not group “vagueness and approximation” under the generic heading of “loose talk”. She proposes to deal with vagueness and approximation separately because approximation may involve “the way ordinarily speak about certain things” but the use of vagueness, in some cases, the speaker does not certain propositional content. In this study, regardless of grouping of a word into vagueness or approximation, if it has hedging potential, it would be classified as a hedge.

In addition to the study of vagueness by Franken (1997), Jucker, Smith and Ludge (2003) also elaborate further on the approach of vagueness to Relevance Theory. They note that Sperber and Wilson (1991: 542) indicate that whether the

interlocutors always want to exchange the “literal truth-conditional meaning” in their communication is uncertain. The speaker may sometimes “vouch for the truth of” only on certain parts of a proposition or some propositions (Jucker et al., 2003: 1740). As a result, “every utterance is only an approximation to the very thought the speaker has in mind” (Jucker et al., 2003: 1742). The use of VL provides only a rough guide to the hearer as to “what the speaker intends to communicate” (ibid.). The hearer is not always expected to see the literal meaning in every utterance of the speaker as the hearer needs to find the relevant information in that particular situation. As a speaker needs to fulfil several communicative tasks for strategic reasons, the use of VL allows him/her to convey the literal meaning of a proposition though it’s the degree of truth may be varied (Jucker et al., 2003: 1740). In this situation, the use of VL may help the speaker, by providing part of the “analytical and contextual implications of the proposition” (Jucker et al., 2003: 1742). The hearer is required “to find the best match between the utterance and the intended meaning” (Jucker et al., 2003: 1742).

Sauerland and Stateva (2011) agree that vagueness in language is of two types, scalar and epistemic vagueness. Examples of scalar vagueness with “less precise approximators” are “*approximately, about, partially, sufficiently, and roughly*”. Examples of epistemic vagueness with “less certain approximators” are “*maybe, -ish, like, if you will*” (Sauerland & Stateva, 2011: 128-130). Both types can be used as hedges.

The association of VL with hedging is also discussed by Overstreet (2011). A distinction is made between vagueness and VL (Overstreet, 2011: 294). Vagueness is found in philosophical tradition to be focusing on “a strictly logical or truth-conditional analysis of the representation of meaning in natural language”. She indicates that the notion of VL has been defined differently. Carter and McCarthy (2006: 928) define VL as the use of “words and phrases with very general meanings (e.g. *thing, stuff, or whatever, sort of, or something, or anything*) which deliberately refer to people and things in a non-specific, imprecise way”. In these examples, *sort of* is called downtoner (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, & Svartvik, 1972) or hedge (Biber et al., 1999: 542) and *or whatever, or something, and or anything* are regarded as general extenders (Overstreet, 2000). Dines (1980: 23) calls them “set marking tags”

as “their function is to mark the preceding element as a member of a set” (Jucker et al., 2003: 1748). Channel (1994: 18-20) refers to VL as a linguistic “expression or word” to “purposely and unabashedly vague” and render the meaning of an expression less precise. Based on various researches, Overstreet (2011: 298) summarizes 3 three different types of vague expressions in the following table.

Table 1: 3 types of vague language

<p>1. Inherently vague expressions (“placeholders*”, dummy nouns”) e.g. <i>thing(s), stuff, thingy, thingummy, thingmajig, whatsisname, whatsit</i> *Placeholder is for when a speaker does not know or cannot remember the name of something or someone.</p>
<p>2. Vague additives</p> <p>a. Approximators (“approximations”) e.g. <i>around seven, sevenish, almost a dozen, sort of blue, it’s like crazy here</i></p> <p>b. General extenders (“set marking tags”, “vague category identifiers”) e.g. <i>and everything, and stuff, and things, or something, or anything</i></p>
<p>3. Vague quantifiers</p> <p>a. Vague amounts and numbers e.g. <i>heaps of, loads of, oodles of, a touch of, a bit of, some, many, most, umpteen</i></p> <p>b. Vague frequency and likelihood e.g. <i>sometimes, usually, now and again, likely, maybe, possibly, probably</i></p> <p>c. Round numbers e.g. <i>she makes \$50,000 a year, a population of ten thousand</i></p> <p>d. Exaggerations e.g. <i>I have a million things to do, it’s a hundred times better.</i></p>

Overstreet (ibid.: 304-305) lists some vague expressions as hedging devices in other studies such as *loosely speaking, technically speaking, technically, sort of*, which have vague boundaries can be used as hedges for softening the force of what is being said (Aijmer, 2002; Brown & Levinson, 1987; Holmes, 1988a; Kay, 2004; Lakoff, 1972; Quirk et al., 1972)

In addition, there are other studies which associate VL with hedges. For example, Koester (2004: 53) states that the general extenders and vague approximators can be

used as hedges to mitigate potentially face-threatening acts in workplace. Rowland (2004: 94) looks at the use of approximators such as *about*, *around* in mathematics classrooms. The findings indicate that these approximators function like hedges, protecting the students against possible errors in their cognitive prediction. The findings also indicate that the use of VL is not a deficiency, but an important element of communicative competence in classroom interaction (Rowland, 2004: 94). Trappes-Lomax (2004) includes approximative devices that can reduce the degree of accuracy, preciseness, certainty or clarity in his study of conference talks. The findings suggest that VL indicate adherence of Grice's (1975) cooperative principle. VL is used as a self-protection strategy, allowing the speakers in postgraduate conference to present the propositions in the same "the true state of [their] understanding" as in the manner of hedging (Trappes-Lomax, 2004: 134). Consequentially, VL can be used to manage tensions in day-to-day communication or conference talks.

From the above discussion, some overlaps are seen between VL and hedging since both are communicative strategies to be used deliberately to fulfil some strategic objectives. In his study of scientific research articles, Hyland (1998a: 41-45) sub-categories VL under the domain of epistemic modality.

Since VL focuses "specifically on the propositional precision or exactness" (Drave, 2000) and hedging covers a wider scope of functions such as the mitigation of commitment, the basic framework of this study therefore treats VL as a possible sub-category of hedging and only VLs that have a hedging meaning are included in this study.

As noted in some studies, researchers have suggested that the linguistic resources of hedges and intensifiers should be included in the taxonomy of metadiscourse when analysing communication between the speakers/hearers and writers/readers (Crismore et al., 1993; Crismore & Vande Kopple, 1988; Hyland, 1998d). Below is a description of the relationship between hedging and metadiscourse.

2.6.4 Hedging and metadiscourse

Hyland & Tse (2004c: 156) consider that writing is a “social and communicative engagement between writer and reader”, and metadiscourse is the “ways writers project themselves into their discourse to signal their attitude towards both the content and the audience of the text”. In Hyland & Tse’s (2004c: 169) metadiscourse taxonomy, hedges such as *might*, and *possible* are included in interactional resources to indicate that the writer is reluctant to commit to the propositional information assertively. The development of metadiscourse is briefly described below.

The term metadiscourse is used to indicate the existence of the writer and the need to pay attention to the utterance itself (Vande Kopple, 1980). Vande-Kopple (1985: 83) later also suggests that:

Many discourses have at least two levels. On one level, we supply information about the subject of our text. On this level we expand propositional content. On the other level, the level of metadiscourse, we do not add propositional material but help our readers organize, classify, interpret, evaluate, and react material. Metadiscourse, therefore, is discourse about discourse or communication about communication. (Vande-Kopple, 1985: 83)

Jalififar and Shooshtari (2011: 54) suggests that metadiscourse can increase “critical thinking” as readers may form “their own opinions and compare them with the writers”. In fact, metadiscourse is linguistic devices in the text by which the writer and reader can organize, interpret and evaluate the text to produce additional meaning. Through the content of the text, writers can express their attitudes so that they can establish interpersonal relationships with the readers (Hyland, 2005a). Hyland (2005a: 39) agrees that the main function of metadiscourse is not to enhance propositional meaning but “it is the means by which propositional content is made coherent, intelligible and persuasive to a particular audience”. Therefore, metadiscourse is an important linguistic device to “influence readers’ reactions to the text content according to the established conventions of a given discourse community” (Jalififar & Shooshtari, 2011: 54).

Currently, two approaches have been used in the study of metadiscourse (Fuertes-Olivera, Velasco-Sacristan, Arribas-Bano, & Samaniego-Fernandez, 2001). One approach used by Mauranen (1993) limits the definition of metadiscourse to Halliday's (1978: 69) "textual metafunction". The focus of this approach is to analyse some aspects playing the text-organizing role (Fuertes-Olivera et al., 2001). Another approach suggested by researchers such as Crismore & Farnsworth (1990) and Hyland (1998b) includes the "text-organizing aspects" as well as the interactive features such as writers' "attitudes and certainty" (Fuertes-Olivera et al., 2001). This interactive approach is associated with Halliday's (1978: 69) "interpersonal metafunction" (ibid.).

Hyland (2000b, 2005a) provides a comprehensive review of metadiscourse in his studies. His notion of metadiscourse is that it is "the cover term for the self-reflective expressions used to negotiate interactional meanings in text, assisting the writer (or speaker) to express a viewpoint and engage with readers as members of a particular community" (Hyland, 2005a: 37). All in all, metadiscourse offers ways to writers to "construe their readers" (Hyland, 2005a: 58) through the understanding of the interpersonal resources used by the writers to present their propositions.

The classifications of metadiscourse have been suggested by different researchers (Crismore & Farnsworth, 1990; Crismore et al., 1993; Crismore & Vande Kopple, 1988; Hyland, 1998d, 2000b, 2005a; Hyland & Tse, 2004c; Mauranen, 1993; Vande-Kopple, 2002). Crismore, Markkanen & Steffensen (1993: 47) classify metadiscourse into two types: "1) textual metadiscourse; and 2) interpersonal metadiscourse. Textual metadiscourse is sub-classified into: a) textual markers - including logical connectives, sequencers, reminders, and topicalizers; and b) interpretive markers - including code glosses, illocution markers, and announcements. Interpersonal metadiscourse is sub-classified into hedges (epistemic certainty markers), certainty markers (epistemic emphatics), attributors, attitude markers, and commentary".

Hyland (1998d: 228) revised the sub-categories of interpersonal metadiscourse into "hedges, emphatics, attributors, attitude markers, and relational markers". Later, a further revision in classifying metadiscourse into two dimensions

(interactive and interactional) was suggested by Hyland and Tse (2004c: 169) and Hyland (2005a: 49). The rhetorical features of the interactive dimension include “transitions, frame markers, endophoric markers, evidentials, and code glosses” (Hyland, 2005a; Hyland & Tse, 2004c). The interactional dimension includes “hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mention, and engagement markers” (ibid.). The use of hedges and boosters indicates the writer’s “assessments of possibilities” and reflect the degree of his/her certainty to the proposition. In addition, the balanced use of hedges and boosters can “play an important role in argument” because writers can “strengthen or weaken their statements” for the reader’s consideration (Hyland, 1998d: 229).

In recent years, the study of hedges associated with metadiscourse has become a popular research area. For example, in his study of metadiscourse markers in four different types of discourses (marketing, microbiology, applied linguistics, and astrophysics), Hyland (1998b: 445-447) finds that overall frequency of the use of metadiscourse markers in the four domains is similar. Hedges are the most frequent marker used across three domains except astrophysics, where hedges rank the second most frequently used type. Further investigation indicates that more instances of interpersonal metadiscourse markers are found in marketing and applied linguistics (ibid.). The use of metadiscourse “constitutes appropriate argument involves a community sensitive deployment of linguistic resources to represent writers, their texts and their readers” (Hyland, 1998b: 453). Hyland (1998b: 452) concludes that analysing the use of metadiscourse in a specific discourse community can provide a better understanding of the norms and conventions of that particular community.

Fuertes-Olivera et al.’s (2001: 1298) study of the genre of advertisements indicates that copywriters use metadiscourse such as hedges and intensifiers to balance between “persuading and informing” the addressees. At the same time, the use of metadiscourse contributes to the maintenance of “reader-writer relationship”. Fuertes-Olivera et al. (2001: 1305) conclude that the appropriate application of interactional resources such as hedges and intensifiers in the framework of metadiscourse can help to make the message more persuasive and acceptable without making it sounds too assertive.

In a study of how metadiscourse markers contribute to persuasiveness in newspapers genre, Dafouz-Milne (2008) finds that hedges are the most frequent category found in both Spanish and British newspapers. Attitudinal markers and certainty markers rank as the second and third most frequently used items. Findings from a questionnaire on the evaluation of persuasive effect indicate that readers would like to choose “as more persuasive the texts with a balanced number of metadiscourse markers” in other words, “both textual and interpersonal” markers (Dafouz-Milne, 2008: 104). Another finding indicates that the proportion of hedges used in newspapers is higher than attitudinal or certainty markers. Dafouz-Milne (2008: 105) claims that “writers favouring persuasion by means of identification and negotiation with the audience rather than by imposition”.

For using the interactional resources of Hyland’s (2005) metadiscourse model, Baumgarten (2012) analyses the frequency of stance and engagement subcategories used by L1 and L2 students in their presentational talks. It is found that hedges are one of the categories most frequently used by L1 and L2 students for hedging their knowledge claims. The only difference is that L2 students use fewer hedges as a politeness strategy compared with L1 students.

In summary, the use of hedges as metadiscoursal makers can help the writers to mitigate the force of their claims. Its main function is the contribution to the establishment of writer-reader relationship.

2.6.5 Hedging and epistemic modality

Hedging is associated with epistemic modality since both express the speaker /writer’s degree of confidence in a proposition. Some researchers do not group hedges within the umbrella of epistemic modality. For example, Namsaraev (1997: 65-67) and Vassileva (1997) suggest that epistemic modality is semantic whereas hedges are pragmatic because they are used for communicative functions. Hyland (1998a: 2) has reaffirmed the close connection between hedging and epistemic modality by echoing that “the writer or speaker’s judgments about statements and their possible effects on interlocutors is the essence of hedging, and this clearly places epistemic modality at the centre of our interest”. He also claims that “hedging is one aspect of epistemic

modality, concerning personal judgements based on a lack of knowledge” (Hyland, 1998a: 44). In this sense, epistemic modality can pragmatically be used to show the writer’s reluctance to commit, or to indicate uncertainty or tentativeness about the truth of the proposition (ibid.). The following section discusses modality as a hedging strategy.

Different researchers have suggested different definitions for modality. According to Simpson (1990: 66-67) modality refers broadly to “a speaker’s attitude toward or opinion about the truth of a proposition expressed by a sentence and toward the situation or event described by a sentence”. Collins (2009: 11) defines modality as “range of semantic notions, including possibility, necessity, ability, obligation, permission, and hypotheticality”.

Lyon’s (1977: 797) definition of epistemic modality is “any utterance in which the speaker explicitly qualifies his commitment to the truth of the proposition expressed by the sentence he utters, whether this qualification is made explicit in the verbal component or in the prosodic or paralinguistic component, is an epistemically modal or modalized utterance”. Coates (1983) states that modality can be divided into two main categories: epistemic and root. Epistemic modality is the “speaker’s assumptions or assessment of possibilities”, where the speaker expresses confidence or lack of it in the truth of the proposition (Coates, 1983; 1992:155). Palmer (2001: 8) refers to epistemic modality as “speakers express their judgements about the factual status of the proposition”. Nuyts (2001: xv) defines epistemic modality as “a speaker’s evaluation of the likelihood of a state of affairs, as expressed in language”. Root or deontic modality is “concerned with the necessity or possibility of acts performed by a morally responsible person” (Lyons, 1977:823). Later, Coates (1992: 55) asserts that root modality covers a range of meanings such as “permission and obligation and also possibility and necessity”.

Since epistemic modality indicates the judgments of the speaker about the truth of a proposition, Palmer (2001: 8. 24) suggests three types of judgments. Speculative judgment refers to expressing “uncertainty”, deductive judgment indicates “an inference from observable evidence”, and assumptive judgment refers to “inference from what is generally known”.

The notion of subjectivity has been seen as a property of epistemic modality (Lyons, 1977; Palmer, 1986). The subjective property of an utterance is the speaker's subjective attitude towards a proposition (Lyons, 1977: 797). For example, speech acts such as *I believe/assume/suppose*, where the source comes from the speaker and the judgement is subjective and personal. The use of these performative verbs is usually to distance the speaker from what he/she utters (Brown, 1992). In this sense, it has the function of hedging. However, epistemic expressions may not have only subjective meanings, and can also have other meanings. For example,

- (14) I think she *might* divorce Alfred. (subjective)
 - (15) She said she *might* divorce him. (objective)
 - (16) She *might* divorce him. (subjective/objective)
- (Mortensen, 2012: 232)

In (14), the expression is subjective as it indicates the speaker's attitude or evaluation. In (15), the expression is objective as evaluation comes from someone else rather than the speaker. In (16), the expression can be either subjective or objective as there is no indication as to who makes the evaluation. Mortensen (2012: 233) claims that the subjective or objective interpretation is acquired through context analysis.

One of the word classes mostly associated with epistemic modality is modal auxiliaries (Coates, 1983; Palmer, 1979). Owing to the variety of meanings of modal auxiliaries (e.g. possibility, permission, necessity, and obligation), they may cover the same functions as hedging, but to varying degrees. The following examples indicate how the modal auxiliary *may* can have various meanings in different contexts.

- (17) I *may* be a few minutes late.
- (18) I am afraid this is the bank's final word. I tell you this so that you *may* make arrangement elsewhere if you are able to (Coates, 1983: 132).

In (17), the auxiliary *may* has an epistemic possibility in meaning. It expresses the speaker's uncertainty/lack of confidence on whether he/she will be a few minutes late. The epistemic use of *may* is a hedge as it shows tentativeness. However, in (18), the auxiliary *may* has root or deontic meaning and not associated with hedging. It has the meaning of willingness or intention to make arrangement (Coates, 1983).

However, researchers have found that epistemic modality can be realized by other grammatical devices (Holmes, 1982, 1983; Hyland & Milton, 1997; McEnery & Kifle, 2002), for example, lexical verbs (e.g. *believe, think, know*), adjectives (e.g. *possible, probable, clear*), adverbs (e.g. *indeed, probably*), and nouns (e.g. *belief, possibility, doubt*). Holmes (1988a: 27) also finds that there are over 350 lexical items that can be used for epistemic purposes.

In light of the definitions of epistemic modality, there are studies which link epistemic modality to pragmatic use. For example, Brown & Levinson (1978; 1987) regard epistemic modality as a strategy of politeness to hedge on the illocutionary force. Holmes (1982: 349; 1984a) suggests that the use of epistemic modality is one of the linguistic forms for attenuating "the illocutionary force of speech acts". Markkanen (1985) examines the parenthetical clauses *I believe* and *you know* as hedging devices. Coates (1990) observes that modal forms have a face-saving function. Karkkainen (2003: 185) finds that the epistemic stance *I think* functions not only "simply an internal relatively fixed state of mind of an individual speaker, but as a truly interactive practice". In the wake of these studies, epistemic modality has drawn attention from pragmatic perspective.

In addition to the semantic and pragmatic roles, the notion of hedging has been further widened to include its interpersonal politeness function. Below is a brief description of hedging from the interpersonal politeness perspective.

2.7 Hedging from an interpersonal politeness perspective

R. Lakoff's (1973) study centres around the use of politeness strategy to avoid offence and reduce any possible conflict resulting from social interaction. In her later

study, she defines politeness as “[...] a means of minimizing the risk of confrontation in discourse – both the possibility of confrontation occurring at all, and the possibility that a confrontation will be perceived as threatening” (Lakoff, 1989). Leech (1983: 81) states that politeness aims to reduce the expressions of impolite belief and increase the expressions of polite belief. Likewise, Brown and Levinson (1978; 1987) describe politeness as a way to reduce any aggressive behaviours and present more effective communication between the interlocutors. The basic principle of Brown and Levinson’s model is that both the speaker and hearer want the FTAs to be reduced. Brown and Levinson (1987) suggest that the use of hedges is a way of mitigating FTAs. Below is a brief description of the politeness model.

2.7.1 Brown and Levinson’s politeness model

Brown and Levinson (1987) examine the hedging phenomenon based on the politeness aspects of communication which was not included in Lakoff’s (1972) model. They have become a source of new ideas for examining the functions of hedging in the framework of pragmatic and interpersonal politeness.

According to Brown and Levinson’s (1987: 61-62) theory, both the speaker and hearer are assumed as “competent adult members of a society” who are concerned about their “face” which can be interpreted as a person’s public image tied up with “notions of being embarrassed or humiliated”, or “losing face” (ibid.). Face is divided into positive and negative face. Positive face refers to the positive “self-image is appreciated or approved by his/her interactants” (ibid.). Negative face refers to “freedom of action and freedom from imposition” (ibid.). Both negative and positive faces can be treated as “wants”. Both the speaker and hearer are aware of the “wants” and it is their desire to maintain the “wants” (ibid.). As such, it is generally in the speaker’s and the hearer’s interest to “cooperate in maintaining other’s face in interaction” (ibid.). In an interaction, when some “acts that by their nature run contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or of the speaker” (ibid.: 65), it may generate a face threat to the interactants. Positive face threats are those acts do not “care about the addressee’s feeling, wants” (ibid.: 66). Negative face threats are acts which “restrict freedom of action of the addressee” (ibid.: 65). The positive face of the hearer is

threatened by certain kinds of acts, either verbal or non-verbal such as “disapproval, criticism, contempt, ridicule, complaints, complaints and reprimands, accusations, insults, contradictions, disagreements, or challenges”, and so on (ibid.: 66). Some kinds of acts may threaten the hearer’s negative face, as no one wants his /her actions to be impeded. Negative face is threatened by acts such as “orders, requests, suggestions, advice, reminding, threats and warnings, offers, promises, compliments, expressions of envy or admiration, expressions of strong (negative) emotions”, and so on (ibid.: 66).

In a situation where a speaker is committing a FTA, he/she has a choice to either mitigate the FTA on record through redressive actions such as positive or negative politeness strategies, or avoid it through the use of the indirect “off-record” strategy (ibid.: 68-69). Alternatively, the speaker can do it directly and “without redress by going bald on record” (ibid.). When choosing a positive or negative strategy to mitigate a threat, the relative weightings of three *wants* should be considered: “a) the *want* to communicate the content of the FTA; b) the *want* to be efficient or urgent; and c) the *want* to maintain hearer’s face to any degree” (ibid.: 68). Decisions about whether a FTA needs to be mitigated also depends upon the “social distance” between the speaker and the hearer (D), “the relative power” of the speaker and the hearer (P), and the weight or degree of imposition of the act (R), i.e. “the absolute ranking of impositions in a specific culture” (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 74 -79). Brown & Levinson further elaborate, “D is a symmetric social dimension of similarity/difference within which speaker and hearer stand for the purposes of this act. In many cases (but not all), it is based on an assessment of the frequency of interactions and the kinds of material or non-material goods (including face) exchanged between speaker and hearer” (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 76-77). “Stable social attributes” are an important way for assessment of D. “P is an asymmetric social dimension of relative power” (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 77). That is, P (hearer, speaker) is “the degree to which hearer can impose his own plans and his own self-evaluation (face) at the expense of speaker’s plans and self-evaluation”. R is a ranking of “impositions by the degree to which they are considered to interfere with an

agent's wants of self-determination or of approval (his negative and positive-face wants)" (ibid.: 76-79). All these factors and variables are context-dependence.

Hedging is one of the negative politeness strategies that can be used to mitigate the risk of face-threat in communications. Negative politeness strategies perform "the function of minimizing the particular imposition that the FTA unavoidably effects" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 129). Since the primary objective of their model is to account for politeness in face-to-face interactions, the use of hedges is in fact "disarm routine interactional threats" (ibid.: 146). The example below is taken from their spoken texts.

(19) I *wonder* if I'll be going too. (conversationally implies, a request, May I go?) (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 153).

According to Brown & Levinson (1987: 153), the italicized verb is a tentativizer which seems to indicate the existence of an implicature, and it can change "a statement into a question or an request". The use of *I wonder* indicates that the speaker does not want to impose any direct request on the hearer.

Hedging is generally for negative politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987:116), but it can also be used in positive politeness strategies. These are usually expressions of solidarity (Brown & Levinson, 1987:2). Hedges used for positive politeness function include *sort of*, *kind of*, *in a way* (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 116). In order to avoid disagreement with the hearer (a positive politeness strategy that aims to establish solidarity), the speaker can form his/her own opinion safely by using hedges. For example,

(20) I *really sort of think/hope/wonder*...(P. Brown & S. C. Levinson, 1987:116)

The use of the italicized verbs can help "to avoid a precise communication of the speaker's attitude" for solidarity reason. (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 117)

According to Grice (1975), the success of a conversation depends upon the interlocutors' various approaches to the interaction. Speaker tries to convey understandable messages in any particular conversation. Grice (1975) believes that there must be some mechanisms guiding the production of the interactions. He postulates a set of assumptions for governing the success of a conversation, i.e. based on the "Co-operative Principle (CP)" - "make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (Grice, 1975: 45). The principle involves both the speaker and the hearer and consists of four underlying maxims: the maxim of quality, quantity, relevance, and manner.

1. The maxim of quality – try to make your contribution one that is true, specially: a) do not say what you believe to be false; and b) do not say that for which there is lack of adequate evidence.
2. The maxim of quantity – a) make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purpose of the exchange; and b) do not make your contribution more informative than is required.
3. The maxim of relevance – make your contribution relevant and appropriate.
4. The maxim of manner – be perspicacious: a) avoid obscurity; b) avoid ambiguity; be brief; and be orderly (Grice, 1975: 45-46).

In short, these maxims indicate what speakers and hearers should do in order to communicate efficiently and co-operatively. When conveying information, the messages should be sincere, relevant and clear. However, sometimes, speakers do not follow these maxims. In fact, they often flout them. That is, they appear to break not only the CP by not mentioning directly what they mean, but also they flout one or more of the maxims. Nevertheless, the hearer still assumes the speaker follows the maxims to a certain degree. As stated by Brown and Levinson that:

the speaker's want to avoid presuming may be partially satisfied by not assuming that the hearer wants to operate (in Grice's sense: 1967, ch3), or by not assuming that the speaker's assessment of what would be a contribution to the

cooperative enterprise of talking is the same as the hearer's. The communication of these non-presumptions (or presumptions) may be made by a set of hedges oriented Grice's cooperative dimensions (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 164).

In other words, a speaker may want to indicate less than full adherence to the maxims by using hedging expressions. Hedges are indications of caution, signalling that the speakers are aware of the maxims and that normally they do adhere to as cooperative participants. Thus, "these hedges emphasize that the cooperative condition is met, or serve notice that it may not have been met, or question whether it has been met" (Brown & Levinson, 1987:164). The following examples quoted from LoCastro (2003: 144-145) show how hedges function in relation to the maxims.

Quality hedges such as "*as far as I know*" indicate that the speaker B has limited his/her certainty for the truthfulness of the utterance, for example,

(21) A: when is she due to arrive?

(22) B: *as far as I know*, next Tuesday....(LoCastro, 2003:144)

Expressions such as "*I'm not sure, but I heard...*"; "*I may be mistaken, but ...*" and "*I guess*" can also be used to hedge this maxim.

Quantity hedges give notice that the speaker does not want to provide all information to the hearer, for example,

(23) A: how was your trip?

(24) B: well, *to make a long story short*, we were disappointed with the service at the hotel, but the scenery was gorgeous....(LoCastro, 2003:145)

Other expressions such as "*as you probably know*"; "*I won't bore you with the details*"; and "*they say*" can also be used to hedge this maxim.

Relevance hedges indicate that the speaker has changed the topic by making the utterance appear to be still relevant to the previous topic, for example,

- (25) A: *not to change the topic*, but have you seen Joe recently?
- (26) B: *no, come to think of it*, not recently... why? (LoCastro, 2003:145),

Both A and B use hedges to comment on having moved away from a topic they might have discussed in a previous communication. Now, they want to resume the earlier topic.

The manner hedge is that the speaker should try to be brief, orderly, and avoid obscurity and ambiguity, for example,

- (27) A: *I may be a bit confused*, but I think the best route is over the mountains... (LoCastro, 2003:145)

Table 2 below shows examples of hedges applicable to the maxims.

Table 2: Examples of hedges applicable to the four maxims

Types of hedge	Examples of hedges	Functions
Quality hedges	<i>I think, I believe, I assume</i>	To soften the speaker's commitment
Quantity hedges	<i>Roughly, more or less, approximately, or so, I cannot tell you any more than that, to some extent, all in all</i>	To redress complaints or request
Relevance hedges	<i>This may not be relevant... but, now is probably the time to say, I might mention at this point, while I think of it,</i>	To redress offers or suggestions
Manner hedges	<i>It you see what I mean, what I meant was, to put it more simply</i>	To redress all kinds of face threatening acts (FTAs)

(Brown & Levinson, 1987:164-172)

In summary, Brown and Levinson (1987) treat hedges as a politeness strategy where hedges are used to avoid “presuming or assuming that anything involved in the FTA is desired or believed by [the] hearer” (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 144). The notion of Grice’s (1975) cooperative principle was firstly received attention in association with linguistic politeness. The politeness theory presented by Brown and Levinson (1987) seems to offer the most systemic analysis of interpersonal politeness phenomenon. Hedges can be used to play down the effects of FTAs and not to flout the conversational maxims to maintain interpersonal relationships.

However, hedging in their model is still limited and mostly applies within the scope of the speech act theory and is interpreted as an indication of politeness. Matsumoto (1988) and Mao (1994) comment that Brown & Levinson’s model focuses on Western values and Spencer-Oatey (2000) also indicates that the model does not account for confrontational situations in which both the speaker and the hearer may deliberately want to hurt the feelings of their counterpart. Their model is unclear as to whether hedging can be used in other discourses. However, their model still encourages researchers from various fields to study the politeness from the interpersonal perspective.

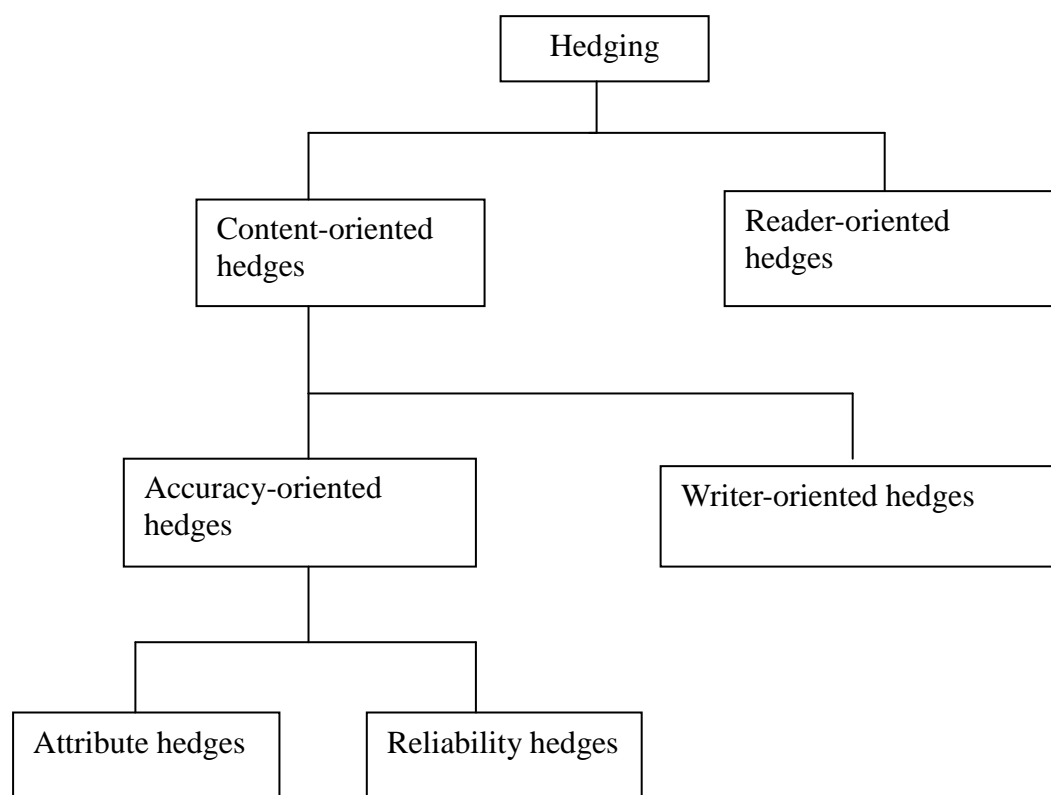
Though some studies such as Prince et al.’s (1982) taxonomy is restricted to the writer’s (or speaker’s) purpose of using different kinds of hedges, it has not taken into account the relationship between writers and readers. However, some scholars have filled the gap by considering the specific views of readers, for example, Hyland’s (1996a; 1998a) study in scientific discourse. Below is a brief description of the model.

2.7.2 Hyland’s model of scientific hedging

In view of the fact that “hedging devices are polysemous and polypragmatic” in nature, a hedging device may convey “a range of meanings for certain users in particular contexts” (Hyland, 1998a:156). Therefore, assigning a specific meaning to a particular form of hedging device is not plausible. Hyland (1998a) follows Zadeh’s (1972:4) fuzzy set approach by claiming that instead of having “firm boundaries and clear criteria of membership”, some categories “do not necessarily share the same

discrete attributes but can be linked by family resemblance” as stated in the prototype theory (Hyland, 1998a: 159-161). He (1998a:159) further states that hedging “categories are not homogeneous but have a prototype, good and bad members and fuzzy borders”. Using the concept of prototype theory, hedges can cover a wide range of purposes and can “weaken force of statements, contains modal expressions, expresses deference, signals uncertainty, and so on” (Hyland, 1998a:160). Hyland acknowledges that some hedging forms are “likely to overlap with other categories to express functions such as politeness or usuality” (ibid.). Hyland (1998a:156) proposes an analytical framework for hedging in academic writing, trying to include the multi-functional nature of the hedges which allows them to have different meanings. Below is his framework.

Figure 2: Hyland’s (1998) model of scientific hedging



(Hyland, 1998a: 156)

According to Hyland (1998a:156), hedges in the context of academic discourse can be grouped into two categories: content-oriented and reader-oriented hedges. “Content-oriented hedges serve to mitigate the relationship between propositional content and a non-linguistic mental representation of reality; they hedge the correspondence between what the writer says about the world and what the world is thought to be like” (Hyland, 1998a:162). Content-oriented hedges are further divided into accuracy-oriented and writer-oriented hedges. The accuracy-oriented hedges “involve the writer’s desire to express propositions with greater precision” which are further subcategorised into attribute and reliability hedges (Hyland, 1998a: 163). Attribute hedges “allow deviations between idealized models of nature and instances of actual behaviour to be accurately expressed” (Hyland, 1998a:164). Reliability hedges “express simple subjective uncertainty in a proposition” and are motivated by the writer’s desire to convey the truth according to his/her understanding (Hyland, 1998a:166).

Writer-oriented hedges are “writer-focused and aim to shield the writer from the possible consequences of negatability by limiting personal commitment” (Hyland, 1998a:170). This type of hedges “minimize writers’ personal involvement and allow them to maintain a distance from a proposition” (Hyland, 1998a: 171). The main difference between writer-oriented and accuracy-oriented hedges is that writer-oriented hedges decrease “author’s presence in the text rather than increasing precision of claims” (Hyland, 1998a: 162, 170), which is the focus of accuracy-oriented hedges. Hyland states that certain hedges can have several functions at the same time (Hyland, 1998a:176).

The second hedging category in Hyland’s (1998a) model is reader-oriented hedges. The main feature of this category is that it deals with interpersonal interactions between interlocutors. Hyland (1998a:178) claims that ignoring “any involvement by the reader” in the text in “the ratification of knowledge” when “presenting claims as ex-cathedra assertions” would display “an unacceptable deviant persona”. Hyland (1998a: 178) also states that “categorical assertions leave no room for negotiation” with the readers. No involvement of the readers means that the claims made by the writer “require no feedback”, and that “relegates readers to a passive role” (Hyland,

1998a:178). Reader-oriented hedges indicate “claims as provisional”, and “invite readers to orientate themselves to the discourse and engage in a dialogue” (Hyland, 1998a: 178).

Hyland (1998a: 3) claims that although linguists tend to focus on modal verbs as exponents of epistemic modality system, the literature includes other forms such as lexical verbs, auxiliary verbs, epistemic adjectives, adverbs, nouns and syntactic hedging through clauses of conditions, concessions, passive voices, source attributions, tense and tag questions can also realize epistemic meaning (Hyland, 1998a:3-5). A summary of Hyland’s classifications of hedges are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 3: Hyland’s classification of hedging functions and devices

Content Oriented		Reader-Oriented
Accuracy-Oriented	Writer-Oriented	
Hedges propositional content	Hedges writer commitment	Hedges assertiveness
Attribute type Precision Adverbs: Content disjuncts Style disjuncts downtoners Reliability type Epistemic lexical verbs Modal verbs Epistemic adjectives Epistemic nouns Content disjunct adverbs Limited knowledge	Epistemic lexical verbs: Judgmental Evidential Impersonal expressions: Passive voice Abstract rhetors “empty” subjects Modal verbs Thematic epistemic device Attribution to literature Impersonal reference to: Method Model Experimental conditions	Epistemic lexical verbs: Judgmental Deductive Personal attribution Personal reference to: Methods Model Assume shared goals Hypotheticals conditionals <i>would</i> Involve Reader Direct questions Refer to testability

(Hyland, 1998a:186).

In sum, Hyland (1996b; 1998a) applies a polypragmatic model for interpretation of results in his study of research articles. Two main categories of hedges, namely, content-oriented and reader-oriented are suggested. Content-oriented hedges are used to “mitigate the relationship between propositional content and a representation of reality” (Hyland, 1996b: 439), while, reader-oriented hedges are concerned with convincing “an attitude about the reader and his/her role in the negotiation of knowledge claims” (Hyland, 1996b: 446). In other words, they are used for establishing an interpersonal relationship between the writer and the reader.

Along with the study of Hyland (1998a), research on academic writing has repeatedly shown that the use of hedges is crucial because they are a central rhetorical means of gaining the community’s acceptance of knowledge claims (Hyland, 1994; Meyer, 1997; Myers, 1989; Salager-Meyer, 1994). Hyland (1998a: 155) also underlines the importance of hedging in “structuring scientific communication” and emphasizes “the variability of the means to express” deference to reader. The findings of Salager-Meyer’s (1997) study also claim that the use of hedges is a threat minimizing strategy in social interactions and negotiations between writers/readers and speakers/hearers. From these perspectives, hedges can be used as interpersonal politeness strategies in conversation and written discourse.

2.8 Functions of hedging/hedges

In general, it is accepted that hedges are multifunctional. The original function is described by Lakoff (1972, 1973) who indicates that hedges are words and phrases whose job is to modify the degree of definiteness of an utterance. Through her various studies, Holmes (1984b, 1986b, 1988b; 1990) indicates that hedges have either epistemic or affective function. In the epistemic role, hedges are used to express lack of confidence in the truth of the claims. Hedges allow the speaker to indicate whether a proposition or the content of an utterance is true or not (Holmes, 1984b, 1984c). The affective function of hedges is to express the “speaker’s attitude to the addressee in the context of utterance” (Holmes, 1984a). In this sense, hedges can be used by the speaker to express lack of full commitment to the proposition (Crismore et al., 1993; Vande-Kopple, 1985). Similar functions are suggested by Hyland (1998a: 1)

who claims that hedges can be used to indicate a desire to either: a) express “tentativeness and possibility”, or b) “avoid commitment to categorical assertions”. Hedges can be used to manipulate the degree of precision in number and can facilitate the creation of friendly atmosphere by agreeing with the addressees and thereby obtaining their contributions to the communications (Holmes, 1984b; 1995). In this sense, hedges can be used to maintain convivial interpersonal relationship or solidarity. The functions of hedging are briefly summarized as follows:

1. Expressing fuzziness, inexactitude when the speaker wants to express the right amount of information;
2. As vague category identifiers - mitigating the assertiveness of an utterance or modify the degree of weightiness of the information given;
3. Modifying the degree of commitment or even hiding the attitude of the speaker towards the propositions;
4. As self-protection strategy - hiding the responsibility of the speaker to the truth-value of what is being said, or to express lack of confidence to the truth of the proposition, or expressing tentativeness;
5. Appearing modest;
6. As a politeness strategy - mitigating positive or negative FTAs;
7. Building solidarity between the interlocutors.

In summary, the above list is not exhaustive because the functions of hedging are in accordance with its supposed purposes. The motivations of using hedges are attributed to a desire to dilute assertions driven by needs of politeness or protection to minimize the threat-to-face or a way of precisely reporting the truthful status of a condition and a means of creating relevance in the context.

2.9 A review of hedging in other disciplines

Swales (1985: 13) indicates that the focal point of genre is “a recognized communicative event with a shared public purpose and with aims mutually understood by participants within that event”. Bhatia (1997: 181) states that genre analysis is the “study of situated linguistic behaviour in institutionalised academic or professional settings”. In other words, genre is the study of the use of language in a

conventional communicative setting to be shared and communicated to members of a specific community. Swales (2004), Bhatia (2004), and Hyland (2005a: 118, 137) indicate that the dynamic social or cultural changes may have impacts on genre settings. In addition, identification of limitations, conventions and writing practices within a particular discipline or community is important. Therefore, it is necessary to account for social norms prevalent in a community or discipline so that an understanding of the important features of the texts can be achieved. Therefore, different types of genres may have variation of the frequency use of hedges.

Research has different views among disciplines in the frequency use of hedges. Some scholars, such as Markkanen and Schroder (1997:10), indicate that the frequency of use of hedges in different fields is not significant as suggested by some researchers. However, Varttala (2001) indicates that there are differences in his study of research articles and popular scientific articles in the disciplines of economics, medicine, and technology. Varttala (2001: 256-261) indicates that the motivation of the use of hedges in research articles may be different from popular scientific articles. The motivation of research articles is to provide “the precision and accuracy of concepts employed” which indicates “a social intracommunal feature”. However, in addition to pay attention to precision and accuracy, popular scientific articles also need to “account for not only the reactions of the presumed non-expert audience but also that of their scientific peers in employing hedging devices”. The purpose of the study has been suggested to be one of the factors affecting the amount of hedges used (Mauranen, 1997:119). Markkanen and Schroder (1997:10) have mentioned that different arguments in various fields are the major reason for variations in the use of hedges. According to them, some fields like linguistics and philosophy display higher frequency than other fields like natural sciences and technology. Spillner (1983: 35), as cited by Markkanen and Schroder (1997: 10), states that arguments in natural science and technology are based on “experimental data and logical deduction”. “The style of writing”, including the use of hedges, is an important element in achieving “convincingness of an argument in the text” in other fields such as philosophy. In her study of hedges used by Germans and Russians in conference presentations, Breilkopf-Siepmann (2012: 314) finds that the forms and frequency of hedging

depend on “culture-specific and genre-specific features”. The genre-specific frequency differences are more significant than the culture-specific differences.

In sum, the frequency difference of hedges in different disciplines can be explained by considering the objectives and general nature of the disciplines as well as the type of materials and methods used in the study. From the perspective of the significance of hedging in different disciplines, below is a brief review of the literature in different contexts.

2.9.1 Hedging in gender studies

R. Lakoff's (1975) study was one of the earliest which suggested that hedges are more characteristic of women's language. This view was supported by Coates' (1997a; 1997b: 249) studies that hedges are used by women to express “shades of doubt”. In their social interactions, females use hedges as politeness strategies to maintain friendship, as expressions of doubt or uncertainty for “avoiding playing the expert”, and to indicate their sensitivity to others' feelings for the purpose of developing a collaborative floor (Coates, 1996: 160-161). The use of hedges by females is “a strength, not a weakness” where they can “take account of the complex needs of social beings” (Coates, 1996: 172). In addition, Holmes (1984b), Coates (1996) and Tannen (1994) find that women use hedges more frequently than men.

However, Grob, Meyers and Schuh (1997) find that no significant gender difference is seen in the use of hedges in small group context. Coates (2003b: 75) finds that men use a higher frequency of hedges to self-disclose their difficult moments in their life in an all-male environment for protecting their own faces.

In her studies, Holmes (1984c, 1986b, 1995a) addresses the function of hedges in gender. Holmes (1995a: 85) points out that women commonly use hedges such as *sort of* as politeness strategy for softening the statements that indicates their concern for others' feelings (Holmes, 1988b). The hedge phrase *you know* is used by women as a facilitative device for drawing the participants into the communication (Holmes, 1986b). Both *sort of* and *you know* are used by men for epistemic reason in expressing the degree of certainty or accuracy. Holmes (1990) also indicates the affective hedges

are commonly used by all-female talk but less common in all-male talk for expressing emotional functions.

The contradictory findings indicate that hedges are one of the rhetorical devices frequently used by both genders in different contexts.

2.9.2 Hedging in L2 learning/teaching materials

Stubbs (1986: 22) points out that “speakers of English as a foreign language can sound rude, brusque, or tactless” as they have not “acquired the sociolinguistic competence which involves in expressing polite, tentative, tactful statements, about controversial subjects”. He emphasises the need to use modal grammar which includes polite and tentative expressions in the teaching syllabus and materials for EFL students (Stubbs, 1986: 21). In his earlier study, Hyland (1994: 252) suggests that the appropriate use of hedges should be incorporated in pedagogic writing materials in the field of ESP so as to demonstrate “competence in a specialist register” and to meet the “sociolinguistic rules of English speaking scientific discourse communities”. In his later studies, Hyland (2000a, 2000c; 2004b; 1997) recommends that the textbook writers and producers of teaching materials should introduce an appropriate level of hedging devices in their teaching materials.

After the contrastive analysis in the use of hedges and boosters by L1 and L2 students’ writing, Hyland and Milton (1997: 201) indicate L2 students rely on a more limited range of hedges and boosters, making them “exhibiting greater problems in conveying a precise degree of certainty”. The NNSs use lesser frequency of tentative markers than the NSs that make them do not sufficiently moderate their propositions. Hyland and Milton (1997: 200) suggest that students of NNS should give a chance to practice a wider range of epistemic category for conveying “the full range of meanings”. Practical use of a greater variety of hedges can help NNSs to “employ ‘expert’ forms in making claims” (Hyland & Milton, 1997: 192).

Wood (2009) also indicates that hedging expressions, in explicit instructions or focused instructions, can be introduced to improve L2 learners’ English fluency. This study also suggests that it is important for L2 learners to learn how to use hedging to

express, for example, their opinions politely and to show their concerns to others' feelings.

2.9.3 Hedging in ESP/EAP

The use of hedging and the motivation for its use have been extensively studied in the last two decades by researchers particularly in academic/scientific writing. Some studies postulate that the information in academic writing is supposed to be direct, precise and objective. Varttala (2001: 54) reviews several studies which support this approach. For example,

Alley (1987: 28) is of the opinion that precision is the most important goal in scientific language use and that vagueness should be avoided, and Hedge (1994) states that directness, precision, and objectivity are among the central guidelines for scientific writing. Ferganchick-Neufang (1995: 99) similarly points out that by "being direct and concise, you avoid vagueness, wordiness, and complexity that can tire or annoy readers (Varttala, 2001: 54)

In this regard, the use of hedging in academic/scientific writing may seem to be not an appropriate strategy. However, other studies claim that academic/scientific writing should be rational, neutral, and enhanced presence of impersonal statements (Varttala, 2001). This view of using hedges is also accepted by some researchers. For example, Skelton (1988: 39) claims that "depending on the situation", imprecision and impersonalization are "permissible; not only that it is generally appropriate". Myers (1989), in his study of scientific discourse, shows how hedging serves as a negative politeness strategy, avoiding any possible conflicts that could come from a writer's statements. Salager-Meyer (1994) finds in her corpus of medical journals that hedges are frequently used in discussions and comments sections. She concludes that hedging is important in academic writing. Hyland (1996b: 433), in his analysis of molecular biology articles, finds that hedging is an important "means of gaining acceptance of claims", and can express precision, caution, and deference to readers. In his study of scientific research articles, Hyland (1998a: 1) indicates that hedging can allow the

writers to express either “a lack of complete commitment to the truth value of an accompanying proposition, or a desire not to express that commitment categorically”, and shows how of academic/scientific writers follow these characteristics in their conventional communications with readers. Hyland (1998a: 92-93) also suggests that scientific texts are “content-oriented” as well as “reader-oriented”. Both content-oriented and reader-oriented hedges are required by the writers to claim reliability of the texts as well as to make the hypothesis acceptable to the audience. In his study of research articles, Varttala (2001: 67) states that “scholars writing for other scholars have to prepare for a less than fully sympathetic response from the audience”. Hedges can be used in “the persuasion of the audience” as well as to “reconstruct a suitable depiction of their scientific activities” (Varttala, 2001: 67).

Hyland (1996b: 451) states that, in other studies, hedging is also treated as a feature of spoken discourse, especially in casual conversation where the frequency can be twice that found “in written discourse and represents a significant resource for speakers” (e.g. (Coates, 1987; Holmes, 1983; Holmes, 1995; Stubbs, 1986; Stubbs & Holmes, 1995)). In the analysis of discourse markers in conversations, Schiffrin (1987) finds that the marker *you know* can be used to mitigate uneasiness and strengthen solidarity when facing conflict between the interlocutors. Schiffrin (1987) also finds that *I mean* can be used for allowing the speaker to modify or further explain the propositions when some conflicts are foreseen. In this regard, *I mean* can be used as a hedge to reduce conflicts between the interlocutors. Hyland (1998a: 255) claims that “unlike scientific writers, for example, speakers are said to use hedges when they wish to create an informal or convivial atmosphere, facilitate discussion, show courtesy or to cover for a deficit of knowledge or suitable vocabulary”.

On the whole, therefore hedging is “found to be an important dimension at all the domains of communication” (Hyland, 1998a: 257).

2.10 The linguistic realizations of hedging/hedges

In early studies, a limited number of linguistic expressions were selected as hedges by Zadeh (1965) and Lakoff (1973). Since then, a wider range of hedging

devices has been developed by researchers. Below is a brief discussion of typologies of hedges developed in previous studies.

2.10.1 Hedging typologies of previous studies

Due to a lack of consensus on the definition of a hedge or hedging, the study of hedging faces two problems (Crompton, 1997: 277). Firstly, some forms that have been classified as hedges may also have other functions. For example, as Hyland (1994: 243) notes, just counting the number of modal verbs does not help because of “the degree of indeterminacy between the root and epistemic meanings modal verbs”. A modal verb may not only be used to qualify commitment but also can express certainty and necessity. Secondly, there is the possibility of overlooking some of the hedges, “which appear in the forms which have not yet been identified as hedges” (Crompton, 1997: 277). For example, as Brown and Levinson (1987: 146) suggest, hedging is “a productive linguistic device” and “can be achieved in an indefinite number of surface forms”. Hyland (1994: 243) also claims that hedging can be reflected in “unpredictable forms, for example by referring to the uncertain status of information, the limitations of a model, or the absence of knowledge”. In view of lack of consensus, Crompton (1997: 281) states that “hedging cannot, unfortunately, be pinned down and labelled as a closed set of lexical items”. Nevertheless, some researchers have developed their typologies. The following is a brief description of the typologies of hedging developed by some researchers such as Skelton (1988b), Myers (1989), Salager-Meyer (1994), Hyland (1994), and Halliday (1994, 2004).

In his study of commentative language in academic articles, Skelton (1988b: 99-100) classifies hedging as “Type 1 comments”. Five realization categories have been identified to indicate tentativeness and hesitation: 1) “copulas other than be” – for indicating “uncertainty or alternative possibility”; 2) “modal auxiliaries” – for expressing “uncertainty”; 3) “adjectival and adverbials” – to indicate the “degree of possibility of a proposition”; 4) “introduced by *It is*, *This is*, *There is*”; and 5) “lexical verbs” such as *believing*, *arguing*, and *doubting* – based on the assumption that the author reports others’ comments. Examples of these classifications are shown below:-

- (28) This *would appear to be* in significant conflict with...
- (29) These results *may* have relevance to...
- (30) *Possibly*, phosphorylation of ACC synthase...
- (31) *There is apparently*, a relationship between...
- (32) I *believe* that the overall orientation...(Hyland, 1994:242)

Following Brown and Levinson (1987), Myers (1989:12) claims that the use of hedges is a politeness strategy which can help maintain good interpersonal relationships between a writer/reader, and speakers/hearers. In fact, expressing an opinion in social communication is to make a claim that may impose the speaker's opinion on the hearer. The hedging effect can be achieved through the use of: i) "modal conditional verbs" (e.g. *would* and *could*); ii) "modifiers" (e.g. *probably*, *plausible*); iii) "any device suggesting alternatives – anything but a statement with a form of *to be* that such and such is the case"; iv) "an introductory phrase" which indicates the speaker expresses doubt or theoretical possibility; v) giving a "statement personal attribution"- the personal attribution can be used to establish the speaker's "own claims or denials of claims". It can also indicate that it is only the guesswork of the speaker. This kind of speculative statement is a politeness strategy which shows the solidarity of the speaker with the hearer; vi) attribution of claims to "some impersonal agency"; vii) the invoking of "a general rule" but not to persons; and viii) "acknowledge and apologize" for the FTAs (Myers, 1989: 13-20). Examples of each type of strategy quoted from Myers (1989: 13-20) are shown below:-

- (33) This *would* result in the maturation of one mRNA species...
- (34) The three short segments... are *probably* spliced to the body of this mRNA...
- (35) It is interesting to *speculate* on how general *such a modal* for the processing of eukaryotic mRNAs *could be*.
- (36) *It seems* totally implausible that the number of radically different genes needed in a salamander is 20 times that in a man.

- (37) *I have been so rash as to say*, more than once, that we might expect between 10 and 100 different enzymes; *but that was pure guesswork*. The number *could be* as low as two.
- (38) *These results imply/this finding suggests/these observations suggest...*
- (39) The statement “*The idea that cells would do so to increase their potential for future evolution is not a Darwinian one*” (Doolittle (1978) quoted in Myers (ibid: 19). In fact, according to Myers, Doolittle is courteously saying that the idea is wrong but not indicating who gives the idea.
- (40) I hope that those working on mammalian viruses *will forgive me* for not describing their results more fully. (Myers, 1989: 13-20)

In Myers’(1989: 12) discussion, he suggests to group the hedging devices into “negative politeness and hedging”, but pay less attention on the description of the purpose or motivation on using them such as “emphasizing personal point of view”. He claims, “Hedging is a politeness strategy when it marks a claim, or any other statement, as being provisional, pending acceptance in the literature, acceptance by the community- in other words, acceptance by the readers”.

In 1994, Salager-Meyer (1994:154) carried out an in-depth contextual analysis, from both linguistic and medical viewpoints, of the hedging expressions used in medical English discourse. She suggested a taxonomy of hedges, which she believes are plausible because they are commonly accepted by other researchers.

1. Shield: all modal verbs expressing possibility; semi-auxiliaries such as *appear, to seem*; probability adverbs like *probably, likely* and their corresponding adjectives; epistemic verbs such as *to suggest*, and *to speculate*.
2. Approximators: stereotyped “adaptors” as well as “rounders” of quantity, degree, frequency and time, for example, *roughly, somewhat, and often*.
3. Expressions of personal doubt and direct involvement, such as *I believe*, and *to our knowledge*

4. Emotionally-charged intensifiers – comment words used to project the writer’s reactions such as *extremely difficult*, and *surprisingly*.
5. Compound hedges such as *may suggest*, and *it would seem likely that*.
(Salager-Meyer, 1994: 154)

The devices of “emotionally-charged intensifiers” are included as one of the categories of hedges. This category might be explained as belonging to one of categories of attitudinal markers in Crismore and Earnsworth’s (1990) classification of metadiscourse. Both hedges and emphatics belong to the grouping of modality markers (ibid.: 124). The inclusion of “emotionally-charged intensifiers” may be used for positive politeness strategies to address the positive face of the hearer. Addressing the positive face of the hearer is a way of hedging for the speaker not to be given the face-threat by the hearer.

The use of hedges as “a social act performed in a specific context for a particular audience” is highlighted by Hyland (1994: 240). His study on hedging in academic writing indicates that epistemic system is “concerned with the display of confidence, or more usually lack of confidence, in the truth of propositional information” (Hyland, 1994: 240 ; 1998a: 45). He postulates that hedging can be expressed through the use of “modal auxiliary verbs, adjectival, adverbial and nominal modal expressions, modal lexical verbs, if-clauses, question forms, passivisation, impersonal phrases, and time reference” (Hyland, 1994: 240 ; 1998a: 45).

With reference to the previous researchers, Crompton (1997) summarizes and categorizes the devices that can be classified as hedges. Table 4 below shows the types of hedging devices recognized by the above researchers (Crompton, 1997: 280).

Table 4: Hedging devices recognized by researchers

Hedging Devices	Shelton (1988b)	Myers (1989)	Salger-Meyer (1994)	Hyland (1994)
Copulas other than <i>be</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lexical verbs	✓ (comments)	✓	✓ (epistemic)	✓ (epistemic)
Modal verbs	✓ (all)	✓ (making a conditional statement)	✓ (expressing possibility)	✓ (epistemic)
Probability adverbs	-	✓	✓	✓
Probability adjectives	-	-	✓	✓
All clause initial adverbs	✓	-	-	-
All adjectives in introductory phrases	✓	-	-	-
All devices suggesting an alternative	-	✓	-	-
-Lexis expressing personal involvement -Emotionally charged intensifiers -Approximators	-	-	✓	-
-IF-clauses -Time adverbials -Impersonal expressions -Passives -Modal nouns, adjectives and adverbials (other than probability)	-	-	-	✓

(Crompton, 1997: 280)

The modality system covers various kinds of intermediate degrees of possibility that fall between “yes” and “no” on a continuum, according to Halliday (2004:146). For example, on the continuum between the certainty of “it is” and the uncertainty “it isn’t” there are other immediate possibilities, such as “it will be” or “it may be”. This indeterminate middle positions can be applied to both propositions and proposals (Halliday, 2004: 147).

The modality of propositions (statements and questions) deals with “modalization”, referring to speakers’ assessments of probabilities and usuality. Immediate degrees of probability such as “*possibly, probably and certainly*” are equivalent to “either yes or no” i.e. *may be yes, may be no*, with different degrees of probability attached. Immediate degrees of usuality, for example “*sometimes, usually and always*” are equivalent to “both yes and no”, i.e. “*sometimes yes, sometimes no*, with different degrees of oftenness attached” (Halliday, 2004:147). The modality of proposals (commands and offers) deals with “modulation”, referring to the speakers’ obligations and readiness towards the action (or inclination). Examples of the intermediate points representing different degrees of obligation are “*allowed to*”, “*supposed to*” and “*required to*” (Halliday, 2004: 147). Examples of intermediate points representing “degrees of inclination” are “*willing to*”, “*anxious to*” and “*determined to*” (Halliday, 2004: 147).

Both probability and usuality can be expressed in three ways: 1) “by a finite modal operator in the verbal group”; 2) “by a modal adjunct of probability or usuality”; and 3) “by both together” (Halliday, 2004: 147). Obligation and inclination can be expressed in one of the following two ways: 1) “by a finite modal operator”; or 2) “by an expansion of the predictor” (Halliday, 2004: 147). Table 5 below (Halliday, 1994:91) summarizes the main categories of modalization and modulation as well as their typical realizations in the clause as follows.

Table 5: Halliday's model of modalization and modulation

Commodity exchanged	Speech function	Type of intermediacy		Typical realization	Example
Information	Proposition (statement, question)	modalization	Probability (possible/probable/certain)	Finite modal operator Modal adjunct (both the above)	They must have known. They certainly knew. They certainly must have known.
			Usuality (sometimes/usually/always)	Finite modal operator Modal adjunct (both the above)	It must happen. It always happens. It must always happen.
Goods-& services	Proposal (command, offer)	modulation	Obligation (allowed/supposed/required)	Finite modal operator Passive verb predicator	You must be patient! You're required to be patient!
			Inclination (willing/keen/determined)	Finite modal operator Adjective predicator	I must win! I'm determined to win!

(Halliday, 1994: 91)

The above table illustrates that modalization and modulation have various realizations in Systemic-functional Grammar (SFG), such as adjectives, adverbs, nouns as well as auxiliary verbs (Ventola, 1997: 160). "Probability assessments and their linguistic realizations" have usually been included in the general "umbrella term" of "hedging" (Ventola, 1997: 162). It is noted that Hyland's (1998a:130) classification of lexical hedges includes some of the epistemic adjectives, adverbs and nouns which also fall under the Halliday's (1994:91) forms of intermediacy "between the positive and negative poles" with regard to the realization of modalization and modulation .

From the above studies, it is noted that certain types of linguistic devices have the functions of hedging such as modal auxiliaries, verbs, adverbs, adjectives, nouns, and phrasal items. However, hedging is perceived as an "open-ended category" (Varttala, 2001: 47). This study also takes into account other possible items, which may have hedging potential. The following sections discuss the literature on how each modal auxiliary is used to hedge, followed by other lexical hedging devices, such as verbs, adverbs, adjectives, nouns, and phrasal items. In addition, syntactic hedging expressions such as if clause, impersonalization, and miscellaneous items are also discussed. The lexical and syntactic devices are used to form the typology of this study.

2.10.2 A review of the categories of hedges

As stated in the last section, hedging can be realized through modal auxiliaries and other lexical items that have an epistemic meaning. The following sections discuss the literature on each category used for hedging. These categories are used to form the typology of this study.

2.10.2.1 Modal Auxiliaries

1. Would

Would, in its epistemic use, is the past form of *will* to indicate “predictability” or “prediction” e.g. *That will be the milkman* vs. *That would be the milkman* (Coates, 1983: 208). *Would* is also used to refer to the present in its unreal/tentative mode (Huddleston, 1971: 307; Huddleston & Pullum, 2002: 200), and expresses the speaker’s or writer’s confidence in the truth of the proposition. Coates (1983: 216-218) and Huddleston (2002: 200) also point out that *would* is pragmatically used to express politeness to avoid assertion which might be challenged by others. Carter and McCarthy (2006: 281) state that *would* can “make argumentative claims” in a less direct manner. Further, *would* also expresses a hypothetical meaning in a sense that involves epistemic meaning (Carter & McCarthy, 2006; Coates, 1983). In such cases, *would* is more relevant to hedging.

2. May

May has five meanings, namely, possibility, permission, general truths, concession, and good wishes (Carter & McCarthy, 2006: 644-645). Of the five uses of *may*, only possibility (*uncertainty*) indicates an epistemic use (Huddleston, 1971: 297-302). *May* expresses a sense of uncertainty and can usually be paraphrased as ‘possibly’, or ‘possible’. The epistemic use of *may* has the characteristics of

subjectivity⁶, flexibility of time reference⁷ and hedging (Fraser, 1975). However, the use of *may* can also be objective, where the estimation is made more generally, but not limited to the speaker, such as; i) the use of an inanimate subject; ii) existential constructions such as *there are* (Collins, 2009), for example,

(41) It's thought the man *may* have committed suicide (Collins, 2009: 93).

Coates (1983: 131-136) considers *may* as the modal for expressing epistemic possibility, reflecting “the speaker’s lack of confidence in the proposition”. In its pragmatic use, *may* is used by the speaker to soften categorical expressions. It can be paraphrased by “it is possible that...” or “perhaps” (Coates, 1983: 133). But *may* is interpreted by some researchers (e.g. (Coates, 1983; Vihla, 2000)) to have both epistemic and dynamic meaning. Dynamic meaning refers to “ability or willingness”, which intrinsically comes from the subject referent (Palmer, 2001: 10). This classification is called “merger” (Coates, 1983: 145). *May* is often considered to be a prototypical hedge (Hyland, 1998a: 116), which is used to refer to weak probability and describe things that are likely to occur or is often used in a more general way to “make a proposition more tentative” (Carter & McCarthy, 2006: 281).

3. Might

Might is the past tense form of the main verb *may*. *Might* is often used “to express epistemic possibility” (Coates, 1983: 146; Palmer, 1979). In modern English *may* and *might* are interchangeably used to reflect tentative, indirect or unreal situations (Carter & McCarthy, 2006: 646; Coates, 1983: 147). *Might* is also used to

⁶ Subjectivity is defined as “devices where the speaker, in making an utterance, simultaneously comments upon that utterance and expresses his/her attitude to what he/she is saying” (Lyons, 1977: 739).

⁷ “The ranges of time refer to: 1) the main predication of the speaker at the moment of speaking; 2) to time subsequent to the moment of speaking; 3) to time prior to the moment of speaking; and to time prior to the moment of speaking which extends up to the moment of speaking” (Coates, 1983: 133).

refer to permission or to give suggestions (Carter & McCarthy, 2006: 647). In some studies, “*might* has superseded *may* as the main exponent of epistemic possibility” (Coates, 1983: 147). Despite the similarity, *might* is more complicated than *may* as “it can be used both as a past form” of *may* and as “a hypothetical alternative to both epistemic and non-epistemic cases of *may*” (Varttala, 2001: 106). *Might* can also fall between epistemic modality and dynamic modality when it is termed “indeterminate” cases (Collins, 2009: 110). *Might* like *may*, is also used as a hedge – “the speaker avoids committing himself to the truth of the proposition” (Coates, 1983: 149). Palmer (1979: 58) states that *might* is even more tentative or unreal⁸ than *may*. He further states that *might* expresses a lower degree of commitment and is more tentative (Palmer, 2001). Brown (1992: 119) recognizes that *might* can be used to “distance” the speaker from to the truth of the proposition, but the “distance” is psychological. Stylistically, *might* occurs more frequently in speech than in writing (Collins, 2009: 112).

4. Could

Coates (1983: 107) states that *could* can express several meanings. In its deontic form, *could* functions “as either a past” form or “a hypothetical form of *can*” in expressing deontic possibility (“it was possible for”) in unreal conditions, “permission (“it was permissible for”) and ability” (“it was able to”) (Varttala, 2001: 108). Deontic possibility concerns the role of enabling or disabling conditions depending on the external constraints on the occurrence (Coates, 1983: 93); for example: “We *could* have another holiday because I shall have two weeks left too” (Coates, 1983: 108). In this example, the external constraints may come from the company as to whether the company allows the speaker to have another holiday. Occasionally, *could* is found to express epistemic possibility (“it is possible that”) like *may* and *might* (Coates, 1983:

⁸ In the simplest case, *might* expresses less assurance than *may*. For example, he *may/might* come tomorrow.

165) and tentative possibility to cover the range of likelihood from “probable assessment of possibility to tentative possibilities”.

Previous studies have examined the frequency of use of *could* in different genres and registers. Coates (1983) examines 15 genres in the Lancaster corpus and the survey of England usage at the University College London and Butler (1990) studies scientific texts. Both studies indicate that the number of instances of *could* is far less than Varttala’s (2001: 109) scientific discourse study. Varttala (2001: 109) observes that *could* provides a choice to “express epistemic possibility with a high degree of tentativeness”, similar to the function of *may* and *might*. Coates (1983: 167) states that indeterminacy between “permission” and “possibility” or “ability and “possibility” is common in the use of *could*. Butler (1990: 156) finds instances of indeterminacy in which deontic or epistemic interpretation is plausible. Declerck (1991: 398) also indicates that *could* can be used to express both theoretical and factual possibility⁹.

5. Can

Huddleston’s (1971) findings on the usage of *can* are similar to those of *may*, such as qualified generalization, exhaustive disjunction, uncertainty/possibility, legitimacy, and ability. Other researchers have the view that *can* is polysemous and has the three meanings of ability, possibility and permission (Coates, 1983; Palmer, 1979, 1990). Carter and McCarthy (2006: 642) also find that *can* generally has truth in its meaning when used “in statements about events and states”. While both *may* and *can* have an indication of possibility, *may* is often used to indicate factualness and *can* is often used to indicate the theoretical possibility. According to Declerck (1991: 397-398) factual possibility is epistemic (“*it is possible that*”).

⁹ Theoretical possibility only expresses there is a theoretical possibility of some events happening. Factual possibility expresses the epistemic judgement of the speaker that there is a chance that an event has happened, is happening or will happen in the future (Declerck, 1991: 397-398). For example: “I wonder if that kind of fruit could be grown in Britain” (Theoretical). That *could* be my train that is pulling into the station” (factual).

However, research suggests that such a distinction may not be altogether accurate. Perkins (1982: 249) argues that “the polysemy of *can* is a function of the contexts in which it occurs rather than just how *can* itself contributes to the meaning of a sentence”. Perkins further states that:

The contribution of *can* to the meaning of a sentence seems, therefore, roughly, to relate the event referred to in the propositional content to some external set of circumstances which is not explicitly identified but whose existence is presupposed, and the precise relationship between the circumstances and the events appears to be that the nature of the circumstances is not such as to preclude the event occurring (such a meaning is clearly related to the notion of possibility, but it is important to note that possibility is being represented here as a transitive relationship between circumstances and an event (Lyons, 1977: 843f) rather than as an intransitive concept as is more frequently the case) (Perkins, 1982: 251).

Perkins (1982: 253) also states it is not always clear-cut whether the semantic structure of *can* expresses dynamic, or deontic, or epistemic modality as *can* may interact with these three different modalities. The following example indicates that *can* might be regarded as having an epistemic meaning.

(42) Cigarettes *can* seriously damage your health.

(Based on evidence derived from inference or deduction, the speaker believes the truth status of the proposition that “Cigarettes have the possibility of damaging your health”) (Perkins, 1983: 35)

As stated above, the use of *can* in expressing epistemic possibility is controversial. Butler (1990) and Collins (1988) state that *may* and *can* have the same core meaning except that *can* occurs with an epistemic meaning only in negative situations (e.g. *it can't be them*) and in the form of interrogatives (e.g. *can it be true?*). Palmer (1990) suggests that *can* always express deontic possibility essentially giving

a permission and dynamic possibility which refers to the ability of the subject. However, there are some cases where the distinction between root and epistemic possibility is not always clear. Sweetser (1990) indicates that some modals have gradually been evolved from non-modals meanings to deontic modal meanings, and subsequently widened to have epistemic meanings. According to Sweetser, people:

...generally use the language of the external world to apply to the internal mental world, which is metaphorically structured as parallel to that external world. Thus we view our reasoning processes as being subject to compulsions, obligation, and other modalities, just as our real-world actions are subject to modalities the same sort (Sweetser, 1990: 50).

These “historical, sociolinguistic, and psycholinguistic” (Sweetser, 1990: 49) changes can account for the observation that some modals have different meanings. From this perspective, Sweetser (1990) argues that the root modality (deontic and dynamic meanings) is basic, but shows an extension of the epistemic meaning. Therefore some modals are unclear about root and epistemic meanings (Sweetser, 1990: 49). Coates (1995) illustrates that *can* is used with an epistemic meaning in certain contexts in American English. Coates (1995: 64) also indicates that the epistemic use of *can* is occasionally used with some “syntactic features such as inanimate subject and stative verb, and in contexts where accompanying words support an epistemic meaning”. Some clauses such as *I hope*, used to introduce subjectivity to the utterance, can also develop into epistemic reading when associated with *can* (Coates, 1995). Declerck (1991: 398) suggests that in some contexts, *can* is used when it is not possible to differentiate between factual and theoretical possibility.

6. Must

Huddleston (1971: 311-313) and Hoyer (1997: 101) recognize two uses of *must*: deontic (permission and obligation) and epistemic. The latter is described as “epistemic necessity” (Palmer, 1990: 32; Quirk et al., 1985: 224) or “confident inference” (Coates, 1983: 31; Palmer, 2001: 34). From the known facts, and through the process of logical deduction, epistemic *must* expresses the speaker’s confidence in

the truth of what is said (Carter & McCarthy, 2006: 655; Coates, 1983: 31; Palmer, 2001: 34). In view of these characteristics, the epistemic use of *must* can be regarded as a hedge when the speaker or writer draws attention of the reader or the hearer the information provided is likely to be true as per logical deduction, but not definitely true (Hoye, 1997: 102). Coates (1983: 44) also notes that epistemic *must* frequently co-occurs with some “syntactic features: the perfect aspect, a stative verb, an expletive *it*, an inanimate subject, and a progressive aspect”. Deontic *must* usually demands a compliance of the addressee of an obligation or a requirement (Hoye, 1997: 103).

There are instances where the auxiliary cannot be determined as conveying either a deontic or an epistemic meaning. These kinds of indeterminacy are regarded as “ambiguous” (Coates, 1983: 15-16; Huddleston & Pullum, 2002). Lyons (1977: 797) observes that it is difficult to distinguish whether the utterance is epistemic or deontic in our everyday use of language. For example,

(43) You *must* be very tactful.

(From the speaker’s assessment of what is known, he/she is obliged to conclude that “you are tactful” (epistemic) or “Be very careful” (deontic)) (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002: 178)

7. Will

Will has several non-epistemic meanings such as insistence, willingness and intention (Coates, 1983: 171-179; Quirk et al., 1985: 228-229) which bear no hedging meaning. However, in some cases *will* has the epistemic meaning of “predictability” which is habitual (“I [confidently] predict that it is the case that p”) or “prediction” of future events (“I predict that...”) (Varttala, 2001: 177-179). The predictability meaning refers to the speaker’s “common sense or on repeated experience”, and making “claims about the present” (Coates, 1983: 177; Huddleston & Pullum, 2002: 188). The prediction meaning refers to future time reference (Coates, 1983: 179). Predictability embedded *will* is equivalent in strength to epistemic *must* (Collins, 2009). Hyland (1998a: 116) points out that *will* is not simply “a marker of future tense” but also bears an element of “uncertainty or doubt”. However, he also agrees

that it is difficult to distinguish between predictability which is “about the present” to prediction which is “about the future” (Hyland, 1998a: 116). Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 190) also agree that futurity and modality are interconnected: “our knowledge about the future is inevitably much more limited than our knowledge about the past and the present, and what we say about the future will typically be perceived as having the character of a prediction rather than an unqualified factual assertion”. Therefore, *will* may involve epistemic meaning. Palmer (1990: 57) does not include prediction *will* in the epistemic category as he claims that the distinction between epistemic and non-epistemic *will* with reference to futurity is difficult. His epistemic and non-epistemic judgement is based on factual assertions.

8. Shall

Huddleston (1971: 309-311) discusses the two uses of *shall* in his corpus: making a statement about one’s future actions and occurrence in clauses embedded as a complement to adjective *probable* (e.g. *it is possible that the molecule shall describe a free path*). In its root sense, *shall* has the meaning of intention, volition, or obligation (Coates, 1983: 185-190). Coates (1983: 192) also states that *shall* has a prediction in meaning which is very similar to “*will*”, except that *shall* is restricted to first person subjects”. *Shall* can also be paraphrased by “I/we predict that ...” or “it is predictable that...”. *Shall* in the first person interrogative is often used in seeking advice (e.g. *So as soon as Bob comes back, Ken, shall I give you a ring?*) (Carter & McCarthy, 2006: 650). Palmer (1990: 162-163) and Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 195) claim that *shall* usually does not have epistemic sense. Hoyer (1997: 120) argues that although *shall* is not usually considered to have an epistemic meaning, there are cases where they indicate a relatively high degree of probability. Collins (2009: 136) observes that, in a number of co-occurrence patterns, *shall* is found to have epistemic meaning: 1) with an epistemic adjunct such as *probably*; 2) use with the progressive aspect; 3) with a non-agentive verb; and 4) with a stative verb.

9. Should

Huddleston's (1971: 309-311) describes the possible uses of *should*: obligation, logical expectation, and first-person equivalent of "tentative would". Alongside its commonest meaning, Coates (1983: 58) also states that it is sometimes used to express an epistemic meaning. This epistemic meaning indicates a "rather extreme likelihood, or a reasonable assumption or conclusion", which implicitly "allows for speaker to be mistaken" (Palmer, 1990: 59). Coates (1983: 64) also points out that the epistemic *should* expresses a "tentative assumption, an assessment of probability, based on facts known to the speaker". Therefore epistemic *should* is generally subjective (Collins, 2009). Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 177, 186) suggest that *should* expresses "medium strength modality" where it distinguishes *should* from both the strong *must* and the weak *can* and *may*. Coates (1983: 77) and Palmer (1990: 59) state that there are cases when *should* is interpreted as a "merger" when root and epistemic meaning cannot be determined. Below is a discussion of lexical verbs.

2.10.2.2 Lexical verbs

The last section discussed the modal auxiliary as one of the commonest ways of generating epistemic meaning. Some studies discuss the functions of some verbs as hedges that bear epistemic meanings. For instance, Lysvag (1975) and Hubler (1983) discuss the use of weak assertive verbs¹⁰ for hedging purposes. Perkins (1983: 94-97) suggests a number of lexical verbs¹¹ that can function as modals. However, both emphasize only the grammatical characteristics and syntactic structures¹² of the verbs

¹⁰ Lysvag (1975) and Huebler (1983) suggest a list of weak hedging verbs, such as *seem, appear, believe, think, expect, consider, , imagine, say, report, allege, repute, rumor, assume, presume, guess, suppose, suspect, fear, be afraid (of), and feel*. "They all produce neustic indetermination of assertory assertions" (Huebler, 1983: 119).

¹¹ Those verbs appear to refer more to a mental state or attitude than to a specific act such as *assume, believe, fancy, fear, feel, guess, hope, imagine, presume, reckon, suppose, surmise, suspect, take it, think, trust, understand* (Perkins, 1983: 97).

¹² The verb *think* could accept only *so* as an anaphoric proform for its complementing sentence, but *believe* could take both *it* and *so*. For example,

without categorization of the verbs for hedging purposes. Skelton (1988) also exemplifies a list of verbs as hedges, but his discussion does not classify the types of verb with hedging potential into different categories. Some handbooks on scientific writing suggest that writers can use a higher frequency of verbs as hedges for limiting the writers' personal judgment when the information given is not totally accurate (Arnaudet & Barrett, 1984: 48,153ff). Salager-Meyer (1994), in her study of hedging in medical English, includes verbs as one of the potential hedges to express the probability of the writer's proposition (e.g. *to suggest*, *to speculate*) or to express the writers' "personal doubt and direct involvement" (e.g. *I believe*) (Salager-Meyer, 1994: 154).

Palmer (1986: 51) proposes that "speculative, deductive, quotative, and sensory" are four ways in which a speaker may express tentativeness or "lack of commitment to the truth of a proposition". These four ways indicate that: i) the speaker/writer is speculating about the information he/she is presenting; ii) the speaker/writer is presenting the information "as a deduction"; iii) the speaker has been provided the information; and iv) the knowledge is a "matter only of appearance, based on the evidence of sense" (Palmer, 1986: 51). The whole purpose of these ways of presenting information is to allow the speaker/writer to avoid commitments or responsibilities by indicating that the information presented is either from speculation, or deduction from what is known, or given by other sources, or based on evidence from sense or feeling. Hyland (1998a: 119) states that epistemic verbs are the "most transparent means of coding the subjectivity of the epistemic source and are generally used to hedge either commitment or assertiveness". Following the framework of Palmer (1986: 51), he proposes his epistemic lexical verbs taxonomy for hedging purposes (Hyland, 1998a: 119). He classifies epistemic lexical verbs into judgmental and evidential verbs. The

Bill thinks the President is a liar, and I think $\left(\frac{so}{it^*}\right)$ too.

Some people believe there is oil in the Norwegian Sea, and I believe $\left(\frac{so}{it}\right)$ too.

former involves the speakers'/writers' tentative judgments and conveys the uncertainty of the proposition (Hyland, 1998a: 120). The latter is associated with the understanding from the reports of others or sensed by the speaker/writer (Hyland, 1998a: 124). Hedging devices in this category show that the information presented is not verified because it comes from other sources. Since the chance of achieving the goals or of "acquiring appropriate evidence" is no sure (Hyland, 1998a: 125), the hedging functions of this type allow the speaker/writer to "express modesty in undertaking the study and caution in anticipating its degree of success".

Hyland (1998a: 120) sub-categorizes judgmental verbs into speculative and deductive verbs. The former indicates that "there is some conjecture about the truth of a proposition" that mainly consists of "performative" items, such as *propose* and *suggest*, which perform "rather than describe, the act they label" (Hyland, 1998a: 120). Some items associated with "unobservable cognitive states or processes" such as *believe*, *suggest*, and *speculate* are also included in the classification of speculative verbs (Hyland, 1998a: 121). Deductive verbs, such as *calculate*, *infer*, and *conclude* are derived "from inferential reasoning or theoretical calculation than from speculation and are presented as deductions or conclusions" (Hyland, 1998a: 121). Evidential verbs are the second category of epistemic lexical verbs (Hyland, 1998a: 124), referring to "evidentiary justification" with reference to either "reports of others", or "evidence of the writer's senses", or "the feasibility of matching evidence to goals". Quotative verbs are the first sub-category of verbs within the evidential verbs in which the speakers/writers "rely on 'hearsay evidence' from other sources, (e.g. Jofuku and Goldberg (1989) showed) (Hyland, 1998a: 124). The second group is sensory verbs, referring to "perception or apprehending", e.g. *appear*, *seems to indicate*, and *seems*. The third group is 'rationalising narrator' verbs, referring to "hedge the strength by which the goals of the research or the possibility of acquiring appropriate evidence", e.g. *attempt to gain insight* and *sought to see* (Hyland, 1998a: 125). The following is the discussion of nouns for hedging purposes.

2.10.2.3 Nouns

The use of nouns to convey a speaker's doubt is discussed briefly in the "Grammar in use" section of Leech and Svartvik' (2002: 156-157) book. Perkins (1983: 86) states that a number of nouns can be used for epistemic expressions (e.g. *claim, implication, proposal, proposition, and report*). Holmes (1988a: 37) also notes that some nouns such as *doubt*, and *possibility* that can express epistemic meaning are frequently found in academic writing. Similarly, some nouns such as *idea* and *chance* are found frequently in spoken language as a way of expressing epistemic meaning. Hyland (1994: 249; 1998a: 130) lists some nouns such as "*assumption, claim, possibility, and hope*" which can be used to express epistemic meaning. A list of nouns¹³ used to express doubt is also drawn up by Bhatia, Langton and Lung (2004) in their study of legal discourse. However, the above studies do not classify the epistemic nouns into different categories. In fact, some epistemic nouns are derived from their adjective forms, for example, *possibility* is derived from *possible*.

Varttala (2001: 140) suggests categorizing epistemic nouns into three types: nonfactive assertive nouns, tentative cognition nouns, and nouns of tentative likelihood. "Nonfactive assertive nouns (e.g. *proposal, suggestion*)" are items which can be used to reflect "different degrees of uncertainty" in the speakers'/writers' own views and "findings of others". "Tentative cognition nouns (e.g. *assumption, belief, estimation*)" refer to expressions which are not categorical, although what is being said is "based on the rationale, subjective view, or limited knowledge of the authors and/or another source" (ibid.). "Nouns of tentative likelihood (e.g. *likelihood, possibility*)" refer to items "indicating a degree of probability, or indefinite frequency or degree" (Varttala, 2001: 140). Below is a discussion of adjectives for hedging purposes.

2.10.2.4 Adjectives

¹³ Items to express doubt in problem question in legal discourse are: *argument, belief, uncertainty, chance, claim, evidence, knowledge, likelihood, opinion, possibility, probability, and requirement*.

“Adjectives may be defined as a class of words which describe properties, qualities or states attributed to a noun or a pronoun” (Carter & McCarthy, 2006: 308). Adjectives have three syntactic properties (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002: 528-529): a) They mainly have three syntactic functions: attributive (e.g. my *new* job), predicative (e.g. they are *good*) and postpositive (e.g. someone *good*); b) Adjectives can be classified into gradable or non-gradable. Gradable adjectives appear along a continuum. For example, *this crocodile is less dangerous* or *extremely dangerous*. *Dangerous* is a gradable adjective. “Non-gradable adjectives cannot be modified on a scale” (Carter & McCarthy, 2006: 309). For example, *he is a single or married* person. One cannot be *less single* or *rather single*; c) They can be dependents, taking adverbs as modifiers (e.g. remarkably *good*). Fuchs & Schwitter (1996: 4) state that “modal adjectives like *possible*, *probable*, and *necessary* modify a state of affairs across a large dimension of modalities rather than adding some concrete information”. Adjectives used as hedges have been studied by a number of researchers such as Brown (1992), Holmes (1988a), Hyland (1998a), Bhatia et al. (2004: 231), and Varttala (2001: 135). For example, in her study of ESL textbooks, Holmes (1988a: 38) tables a list of adjectives¹⁴ which are used to express epistemic meaning. Hyland (1998a: 130) also lists some of the most frequent adjectives¹⁵ which express hedging meaning, in his study. In his study of scientific discourse, Varttala (2001: 135-136) groups adjectives showing epistemic meaning into: a) probability adjectives, which have an tentative meaning; b) indefinite frequency adjectives, which involve non-assertive quantifications; c) indefinite degree adjectives used to reduce the “definiteness of a claim”; and d) approximation adjectives used for controlling the “precision in quantification” (Varttala, 2001: 138). Below is a discussion of adverbs for hedging purposes.

¹⁴ In Holmes’s 50,000 words base corpus, she finds that the adjectives like *apparent*, *certain*, *clear*, *inevitable*, *likely*, *possible*, are frequently occurred in textbooks.

¹⁵Hyland (1998: 130) finds that items like *likely*, *possible*, *similar*, *significant* are commonly found in his RA study.

2.10.2.5 Adverbs

In addition to modal auxiliaries, verbs, nouns and adjectives, adverbs are also associated with modality and can offer the speakers/writers another means to express epistemic meaning for hedging purposes. In Holmes' (1988a) study of ESL textbooks, about 20 per cent of the epistemic devices are expressed by adverbials.¹⁶ In Hyland's (1994; 1996a; 1998a) studies of academic writing and biology and science RAs, he also finds that the use of adverbs for hedging purpose are common.

A range of adverbs expressing epistemic meaning has received some attention in the literature. For example, Perkins (1983: 89ff) suggests a list of modal adverbs (e.g. *likely, possibly*) that can be employed to express epistemic meaning "in terms of their syntactic properties and their meaning" (Varttala, 2001: 126). Based on examples of adverbs provided by Declerck (1991), Greenbaum (1969) and Quirk et al. (1985), Hyland (1998a: 134ff) discusses the use of adverbs for hedging purposes and groups them into adjuncts and disjuncts. The adjuncts are referred to as "downtoners" (e.g. *quite, partially, rarely, virtually*) which can lower "the force of the verb they modify" (Quirk et al., 1972: 452ff). Probability adjuncts are choices of intermediate degrees. They refer to "various kinds of indeterminacy that fall in between positive and negative poles, like *probably* or *maybe*" (Halliday, 1994: 88ff). Disjuncts can also be subcategorised into "style and content disjuncts" (Hyland, 1998a: 136). The former (e.g. *briefly, broadly, generally, simply*) indicates that "the speaker is making a generalization" (Quirk et al., 1972: 509), introducing an element of hedging (Hyland, 1998a: 136). The latter (e.g. *presumably, perhaps, possibly, potentially, probably*) also named as attitudinal disjuncts by Quirk et al. (1972: 513ff) which carry comments,

¹⁶ An adverbial is a word (an adverb) or a group of words (an adverbial phrase or an adverbial clause) that modifies or tells something about the sentence or the verb. Adverbials commonly take the form of adverbs, adverb phrases, temporal noun phrases or prepositional phrases (Quirk et al., 1985: 729). For example, a) James answered *immediately* (adverb); b) James answered *in English* (prepositional phrase); c) James answered *this morning* (noun phrase); d) James answered in English *because he had a foreign visitor* (adverbial clause).

such as expressing some degree of doubt, conveying “how the truth of the proposition can be perceived mentally”, and expressing “a judgment on what the speaker believes to be true or false” (Hyland, 1998a:136-137). Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 557) state that adverbs having modality in meaning may also carry hedging potential. However, as Varttala (2001: 127) expresses, due to the multifunctional nature of these categories, it is sometimes difficult to establish that a given adverb is used “as an adjunct functioning as a downtoner or a style or content disjunct”, and one has to take into consideration the “syntactic properties of the adverb”. He further indicates that “analysing the syntactic properties of adverbs with hedging potential and a respective classification is not essential”.¹⁷ Therefore, adverbs carrying hedging potential in this study are classified according to their meaning instead of their syntactic properties. Varttala (2001: 126-128) classifies adverbs into probability adverbs, adverbs of indefinite frequency, adverbs of indefinite degree, and approximate adverbs. The potential hedging meaning of each type is similar to those adjectives described in the previous section. Below is a discussion of phrasal items for hedging purposes.

2.10.2.6 Phrasal items

Other than the lexical items identified above, phrasal items that have hedging functions are also examined in this study. These items are also frequently linked to imprecise quantifications, tentative, not conclusive, and so on¹⁸ (Channell, 1994: 100-110; Dubois, 1987). “Diminishing precision” is a means of hedging a speaker’s expression (Dubois, 1987: 531). There are some phrasal items which can be used as hedges for expressing politeness and deference, downtoning the importance of

¹⁷ *Rarely* can be an adjunct or a disjunct. There seems to be “not much difference in meaning” as such an item is placed in different positions in a sentence “even though it may sometimes behave differently in a syntactic structure” (Varttala, 2001: 174). For example, 1) *Rarely*, the master would admit defeat; 2) the master *rarely* would admit defeat.

¹⁸ Phrasal items are separate from the approximative adverbs and adjectives as they are in phrasal forms or numerical ranges instead of in a lexical item.

something, protecting the speaker against being questioned by the giving right amount of information, and so on (Channell, 1990; Dubois, 1987; Mauranen, 2004b). Below is a discussion of syntactic hedges.

2.10.2.7 Syntactic hedges

Other than the six categories of lexical hedges mentioned above, there are other devices that can contribute to the hedging effect in the utterances. In this study, these devices are termed as syntactic hedges which include if-clauses, impersonalization (including the pronoun *we*, nominalization, agentless passive, and the use of *someone* or *one*), and miscellaneous items such as clausal items and compound hedges. Below is a brief discussion of these devices.

2.10.2.7.1 If-clause

In addition to the hedge categories mentioned above, the use of an if-clause is one of the other hedging phenomena identified by researchers (Clemen, 2002; Crompton, 1997; Hyland, 1994; Varttala, 2001). An if-clause may express an indirect or hypothetical condition. Hyland (1998a: 145) also indicates that if-clause can move the speaker/writer “to a possible alternative world where the expressed facts are not epistemically accessible, but relate to a speculative state of affairs”. An indirect condition may be related to tentativeness (Varttala, 2001: 145). An if-clause is linked to hedging as it involves the speaker’s assumption that there is a possibility that the assumption is incorrect or its fulfilment is not certain but quite possible (Declerck, 1991: 425). A hypothetical condition is its “future fulfilment is seen as unlikely (but not impossible)”. For example, “If you were to pull down this supporting wall, the whole building would collapse” (Declerck, 1991: 425). In this sense, the if-clause is associated with hedging as the speaker qualifies the certainty of the proposition. Hedging realized by indirect or hypothetical conditional if-clause refers to “hypothetical situation and marking the speaker’s epistemic stance” (Clemen, 2002: 43). The if-clause also displays the speaker’s lack of confidence in the truth of a proposition (Crompton, 1997).

2.10.2.7.2 Impersonalization

Impersonalization is the “avoidance of explicit reference to the persons” (Luukka & Markkanen, 1997) or the use of “constructions lacking a specified human agent” (Siewierska, 1984: 237). Previous studies have included impersonalization hedging strategies because it can soften or mitigate illocutionary force of utterances (Hyland, 1994, 1998a; Myers, 1989). Impersonalization is a means of “detachment” which is termed by Chafe as used for “suppressing the direct involvement of an agent in action” (Chafe, 1982: 45). Avoidance of direct reference and the use of impersonal expression are the main features of detachment. For example, a speaker/writer can avoid taking responsibility by not mentioning his/her direct involvement in what is being said (e.g. *a reduction of the income tax has been suggested* instead of *I suggest a reduction of the income tax*). According to Brown and Levinson (1987: 190), impersonalization is one of the negative politeness strategies when a speaker “doesn’t want to impinge on hearer is to phrase the FTA as if the agent were other than speaker, or at least possibly not speaker or not speaker alone...”. Impersonalization also leads the hearer to believe that he/she has not been impinged upon by the FTA (e.g. *As can be seen on the handout* instead of *as you can see on the handout.*) (Luukka & Markkanen, 1997: 169). Several kinds of impersonalization functions have been identified as hedging: a) the pronoun *we*; b) nominalization, c) agentless passive; d) replacement of *you* by indefinites such *someone* or *one*.

a) Pronoun *we*

The personal pronoun *we* has a number of meanings (Quirk et al., 1985: 350-351) and one of them is an indication to the hearer that “I do not stand alone” (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Kitagawa & Lehrer, 1990), in the sense that one or more of other unspecified persons should be included. The second meaning refers to the speakers and the addressee(s). The third meaning refers to the speaker, the addressee(s) and other unspecified persons. This vague characteristic has led Biber et al. (1999) to suggest that it is up to addressees to decide who all are being referred to. The impersonalized use of *we* implies that the speaker tends to avoid possible personal criticism of him/her (Luukka & Markkanen, 1997: 169). The speaker “distances

himself as an individual from acts he would rather have attributed to the duties and rights” of a group of persons or a corporation of which the responsibilities are to be shared between members (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 199, 203, 204). In this sense, the speaker can enhance the argumentative position and evade exclusive responsibility. Other functions also include establishing solidarity and reducing FTAs (Pavlidou, 2012). Equally, Wilson also claims that:

With such manipulative possibilities provided by the pronominal system as it operates in context, it is not surprising to find that politicians make use of the pronouns to good effect: to indicate, accept, deny or distance themselves from responsibility for political action; to reveal ideological bias; to encourage solidarity; to designate and identify those who are supporters (with us) as well as those who are enemies (against us); and to present specific idiosyncratic aspects of the individual politician’s own personality (Wilson, 1990: 76)

b) Nominalization

Martin (1991) states that nominalization, a common feature in academic and scientific writing, that a verb or adjectives can be changed to an expression in the form of a noun or noun phrases. For example, the verb *attend* can be changed to “a noun as *attendance*” and it can also “be modified and expanded” (e.g., *perfect attendance*, *attendance at every session*). The change from *attend* to *attendance* enables the writer to include judgement and value such as *perfect attendance* (Fang, Schleppegrell, & Cox, 2006: 254). Fang et al. (2006) indicates that:

Nominalization contributes to both the information density of a clause and the referential linking that builds in the construction of a text. In text-organizational terms, nominalization enables something that has been presented in a series of clauses to be distilled into one nominal element. Such distillation enables a chain of reasoning to be developed by the writer (note, e.g., how the nominalization *such distillation* at the beginning of this sentence refers back to the point of the previous sentence). At the same time, it also tends to

introduce abstraction, ambiguity and uncertainty, which can greatly decrease a text's comprehensibility. (Fang et al., 2006: 254).

Fang et al. (2006: 264) summarize three uses of nominalization. Firstly, events “can be presented as ‘packages’ (e.g. the Great Depression, Reconstruction) that themselves highlight certain aspects of the event and deemphasize others”. Secondly, nominalization can incorporate judgement and value (e.g. *rising productivity*). Thirdly, nominalization can remove “author as responsible for interpretation by making a nominal participant”. This kind of impersonalization contributes to “the appearance of objectivity which is often a requirement of professional practice” (Yeung, 2007: 167).

Luukka et al. (1997: 175) also indicates that nominalization is the removal of personal involvement from the utterances. It indicates the objectivity of the utterances (ibid.: 175). Brown & Levinson (1987: 207) describe linguistic continuum with “syntactic volatility” at one end to “syntactic inertness” at the other end, that is, “from verb through adjective to noun”. The formality produced by syntactic inertness (normalization) is a form of negative politeness. When the active agent in an utterance is progressively removed, the degree of formality of the utterance changes from informal to formal. The degree of formality corresponds with “the degree of nouniness” (ibid.: 208). Negative politeness is associated with “the noun end of the continuum” rather than verbs and adjectives (ibid.: 207). A more nouny utterance tends to distance the speaker from doing or being something so as to minimize face threat (ibid.: 208-209). For example,

- (44) You performed well on the examinations and we were favourably impressed.
 - (45) Your performing well on the examinations impressed us favourably.
 - (46) Your good performance on the examinations impressed us favourably.
- (ibid.: 207)

(Example 46 is more formal than examples 44 and 45 in their syntactic structure as the utterance becomes more nouny, i.e. the noun group of “Your good performance”).

c. Agentless passive

The use of a passive construction allows a speaker/writer to avoid mentioning any active doer, and can present the event “in a more abstract fashion” (Chafe & Danielewicz, 1987: 109). Passive sentence without an explicit agent is another means of “avoiding direct reference to persons involved in the FTAs” (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 194). The passive construction is more “impersonal” and does not have any implication such as “you, the councillors”. The suppression of the agent may indicate that the agent is unknown or the speaker “does not wish to reveal its identity” (Siewierska, 1984: 237). As such, it offers the possibility of letting the speaker avoid responsibility with respect to the source of information or detach his or her involvement from the topic under discussion. It can also avoid any implications for the speaker or others. For example,

(47) You must type that letter immediately.

(48) That letter must be typed immediately (by you) (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 194).

(In 48, by using agentless passive form the speaker can mitigate the FTAs to the hearer. The motivation behind may be the speaker’s desire to save his or her own face or the hearer’s face.)

d. Replacement of *you*¹⁹ by indefinites such *someone* or *one*

In English some impersonalized indefinites such as *someone* or *one* can “serve FTA purposes to good effect” to the agent who is not the hearer, or at least possibility

¹⁹ *You* can be interpreted impersonally, functioning generically with reference to “people” (Quirk, et al, 1985: 353)

not the hearer alone (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 197). Both *someone* and *one* can express an indefinite but restricted quantity or amount in meaning (Declerck, 1991: 299). Both are also reference to an unknown or unstated person. *One* has an indefinite meaning of “people in general” or any person (Declerck, 1991: 287). *One* has a “significant point-of-view effect of distancing” (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 198). For example,

(49) You shouldn’t do things like that.

(50) One shouldn’t do things like that. (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 197).

(The use of *one* in (50) can impersonalize the known person, allowing the utterance not to give FTAs to the hearer.)

2.10.2.7.3 Miscellaneous items

The remaining hedges in the group of syntactic hedges are clausal items and compound hedges.

a. Clausal items

Hyland (1998a: 141ff) treats clausal hedging items under the heading “non-lexical hedges” which are subcategorized into three types: a) limitations of experimental conditions; b) limitations of the model, theory or methodology; and c) limitations of the knowledge. Hyland (ibid: 141) is of the view that by using these content-based hedging strategies, writers “can qualify commitment of their propositional certainty”. However, it is problematic to apply Hyland’s (1998a) subcategorization as this study is restricted to the analysis of public speeches rather than scientific research articles. Therefore, Hyland’s (1998a) three types of non-lexical hedge are not employed in this study. Instead, any clausal items found in hedging use in the three corpora are dealt with as one category. Clausal items found in this study are mainly illustrated as an entire sentence or “any specific parts of the sentences that produce hedging effects” (Varttala, 2001: 146).

b. Compound hedges

Salager-Meyer (1997) suggests that compound hedges are phrases consisting of several hedges, such as a modal auxiliary combined with a hedging verb (e.g. *would appear*) and a hedging adverb or adjective preceded by a hedging verb such as *it seems possible*. The adjective *possible* can add strength to the hedging verb *seems*. The compound hedges can be in the form of double hedges as stated above, triple hedges such as “*it seems reasonable to suggest*”, quadruple hedges such as “*it would seem somewhat unlikely that*”, and so on (Salager-Meyer, 1997: 136).

In summary, this chapter has presented some of the theoretical concepts of hedges. Due to its multifunctional nature, the study of hedges is complex. Previous studies have approached hedges from different perspectives such as fuzzy logic (e.g. Zadeh, 1965), semantic (e.g. Lakoff 1972, 1973), pragmatic (e.g. Prince, et al. 1982; Channel, 1994; Hyland, 1994, 1998a, 1998d, 2008), and interpersonal (e.g. Brown & Levinson, 1987; Hyland, 2001a, 2005a). Hedges are used in many contexts for avoiding direct commitment, softening the force of the utterances, and reducing the threat-to-face in the dialogue and so on. Researchers have identified many categories of hedges. This chapter has introduced seven categories of hedge. These seven types can be used to hedge the utterances of the speakers, implying the utterances contain the speaker’s personal assumption based on beliefs or plausible reasoning. What follows is the literature review on intensifiers.

Chapter 3 Literature review of intensifiers

3.1 Introduction

Along with hedges, this study also examines intensifiers. The literature regards hedges and intensifiers as related, and sometimes describes them as concomitant with each other (Grabe & Kaplan, 1997: 155; Silver, 2003: 365). In the classification of metadiscourse, intensifiers are placed along with hedges in the interpersonal sub-category, where both categories have the same phenomenon, i.e. the speakers' degree of commitment to the truth of their utterances in the spectrum. Intensifiers indicate certainty or full commitment and denote a meaning at the opposite end of hedges in the spectrum. Intensifying items foreground the meaning of their focus; they always explicitly make a point (Lorenz, 1999: 24). Examples such as *it is obvious*, *clearly*, and *in fact* show the speaker's attitude to the textual contexts and convey the meaning of "impressing, praising, persuading, insulting, and influencing" (Partington, 1993b: 178). The study of intensifiers has been a popular research area as they play a major role in spoken and written interaction (de Klerk, 2006; Holmes, 1984a; Maat, 2007; Stenstrom et al., 2002; Xiao & Tao, 2007).

As stated in the earlier discussions, certain prototypical devices such as epistemic nouns, adjectives, adverbs, modal auxiliaries, and verbs are commonly used to form the taxonomies of hedging by other researchers (Crompton, 1997; Hyland, 1994, 1998a; Varttala, 2001). However, previous studies focus on intensifiers as degree modifiers of adjectives or adverbs such as *very long* (Paradis, 1997, 2001) or the use of individual items such as *really* (Giuliana, 2008) or *so* (Tagliamonte, 2008) or simple collocations such as *absolutely marvellous* (Kennedy, 2003). Taxonomies and classifications of intensifiers have rarely been discussed in the literature. Since intensifiers are approached differently in the literature, therefore, the structure and arrangement of this chapter are slightly different from the previous chapter. The following sections discuss the key concepts from the semantic, pragmatic and

interpersonal perspectives, functions, gender and previous studies, and linguistic realizations of intensifiers.

3.2 The concept of intensifiers

In this study, intensifiers are defined as linguistic devices that can strengthen the force of the utterances, denoting a degree higher than the assumed norm in a continuum. In various senses, intensifiers can be examined from semantic, syntactic, pragmatic, and interpersonal perspectives.

3.2.1 Intensifiers from semantic and syntactic perspectives

Intensifiers are vehicles for expressing “emphasis for speakers” (Bolinger, 1972: 18). From the semantic perspective, some scholars indicate that intensifiers can scale the entity both upward and downward from the norm (Bolinger, 1972: 17; Paradis, 1997: 26; Quirk et al., 1985: 589-591). Allerton (1987) and Quirk et al (1985) also agree that intensification implies not only reinforcement but also attenuation. Quirk et al. (1985: 589ff) indicate that intensifiers have the semantic role of degree and categorise intensifiers into amplifiers and downtoners. They further sub-classify amplifiers into “maximizers” and “boosters”. Downtoners are sub-classified into approximators, compromisers, diminishers, and minimizers. These descriptions seem to include “both detensifiers and intensifiers” in the definition of hedges which is how Lakoff (1972: 195) and Brown and Levinson (1987: 145) see hedges. In other words, these descriptions cover the full spectrum of the speakers’ stances on the continuum.

Although some researchers agree that intensifiers can impose a force of reinforcement or attenuation on the elements they modify (e.g. (Athanasiadou, 2007)), other researchers state that it may not be appropriate to use the term “intensifier” to scale the entity downward (Holmes, 1990: 187; Huddleston & Pullum, 2002: 585). Biber (1999) and Klein (1998: 23) classify the modifiers, as those which indicate a high degree from an established norm as intensifiers.

Bolinger (1972: 18) states that intensifiers give the impression of “[They] afford a picture of fevered invention and competition that would be hard to come by elsewhere, for in their nature they are unsettled. They are the chief means of emphasis

for speakers for whom all means of emphasis quickly grow stale and need to be replaced". In other words, new intensifiers "appeared on the scene", but the old ones would be "elbowed the other aside". The process repeats constantly and the new intensifiers would never settle down, for example people would say things were "topping" and then sometime later they would said "too divine" and then later they would said "marvellous" (Bolinger, 1972: 18). According to Peters (1994: 271), intensifiers are "subject to fashion" and Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005: 281) also indicate that intensifiers give the impression that the speaker wants the expressions to be original or novel in order "to hold the audience's interest".

In diachronic studies of language, some lexical words with an intensifying function have undergone an evolution described as delexicalization (Partington, 1993b). Delexicalization is described as "reduction of the independent lexical content of a word, or group of words, so that it comes to fulfil a particular function but has no meaning apart from this to contribute to the phrase in which it occurs" (Partington, 1993b: 183). Some lexical items that now have an intensifying function started their life "with some modal semantic content" and were often used by speakers to comment on the "assessment of truth of the matter under discussion or vouch for the sincerity of their words" (Partington, 1993b: 181). Partington (ibid.) calls this process the "modal-to-intensifier shift" which is both a synchronic and diachronic phenomenon. For example, *terribly* and *highly* are intensifiers but they have no independent meaning (Partington, 1993b). These two words have also gradually lost their collocational restrictions. For example, *terribly* was restrictively collocated with the negative type "terribly threatening". But "terribly good" is certainly acceptable today and it does not have the meaning of "evoking terror" (Peters, 1994: 270).

Bolinger (1972: 18) also extends the scope of intensifiers to include grammatical items such as "*more* and *most* and the suffixes of comparison", i.e. *-er* and *-est*. The comparative forms (i.e. *-er* and *more*) are usually involved in comparing "the similarity between two participants in terms of some property" (Dixon, 2005: 91). They are usually in the form of changing the ending of an adjective to *-er* or precede

an adjective, for example, “Over the next 18 months we will introduce statutory backing for the *more* important listing requirements”.²⁰ The superlative forms (i.e. *-est* and *most*) are generally used to intensify a noun in noun phrase or an adjective, for example, “The Mainland currently possesses the world’s *biggest* savings pool and the world’s *biggest* foreign currency reserves”.²¹

Syntactically, the typical function of an intensifier is adjective modification. For instance, items such as *terribly*, *extremely* are used to modify the qualities expressed by the adjacent adjectives in phrases such as *extremely dangerous* or *terribly nervous* (Quirk et al., 1985). As a modifier, syntactically, it becomes optional for speakers or writers (Allerton, 1987: 16; Bolinger, 1972: 23). For instance, in “In a market-driven economy, such as Hong Kong’s, it is *absolutely* right that the private sector should play a leading role in promoting and adopting all these objectives”,²² the word *absolutely* is used to strengthen the meaning of the adjective, *right*. However, in “We noticed that some of the hot money which had made use of Hong Kong dollar as proxy for speculation had flowed out, and monetary conditions have *largely returned* to normal”,²³ the italicized word *largely*²⁴ can heighten the meaning of *returned*, which is

²⁰ Quoted from the speech given by the FS at the World Pension Forum on May 10, 2004

²¹ Quoted from the speech given by the FS at the discussion forum on “Strengthening Hong Kong as China’s International Capital Formation Centre” organized by the Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Ltd on May 31, 2007.

²² The FS’s speech at the Sustainable Business in East Asia Conference co-hosted by the Financial Times and the International Finance Corporation at the JW Marriott Hotel, Oct 16, 2006

²³ Policy dialogue session moderated by the FS on “Free and Stable Movement of Capital of the 12th APEC Finance Ministers’ Meeting” in Jeju Island, Korea on Sept 8, 2005

²⁴ *Largely* in the context, could also be seen as a hedge as it may indicate that the FS may not have the precise information on the level of monetary condition, which has returned to normal. In this sense, the use of *largely* signifies what is said is true to an unspecified degree. It is also of the fact that in such cases, it is not necessary to state the exact magnitude of normalcy, the use of the vague word *largely* is sufficient.

a verb modifier. In a broad sense, the italicized intensifiers shown below can be used not only to modify adverbs or adjectives, but also other clause constructions in a sentence.

- (51) They *definitely* admire his music. (verb modifier)
- (51) The play was *terribly* bad. (noun modifier)
- (53) The story was *extremely* interesting. (adjective modifier)
- (54) He is driving *very* slowly. (adverb modifier)
- (55) I *much* prefer the old book (pronoun modifier). (Allerton, 1987: 16; Quirk et al., 1985: 590-591)

Although, the class of intensifiers that modifies adjectives can be distinguished from the class of intensifiers used to modify lexical verbs, they sometimes overlap, for instance *rather resentful* (modifier of adjective) or *rather resent* (modifier of lexical verb) (Allerton, 1987: 17).

Paradis (1997, 2001) indicates that there are limitations on the possible associations of degree modifiers and gradable adjectives. Degree modifiers are of two kinds. Scalar modifiers, such as “*very* and *terribly*, indicate a range on a scale of the gradable property expressed by the adjectives they modify and are that respect unbound” (Paradis, 2001: 50). Totality modifiers, such as *completely* or *absolutely*, “relate to a definite and precise value of the property expressed by the adjective and are bounded” (ibid.: 50). Gradable adjectives such as *nice* or *good* can be modified by *very* or *terribly* (ibid.: 53). Nongradable adjectives, such as *dead* or *wrong* only be collocated with totality modifiers such as *absolutely* or *completely* (ibid.: 53). Paradis (1997: 158) also concludes that “the gradable feature in the adjective must harmonize with the grading function of the degree modifier in terms of totality and scalarity to make a successful match”.

Klein (1998: 65) states that the borderline that distinguishes an intensifier that modifies scalar predicates from one that modifies the totality is sometimes blurry. In addition, some adjectives cannot easily be distinguished as gradable/ unbounded or totality/bounded. In some contexts, an adjective can be interpreted as having either gradable/unbounded or totality/bounded meanings. For example, *blind* may be

considered as having a totality/bounded meaning when a person is “completely blind”. However, *blind* can also have a gradable meaning, indicating the degree of blindness from “good vision via impaired vision to non-vision” (Klein, 1998: 65). As such, “he is very/rather blind” is also acceptable (Klein, 1998). Some adverbs like *quite* can modify either bounded or unbound adjective, for example, *quite right* (totally) and *quite pretty* (scalar) (Paradis, 2001: 58). *Quite* can be used as a hedge (in the sense “to some extent”) or an intensifier (in the sense of “high degree”), depending on the context (Biber et al., 1999). For example,

- (56) In the Q & A session after the 2003 budget speech, the FS was asked when the government expected to convert the deficit in the balance of payments into surplus. The FS said “*quite* a difficult question to answer”.
(The italicized intensifier indicates a high degree of difficulty.)
- (57) “He was *quite* nice”.
(The italicized hedge indicates that to some extent he is nice.)

Cacchiani (2009: 231) argues that multiple intensifiers (e.g. *quite very popular*, *rather very insensitive*) are acceptable because, “contrary to degree modifiers, they do not supply a specific value for the degree argument adjective in its positive form”. “The positive form involves a null degree morpheme *pos*, which maps a gradable adjective to a property of individuals that expresses a relation to a context-dependent standard of comparison” (Kennedy & McNally, 2005b: 64). For example, in the use of *very tall*, the positive form is denoted by $[_{AP} \text{very tall}]$. *Very* is used to adjust “the context-dependent standard of comparison for the gradable property measured by the adjective in the positive degree. *Very tall* and *tall* refer to two different standards of comparison” (Cacchiani, 2009: 231). Since the combination of intensifier + adjective is context-dependent, Cacchiani (2009: 231) further argues that “intensifiers can further modify the intensifier + adjective combinations in accumulation and reduplications (respectively, *so very tall* and *very very tall*)”. In this sense, some intensifiers can be iterated such as *very* and some degree intensifiers such as *this* or *that* cannot be iterated (Cacchiani, 2009). So, Cacchiani (2009: 231) suggests that

“individual intensifiers differ with respect to multiple modifications”. For example, Paradis (2003: 202-203) indicates that *really* “serves an intensifying function in simple collocations like *really good/nice/funny/bad...*”. The adjectives *good*, *nice*, *funny*, and *bad* are “based on a scale schema and it is this schema that makes it possible for *really* to develop a degree reinforcing function” (ibid.: 203). However, deepening on the intonation, *really* may act on a truth attesting or an emphasizing function in a complex collocation such as “she is *really* very funny” (ibid.: 204). As such *really*, in some cases, may be used for pragmatic purpose rather than for intensifying function (Cacchiani, 2009).

3.2.2 Intensifiers from pragmatic and interpersonal perspectives

Scholars who have studied developments and changes in the use of intensifiers (Bauer & Bauer, 2002; Bolinger, 1972; Labov, 1984; Lorenz, 1999; Partington, 1993b; Quirk et al., 1985) suggest that intensifiers play a pragmatic and interpersonal role in social and emphatic expressions of speakers.

Partington (1993b: 178) discusses the use of intensifiers as the “speaker’s desire to use and exploit the expression of hyperbole”. As such, the speaker tells the hearer “what is being said is sincere and vouched for” (Partington, 1993b: 178). Since some intensifiers may serve a modal function, they may be viewed as conveying an interpersonal meaning from a Systemic Functional perspective (Halliday, 1994: 356) or conveying speaker-stance (Partington, 1993b; Peters, 1994). For example, “I must *absolutely* insist that there be complete silence” (Hoye, 1997: 169). Hoye (1997: 170) states that “although the effect of *absolutely* is primarily to focalize the main verb, it also heightens the force of the modal *must*” as it implies strong demand “as well as affirmation of the speaker’s authority”. In some cases it creates a sense of identity and group membership (Lorenz, 1998; Peters, 1994). Lorenz (1998: 65) states that “every generation of teenagers coins its own set of expressions like *ab fab* (*absolutely fabulous*), *bloody brill* (*brilliant*), *dead ace* or *well wicked*. And just as these are noted by outsiders who begin to adopt them on a wider scale, they are ‘out’ and obsolete in their in-group function”. The use of intensifiers is an important vehicle in the

communication process “for impressing, praising, persuading, insulting, and generally influencing the listener’s reception of the message” (Partington, 1993b: 178) .

Paradis (1997: 9) states that “degree words” are emphatic expressions which enhance the force of utterances. She states that some adverbs such as *extremely*, *very*, *terribly*, and *immensely* can intensify the adjectives they modify, “but also they may show involvement” of the utterances or propositions, adding “an emotive and subjective dimension” of the discourse (Paradis, 1997: 10). Paradis (1997: 12) also points out that “different situations require different degrees of exactness”. “One situation may call for precise measurement”, but others may not. For instance, in an experimental situation, “it may be necessary to know the exact temperature of the water, such as 40°. In other situations, it may be sufficient to say that the water is *extremely* hot” (ibid.). As such, the modifier *extremely* may convey the speakers’ attitudes in the utterances. De Klerk (2006: 188) states that intensifiers enable the speakers or writers to express “levels of commitment ranging from caution and doubt (e.g. *fairly certain*) to certainty and emphasis (e.g. *absolutely vital*)”. Ducrot (1980) remarks that intensifiers can be used for argumentative reinforcement. He claims that “A reinforced statement is a stronger argument for a specific conclusion than the non-reinforced one” , for example, *very* in “John works *very* hard this year” can strengthen the argument that consideration should be given to reward John this year (Maat, 2007: 68).

Intensifiers indicate something about the speaker’s or writer’s strong commitment toward what he/she is saying or writing, and in doing so “modify the illocutionary force” (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 147). Intensifying devices not only add to the strength of an utterance for “the sake of politeness” but are also used for justification when “the speaker is perfectly certain of the truth of the assertion, and there is no danger of offence” (Holmes, 1990: 185). For example, in the instance of foreseeing any contradictory arguments from the opponents or critics, the speaker may use intensifiers (e.g., *absolutely*, *of course*) to show conviction and sincerity to convince the hearers (Holmes, 1990: 190). In such a way of expressing certainty to a proposition with confidence is based on the speaker’s information and experience. Intensifiers may also be used by a speaker to intensify contributions to the

communication with the hearer, by either “making a good story” or simply intensifying the sincerity of the speaker’s “intrinsic interest” (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 106). Salager-Meyer (1994: 154) and Salager-Meyer and Defives (1998) include “emotionally charged intensifiers” in their taxonomies of hedges. The reason for this inclusion is not explicitly explained in their functional concept of a hedge, but the concept of politeness theory seems to give an explanation of the inclusion (Crompton, 1997: 276). Positive politeness strategies address the “positive face of the hearer” (ibid.). For example, the phrase “*particularly encouraging*” reflects “solidarity with the (discourse) community by exhibiting responses that assume shared knowledge and desires”, and shows “identification with a common goal, rather than the response or desires of an individual” (Myers, 1989: 8 cited by Crompton, 1997).

In summary, all these studies indicate that intensifiers play semantic, syntactic, pragmatic and interpersonal roles.

3.3 Functions of intensifiers

In extant literature, the term “intensifiers” usually denotes as “modifiers of adjectives or adverbs” (Mendez-Naya, 2003: 372). Broadly speaking, intensifiers “express inner states, feelings, emotions, moods and judgments and, accordingly, expressivity and involvement” of the speaker’s stance (Cacchiani, 2005: 401). Intensifiers may have the following functions:

1. “Exaggerating the actual status of affairs, reinforcing the truth value of the proposition” (Hinkel, 2005: 30);
2. Intensifying the claim or viewpoint more certainly, or enhancing politeness or showing interest (e.g. *you have made an excellent performance*) (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Levinson, 1983);
3. Playing an exaggerative role in describing large numbers (e.g. *a huge amount of money*) for creating “hyperbolic expression” (Channell, 1994: 89; Peters, 1994: 271);
4. Serving interpersonal functions in creating a sense of identity and group memberships (Partington, 1993b; Peters, 1994);

5. Intensifying the effects of the speaker's appeals to draw the attention or emotion of the audience (Peters, 1994: 271).

In above functions are not exhaustive as intensifiers also have other functions such as in association with modifying functions of adjectives or adverbs.

3.4 Intensifiers in gender and group communications

A positive relationship between the use of intensifiers and femininity has been found (Holmes, 1995; Mulac, Wiemann, Widenmann, & Gibson, 1988; Murphy, 2010; Xiao & Tao, 2007). Bradac, Mulac, and Thompson (1995) also find that females use a higher frequency of intensifiers than males in problem-solving interactions. In their study of intensifiers used by six characters (three men and three women) in television series *Friends*, Tagliamonte and Robert (2005) find that female characters use the intensifier *so* more frequently than male characters. In their study of London teenagers' conversations, Stenstrom, Andersen and Hasund (2002: 142) report that the total relative frequency of intensifiers used by girls is slightly higher than boys. Another observation in their study is that girls use weaker expletives such as *really* more frequently than boys and the boys use a higher frequency of strong swear words such as *bloody* or strongest ones such as *absolutely* than girls (ibid.: 143). Holmes' (1990: 200) study of "women's and men's speech" indicates that the number of the phrasal intensifier *of course* used by "New Zealand women and men is almost exactly the same", a pattern which she calls "challenges Lakoff's (1975) suggestions which indicated that women would use more intensifiers than men". Fahy (2002a, 2002b) finds that males used more intensifiers (e.g., *very*, *only*, *every*, *never*, and *always*) than females in computer conferences or computer support collaborative argumentative activities. After analysing education conference papers, Holmes (2009) claims that men use greater frequency of intensifiers than women in conference presentations. In the analysis of computer-related texts, Vassileva (2004) observes that men use greater frequency of intensifiers than women in instructional writing. Whether the inclusion of intensifiers in powerful or powerless speech style messages is not conclusive as the nature of the registers, gender, age, social classes, and education levels of both the

speaker and audience may affect the distinction and frequency of intensifiers (Xiao & Tao, 2007).

Intensifiers are “also associated with colloquial usage and non-standard varieties” (Ito & Tagliamonte, 2003: 260). The findings of Stenström et al. (2002: 141) indicate that the use of intensifiers by adults is almost double as the youths. Paradis (2000: 154) and Stenström et al. (2002) suggest that different groups may use different sets of intensifiers, for instance, teenagers use more swear words such as *bloody*, *fucking*, and so on. All these findings suggest that the frequency of the use of intensifiers depends on particular situational factors which should be taken into account (James et al., 1995).

3.5 A review of intensifiers in other studies

When reviewing research relating to the full spectrum of the degree of certainty which includes hedging and intensifiers, the former is more thoroughly studied (Hyland, 1998c: 353; Vassileva, 2001: 85). Many studies focus only on the analysis of hedging (Banks, 1994; Clemen, 1997, 2002; Crompton, 1997, 2012; Davoodifard, 2008; Hyland, 1994, 1998a; Lewin, 1998, 2005; Mauranten, 1997; Myers, 1989; Varttala, 1999). A few studies concentrate on intensifiers (Fuertes-Olivera et al., 2001; Lorenz, 1998, 1999, 2002; Maat, 2007; Stenstrom et al., 2002; Xiao & Tao, 2007; Yeung, 2007). Others pay equal attention to both hedges and intensifiers (Crismore et al., 1993; Grabe & Kaplan, 1997; Hinkel, 2005; Holmes, 1990; Hyland, 1998c; Hyland, 2000a; Hyland, 2005a; Hyland & Milton, 1997). Hyland (2005b: 175) finds that the appropriate use of hedges and intensifiers can show competence in English in their academic writing when “adopting a point in relation to both the issues discussed in the text and to others who hold points of view on those issues”. In the same study, it is found that intensifiers can enable writers to communicate their certainty and involvement in the propositions, and indicate solidarity with the readers (Hyland, 2005b: 179). In addition, unlike hedges, intensifiers can emphasize the force of propositions in academic writing (Hyland & Tse, 2004c: 168). Below are some studies which examine intensifiers in specific contexts.

In a study of intensifiers used in annual business reports, Grabe & Kaplan (1997: 160-161) find that intensifiers are frequently used for the purposes of: a) emphasis on the right decisions taken; b) highlight the successful products; and c) as a maker persuading the investors to believe that the company can “turnaround from its financial loss”.

According to Hyland (1998b: 437), an important role of metadiscourse is in “social and communicative engagement between writer and reader”. With his emphasis, he includes intensifiers as a subcategory of interpersonal category in its metadiscourse framework (Hyland, 1998b: 442; 1999b: 7; 2005a: 49). The findings in his study of four disciplines namely microbiology, marketing, astrophysics and applied linguistics indicate that intensifiers have a reasonable frequency of use within the interpersonal category. The result indicates that it is important for writers, in the use of intensifiers, to emphasize “what readers should attend to and how the writer would like them to respond to information” and show “issues the writer sees as important or interesting” (Hyland, 1998b: 450).

In “a small retrospective think-aloud study” and follow-up interview of 14 Cantonese L1 undergraduates, Hyland (2000a: 179) finds that intensifiers are generally attended by participants while hedges seemed to be invisible to the students. In a study of advertising English, Fuertes-Olivera et al. (2001: 1300-1302) find that copywriters use intensifiers in headlines and slogans to persuade the addressees “to buy what is being offered” because intensifiers can show certainty and necessity of the prominent features of the products. In a study of business reports, Yeung (2007: 175-176) finds that business reports use various persuasive means such as intensifiers to obtain the acceptance from the addressees of the recommendations introduced. Intensifiers such as *will always be important*, and *certainty* are one of the means used in the reports to help the company impart confidence to the addressees. Maat’s (2007: 92-93) stylistic analysis of language used in press releases indicates that intensifiers²⁵

²⁵ Maat’s (2007: 92-93) intensifier typology includes: 1) Adjectives such as *important*, *large*, *strong*, and *extensive*; 2) Quantifiers such as *all*, *various*, *millions*, *many*, *extra*, *entire*, and *complete*; 3)

are frequently used for persuading the addressees to read some specific parts of the text. From this perspective, intensifiers are used as a promotional language “for maximizing the chances of positive publicity”. A recent study of Hinkel (2005: 29) finds that L2 writers such as Chinese, Japanese, and Korean use higher frequency intensifiers (e.g. *always*, *totally*, *completely*, *really*, *never*, and *exact*) and overstatements in informal speeches but rarely in written discourse. She also suggests L2 writing instructions should address the undesirable use of conversational intensifiers such as *no way*, and *really* in written discourse.

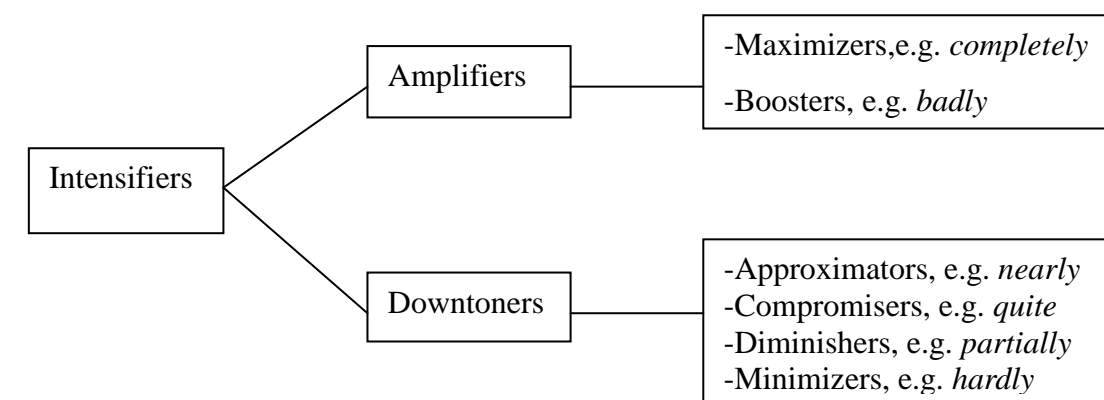
3.6 Linguistic realizations of intensifiers

The linguistic realizations of intensifiers have been described in a number of studies. Below is a brief description some of these studies.

3.6.1 Intensifier framework of Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik

The framework of Quirk et al. (1985: 589ff), which is basically a semantic one, subdivides intensifiers into two groups. The two categories are shown in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Intensifier framework of Quirk et al.



Adverbs such as *tremendously*, *well*, *strongly*, *more and more*, and *even faster*; 4) Numerals such as *almost*, and *over*; 5) modal intensifiers such as *of course*, and *simply*.

Amplifiers indicate the degree of increasing intensification upwards from the assumed norm. Downtoners indicate the degree of decreasing intensification downwards from the assumed norm. By definition, Quirk et al.'s category of amplifiers is regarded as intensifiers in this study as they strengthen the force of the speaker's utterance. There are two subcategories of amplifiers according to Quirk et al. (1985). Maximizers "denote the upper extreme on the scale". The common maximizers include "*absolutely, altogether, completely, entirely, extremely, fully, perfectly, quite, thoroughly, totally, utterly, and in all respects*" (Quirk et al., 1985: 590). Boosters, on the other hand, signify a higher degree on the scale. Items such as "*badly, bitterly, deeply, enormously, far, greatly, heartily, highly, intensely, much, severely, so, strongly, terribly, violently, well, a great deal, a good deal, a lot, and by far*" are the common boosters (Quirk et al., 1985: 591). Both maximizers and boosters are open-class forms and new words frequently replace the older ones, "which become ineffectual" (Quirk et al., 1985: 590).

3.6.2 Intensifying adjectives

In Collins Cobuild English Grammar (1990: 69), the authors indicate that some adjectives can be used to intensify the feelings of the speaker. Since they are used to indicate strong feelings, these adjectives are called intensifying adjectives. The common intensifying adjectives include "*absolute, complete, entire, outright, perfect, positive, pure, real, total, true, and utter*" (ibid.). Some adjectives ending in *ing* can also be used for intensifying purposes such as *blooming, crashing, and freezing* are examples found in the Collins Cobuild English Grammar (1990: 69).

3.6.3 Lorenz's intensifier framework

Lorenz (1999) analyses different types of intensifier and their frequencies used by the learners of non-native speakers versus native speakers. He classifies intensifiers into three types. The first type is comprised of closed-class intensifiers such as *very* and *too*, which are "by definition a finite, non-productive set and no items can normally be added" (Lorenz, 1999: 61). The second type is comprised of phrasal

intensifiers such as *a great deal*, and *more than*, which are multi-word items denoting a higher degree. The third type is made up of open-class intensifiers which are basically *ly*-adverbs, denoting a higher degree. Open-class items are further subdivided into five semantic categories according to their intensifying functions as follows:

1. Scalar intensifiers purely express the notion of degree (e.g. *completely*, and *absolutely*) (Lorenz, 1999: 97);
2. Modal intensifiers modify the truth value of the speaker's comments on the matter discussed (e.g. *truly*, *really*) (Lorenz, 1999: 101);
3. Evaluative intensifiers indicate the excessive judgements of the speaker (e.g. *remarkably*, and *seriously*) (Lorenz, 1999: 111);
4. Comparative intensifiers express a meaning of "peer-comparison" (e.g. *especially*, *particularly*) (Lorenz, 1999: 115);
5. Semantic featuring copying intensifiers share or copy "a substantial part of the meaning of the adjectives" for achieving intensification (e.g. *closely linked*, and *readily available*) (Lorenz, 2002: 148).

In summary, the various degrees of effect of intensifiers represent a semantic gradient from the assumed norm to the upper end of a continuum. Rather than taking it purely as an "ideational" statement, intensification expresses a pragmatic and interpersonal message. It reflects the speaker's "commitment as well as his or her truth value judgments" (Lorenz, 1999: 26). According to Hyland (2005b: 179) intensifiers can function to "stress shared information, group membership, and direct engagement" with hearers. Studies of intensifiers indicate that they are used for several purposes such as to muster support and recommendations, and to emphasise correctness. From the literature, there is no firm conclusion to suggest that age, gender and power are the main reasons causing a higher frequency of use. Since this analysis is limited to one speaker, age, gender and power differences in the use of intensifiers are not relevant in this study. The realizations of intensifiers are usually in the form of adjectives, closed-class items, phrasal intensifiers and *ly*-intensifiers.

Having briefly discussed the general notions, concepts, functions, and frameworks of other studies of intensifiers, the following chapter is a review of extended units of meaning.

Chapter 4 Literature review of the extended units of meaning

4.1 Introduction

This study is a corpus-based study to analyse the use of hedges and intensifiers across the three types of speech given by the FS. However, Sinclair (2004a: 148) indicates the “the word is not the best starting-point for a description of meaning, because meaning arises from words in particular combinations”. The analysis of extended units of meaning can “widen our horizons and expected the units of meaning to be much more extensive and varied than is seen in a single word” (Sinclair, 1996: 94). Tognini-Bonelli (2001: 101-130) also states that the meaning of a lexical item can only be obtained through the analysis of text and environment. Cheng (2006) also indicates that “meaning-making in text is a product of multiple occurrences of the same or semantically related items within and across texts”. Therefore, this study uses the concept of extended units of meaning as another way of analysing the hedges and intensifiers used by the FS. The objectives are to understand what are the frequent collocates and clusters used by the FS and what are the semantic preferences associated with the most frequent hedges and intensifiers. The investigation of the semantic preferences can find out what discussion topics in the speeches are linked to the most frequent hedges and intensifiers. The following sections are therefore partial descriptions of an extended unit of meaning.

4.2 Extended units of meaning of a lexical item

There are basically two approaches in the analysis of actual use of language (Macqueen, 2012: 20). The first is the analytic approach, which requires attention to be paid to grammatical knowledge for the discovery of meaning. The second is the holistic approach which requires attention to the “word groups or prefabricated strings stored as chunks in memory” (Wray, 2002: 14). The holistic approach “deals with chunks that cannot be created or comprehended via the application of rules” (e.g. idioms) as well as “linguistic material for which grammatical processing would have rendered exactly the same result” (Wray, 2002: 15). The strategy for holistic approach is that at any moment the language use depends on the requirements of the material

and the communicative purposes (Wray, 1992). The two principles of language interpretation postulated by Sinclair (1991: 109-114) have rightly accounted for these two approaches. The open-choice principle is:

A way of seeing language text as the result of a very large number of complex choices. At each point where a unit is completed (a word or a phrase or a clause), a large range of choice opens up and the only restraint is grammaticalness (Sinclair, 1991: 109).

The second principle is called the idiom principle:

The principle of idiom is that a language user has available to him or her a large number of semi-preconstructed phrases that constitute single choices, even though they might appear to be analyzable into segment (Sinclair, 1991: 110).

Wray (2002: 14) remarks, “the open choice principle results in the selection of individual words, and gives us the same kind of creative leeway. The idiom principle brings about the selection of two or more words together, on the basis of their previous and regular occurrence together”. The open choice principle “represents paradigmatic and analytic selections which are based on the position in a clause” (Macqueen, 2012: 20). The idiom principle “explains formulaic syntagmatic relations which limit the choices” (ibid.). According to Sinclair (1991: 111-112), the idiom principle is “far more pervasive and elusive” and can be elevated “from being a rather minor feature, compared with grammar, to being at least as important as grammar in the explanation of how meaning arises in text”. Sinclair (1991) has expressed a higher “recognition of syntagmatic relationship in linguistic description”. The concept of collocation illustrates the idiom principle (Sinclair, 1991: 115). Sinclair (1996; 2004a: 24-25) claims that where “words enter into meaningful relations with other words around them” for collocation. Sinclair (2004) remarks that the interrelationships between semantic and collocation is the central role in describing language.

Sinclair (2004a: 24) also states that “the word, however, does not reign unchallenged as the basic unit of language” but rather the “extended units of meaning” should be considered in language description. An extended unit of meaning accounts for the relationships between words and its linguistic co-text so as to describe the meaning of language, i.e. a speaker or writer co-selects the words (Cheng, 2012). In Sinclair’s (2004a: 141) model of an extended unit of meaning, there are “five categories of co-selection” for the analysis of a lexical item. The two obligatory categories are the “core” and “semantic prosody”, and the optional categories are the “collocation”, “colligation” and “semantic preference”. Cheng et al.’s (2009: 248-249) study exemplifies the extended units of meaning containing a core item “PLAY+ROLE”. The findings indicate that: 1) the frequent collocates are *important* (23 instances), *significant* (15 instances), *major* (8 instances), *leading/lead* (8 instances), and so on; 2) the colligation for the co-selection is a “modifier” (e.g. *positive*, *critical*), “determiner” (e.g. *the*, *that*), and “preposition” (e.g. *to*); 3) it shows the semantic preferences of “business or economic activities organizational or societal relationships”; 4) the cumulative force of semantic prosody of the concordance lines has an indication of “to participate and/or contribute in a weighty/meaningful manner”. Below is a description of the four categories of a lexical item, which makes up an extended unit of meaning.

4.2.1 Linguistic collocation

Although the study collocation is a common topic in linguistics, there is no universal definition (Lewis, 2001). However, the term can be traced back to the 1950s when it was used by Firth (1957b) in his studies of the linguistic theory. In his view, collocation of a word should be judged “by the company it keeps” (Firth, 1957b: 11). Firth (1968: 181) also states that “collocations of a given word are statements of the habitual or customary places of that word”. In this sense, it is a structural or spatial pattern. Collocation is also defined as the “co-occurrence of two or more words within a short space of each other in a text” (Sinclair, 1991: 170). According to Sinclair (1991: 115, 172), a collocation consists of words which “appear to be chosen in pairs or groups and these are not necessarily adjacent” and “each of which maintains some

meaning of itself". Partington (1998: 25-26) states that collocational phrases can be "fixed and some allow degrees of variation". Accordingly, many studies classify collocational phrases into the following three categories, although the terms used are different (Bahns, 1993; Nesselhauf, 2003; Partington, 1998):

1. Open collocations (also termed as free collocations or free combinations) are combinations of a verb and a noun in accordance with their respective literal meanings and they are easily substitutable. Such combinations are characterized by the openness of collectability of each element in relation to the other or others (Cowie, 1981). For example, "the noun *murder* can be used with many verbs (*to analyse, boast of, condemn, discuss*, etc. a *murder*) and these verbs combine freely with other nouns" (Bahns, 1993: 57).
2. Restricted collocations (also termed as fixed combination or fixed collocations) have one element used in figurative sense and the other in a literal sense such as *explode a myth*, and *run a company* (Cowie, 1981; Howarth, 1998).
3. Idioms are "relatively frozen expressions whose meanings do not reflect the meanings of their component parts" (Bahns, 1993: 57). They are used in a specialized sense so that "substitution is either not possible at all or only possible to an extremely limited degree" (Nesselhauf, 2003), for example, *kick the bucket*, and *spill the beans*.

Stubbs (2002: 225) indicates that collocation is the involvement of "semantic relations between node and collocates, and amongst the collocates themselves". In this sense, the meaning of a collocate is spread among the units instead of falling on one individual lexical unit. Cruse (1986) uses "the contextual approach" to describe the meaning of collocations. He states that "the semantic properties of a lexical item are fully reflected in appropriate aspects of the relations it contracts with actual and potential context" (Cruse, 1986: 1). He further states that the meaning of a word "is fully reflected in its contextual relations" and is "constituted by its contextual relations". Greenbaum (1974: 82) indicates that if there is a higher frequency of the co-selection of two lexical items in the language, they are likely "a statistically significant collocation". The relation of the co-occurrence of two words are in fact

called “mutual expectancy” (Stubbs, 1995). For example, the word *cause* appears in a text, and then certain words like *trouble*, *death* are likely to occur in the same text. Xiao & McEnery (2006: 105) also claim that collocation is “essentially quantitative”. However, McEnery et al. (2006: 215) argue that the frequency of co-occurrence cannot reflect the strength of association. For example, a high frequency word may not strongly collocate with a node word²⁶ but simply co-occur more with other words. Therefore, the definition of collocation has further been described as “the characteristic co-occurrence patterns of words” (Xiao & McEnery, 2006: 105); and “the tendency of two word-forms are found together (co-occur) more often than chance would predict” (Scott & Tribble, 2006: 33). Partington (1998: 16) calls these as “statistical definition of collocation”. To reflect the strength of association of a collocation, two statistical measures are commonly used; t-score and mutual information (MI) (Cheng, 2012). Both tests can remove pairings that have less strength of association. The significant levels are usually set at ≥ 2 (t-score) and ≥ 3 (MI).

Clusters are a combination of consecutive words (e.g. 2-, 3-, 4-, 5-, or 6-word combination) which follow each other in a text (Scott, 1997). Clusters are also termed lexical bundles (Biber et al., 1999), chunks or n-grams (Cheng et al., 2009). It is a syntactic fragment and may not constitute a complete syntactic unit such as a phrase or clause (O’Keeffe, McCarthy, & Carter, 2007). In some respects, clusters may overlap with collocations but “it should be distinguished from collocations, which consist of independent words that tend to co-occur. For example *broad* frequently collocates with *accent*, *agreement*, and *daylight* and *wide* frequently collocates with *appeal*, *area*, and *distribution* (Biber et al., 1999: 59). These collocations statistically co-occur more frequently (Biber et al., 1999: 989). In view of the fact that clusters can be regarded “as extended collocations” (Biber et al., 1999: 989), the study of both collocations and clusters can help understand what lexical-grammatical choices are frequently used by the FS in association with hedges and intensifiers. Using clustering facilities,

²⁶ The centred search word in a concordance (Cheng, 2012).

three-word clusters which include the targeted lexical hedges or the intensifiers as node words are generated. The study of the three-word clusters helps to identify the structural patterns of hedges and intensifiers in speeches of the FS.

4.2.2 Colligation

According to Stubbs (2009: 124) “colligation is the relation of co-occurrence between the node and the abstract grammatical categories (e.g. past participles or quantifiers)”.

The concept of colligation has been studied in Firth’s seminal study in 1950’s. Firth (1968: 181) defines colligation as “the statement of meaning at the grammatical level is in terms of word and sentence classes or similar categories and of the interrelation of those categories in colligations”. Firth (1968: 182) further states that “colligations cannot be of words as such”. This means that there is no requirement of the obligatory core word. For example, the frame of *the faintest idea* is only a colligation of a definite article, a superlative adjective and a noun but with no core word.

Sinclair’s (2004a) approach towards colligation is slightly different from Firth’s. He describes colligation is the co-occurrence of a grammatical phenomenon with the core word. For example, the node *true feeling*, “there is a strong colligation with a possessive adjective” such as *our* (Sinclair, 2004a: 35).

Stubbs (2001a: 88) also states that the degree of abstraction of colligation is one level higher than collocation because it requires a longer sequences of analysis. He further points out that in colligation “the classes of words (such as past participles or quantifies) are not directly observable; they are abstractions based on generalizations about the behaviour of the word in the class”. “For example, the word-form *cases* frequently co-occurs with the grammatical category of quantifier, in phrases such as *some cases, in many cases*” (Stubbs, 2001a: 65).

4.2.3 Semantic preference

Different researchers have their own definition of semantic preference but they share the view that semantic preference groups elements into a semantic field “on the basis of semantic similarity” (McEnery & Hardie, 2012).

Semantic preference is defined as “the restriction of regular co-occurrence to items which share a semantic feature” and its “feature is relevant in the same way to both syntagmatic and paradigmatic phenomena” (Sinclair, 2004a: 142). “Regardless of word class”, the awareness of the similar meaning of the co-occurring items being similar is important (Sinclair, 2004a: 142). Stubbs (2001a: 65) defines semantic preference as “the relation, not between individual words, but between a lemma or word-form and a set of semantically related words”. This means words from the same lexical field are attracted but rather not the same words may be involved. For example, *large* collocates with words from the same semantic feature indicating “quantities and sizes” e.g. *number(s)*, *scale*, and *part* (Stubbs, 2001a: 65). On the basis of the shared semantic feature of “quantities and sizes” and frequent occurrences, therefore it can be regarded as the “typical, and central” use of the word-form *large* (Stubbs, 2001a: 65). Stubbs (2001a: 88) further defines semantic preference as a “class of words” which share some semantic feature (such as words to do with *medicine* or *change*). Such a class “is also abstract, and will have frequent and typical members, but will be open-ended” (ibid.: 88). According to Philip (2011: 54) semantic preference “is an abstraction of the semantic patterning which pulls together collocates and non-recurring near-synonyms into semantic sets”.

Speakers of a specific community may share the same semantic preferences “because their experience of language is similar, competent speakers of a language will hold the vast majority of lexical primings in common – though there will be small individual variation – otherwise communication would be impossible” (Partington, 2004: 152). In this sense, semantic preference is “priming” which is what Hoey (2005: 8) describes “as a word is acquired through encounters with it in speech and writing, it becomes cumulatively loaded with the contexts and co-texts in which it is encountered, and our knowledge of it includes the fact that it co-occurs with certain other words in certain kind of context”.

Partington (2004: 153) and Hoey (2005: 9) consider that semantic preference is dependent on genre, context, and particular domains. Partington (2004: 145) also suggests that semantic preference is affected by colligative patterning. For example, in his analysis of the item *sheer*, if the pattern is “*the sheer+noun phrase+of+noun phrase*”, it has a semantic preference of “magnitude”, “weight”, or “volume” (e.g. *the sheer volume of reliable information*). If the structure is such that the item *sheer* “is preceded by words expressing means or manner, e.g. *through, out of, by, because of, and by virtue of*”, it has a semantic preference of “persistence” (e.g. sometimes through *sheer* insistence) (Partington, 2004: 145).

In his study of newspapers texts from the Bank of English corpus, O’Halloran (2007: 16-17) finds that the verb *erupt*, including the lemma of *erupted* and *erupts*, has a semantic preference of human phenomena. However, the noun *eruption*, including the eruptions, has a semantic preference related to geological phenomena.

In her analysis of *short-sighted* in the BNC, Bednarek (2008: 124) finds that the literal meaning of *short-sighted* has the semantic preference of “lexis from the semantic field ‘seeing’ (e.g. *eyes, steel-rimmed, glasses, blinked, blinking, and peering*)” whereas its metaphorical meaning has the semantic preference of “lexical items from the financial domain (e.g. *dealing, profit, cutback, privatizing*)”.

In this study, semantic preference is therefore defined as a shared semantic field determined by patterns of co-selection including colligation, collocation, clusters and the wider co-text.

4.2.4 Semantic prosody

Semantic prosody expresses attitude or evaluation of the speaker and on the “pragmatic side of semantics/pragmatics continuum” (Sinclair, 1996: 87; Stubbs, 2001a: 65). The pragmatic aspect often indicates the reasons of the speakers for making the statement (Stewart, 2010: 10). One of the features of semantic prosody is noted in Sinclair’s (1991: 112) idiom principle in which he indicates that “many uses of words and phrases show a tendency to occur in a certain semantic environment. For example, the verb *happen* is associated with unpleasant things”. Sinclair (1996: 87) also states that semantic prosody “expresses something close to the ‘function’ of the

item” and provides clues as to “how the rest of the item is to be interpreted functionally”. In his exemplification of the core items: a) *naked eye*; b) *true feelings*, and c) *brook*, he finds that these lexical items have the semantic prosodies of *difficulty*, *reluctance* and *intolerance* (Sinclair, 1996). In this sense, semantic prosody is not restricted to a lexical item to either good or bad distinction.

Louw (1993: 159) states that “the habitual collocates of the form *set in* are capable of colouring it, so it can no longer be seen in isolation from its semantic prosody, which it established through the semantic consistency of its subjects”. He therefore defines semantic prosody as “a consistent aura of meaning with which a form is imbued by its collocates” (Louw, 1993: 157). The negative or positive characteristics are formed and revealed when a prosody is collected through the habitual collocates (Louw, 1993: 158). In his example, *symptomatic of* is usually associated with unpleasant events. However, with its habitual collocations with other positive words such as *their courage*, it becomes a favourable expression (Stewart, 2010: 8). Louw (1993: 158) calls this transfer of meaning from habitual co-occurrence as “irony”. In his study, Stubbs (2001a) uses the term of discourse prosody instead of semantic prosody. He claims that discourse prosody can “maintain the relation to speakers and hearers” and “emphasize their function in creating discourse coherence” (Stubbs, 2001a: 66). Stubbs (ibid.: 65) further indicates that the phenomenon of discourse prosody can “extend over more than one unit in a linear string”. In his analysis of the lemma CAUSE, he finds the CAUSE only associated with unpleasant events. However, the Lemma PROVIDE has the connotative meaning of “desirable or necessary” (ibid.: 65). Therefore, the emphasis is placed on attitudinal characteristic in defining discourse prosody:

Discourse prosodies express speaker attitude. If you say that something is *provided*, then this implies that you approve of it. Since they are evaluative, prosodies often express the speaker’s reason for making the utterance, and therefore identify functional discourse units (Stubbs, 2001a: 65).

The concept of semantic prosody is related to connotation. Semantic prosody is termed as “expressive connotation” and a feature of “connotation meaning” (Partington, 1998: 65; 2004: 131). Hunston (2002) indicates that semantic prosody “accounts for connotation”. This implies that in addition to carrying the meaning of a word, it also has a “real” meaning (Stewart, 2010: 27). Whitsitt (2005) also states that semantic prosody is a synonym of connotation. The distinction is that the discovery of a connotation is through intuitive judgements of a word whereas semantic prosody is through the observation and analysis of the habitual collocations of the concordance lines (Stewart, 2010: 27). The distinction is also described in Louw’s (2000: 50) study in which he said semantic prosody is a “strongly collocational” phenomenon whereas connotation is “schematic” in nature. Louw further refines the definition of semantic prosody from his 1993 study. He indicates that:

A semantic prosody refers to a form of meaning which is established through the proximity of a consistent series of collocates, often characterisable as positive or negative, and whose primary function is the expression of the attitude of its speaker or writer towards some pragmatic situation. A secondary, although no less important attitudinal function of semantic prosodies is the creation of irony through the deliberate injection of a form, which clashes, with the prosody’s consistent series of collocates. Where such reversals are inadvertent they are indicative of the speaker’s or writer’s insincerity (Louw, 2000: 60).

Stewart (2010: 28) remarks that semantic prosody “is more attendant upon co-occurrence factors, and is more functional or attitudinal in nature than connotation”.

Stubbs (2001a: 66) comments that “the distinction between semantic preference and semantic prosody” is blurred. His arguments are because: a) the list of collocates is open-ended; the list for all words for *quantities* and *sizes* of the word *large* is possible but not for “unpleasant thing”; b) the distinction between semantics and pragmatics is sometimes difficult; c) “how delicate the analysis is” sufficient. However, Sinclair (1999) has given a clear distinction. Sinclair (1999: 33-34) states

that semantic prosody is “attitudinal” and the prosody is more than a positive or negative judgement. For example, Sinclair’s (2004a: 33) analysis on the core words “MAKED EYE”, it also has an attitudinal meaning of “difficulty” because words such as *small*, *faint*, *weak*, and *difficult* are evident in the instances. In this regards, Sinclair treats semantic prosody as “a discourse function of a sequence rather than a property of a word” (Hunston, 2007: 258).

In conclusion, this chapter has discussed the concept of extended units of meaning. An extended unit of meaning has five co-selections namely core, semantic prosody, collocation, colligation, and semantic preference. Core is the centre word for analysis. Collocation is the frequent co-occurrence of word forms through direct observation of the textual data. Colligation is the association of the core word with grammatical devices. Semantic preference is a group of words sharing similar semantic features. Semantic prosody refers to word forms, which generalize the communicative purpose. Colligation and semantic prosody are not covered in this study because the main purpose of this study is to use the concepts of collocation and semantic preference to identify what contexts in the speeches trigger the use of hedges and intensifiers. Also, the data of this study do not have sufficient examples to find out the relative prosodies. What follows is a discussion of the methodology of this study.

Chapter 5 Methodology

5.1 Introduction

The FS's speeches in this study are grouped into CORDS, CBUSS, and CBUDS. CORDS is evocative in nature, CBUSS and CBUDS are informative and persuasive. This chapter provides a description of methodological approach used this study. First, there is an introduction of the term public speech (5.2) and the language used (5.3). Then, a description on hedges and intensifiers in public speeches is shown on 5.4. The process of preparing different types of speeches by the FS is described in 5.5. Then, a description of the approaches to corpus studies is mentioned in 5.6. The procedures adopted to analyse the hedges and intensifiers in the corpora are described in 5.6.1 and 5.6.2. The procedures of the statistical and qualitative analysis are mentioned in 5.7 and 5.8. Section 5.9 and 5.10 are the procedures to analyse the syntactic hedges and intensifiers and collocates, clusters and semantic preferences.

5.2 The public speeches

A public speech is public speaking which involves “one person or a small group of people speaking to a larger number of people, an audience that typically has little or no ‘speaking’ role except for questions and answers at the end of the presentation” (Morreale, 2010: 31). There are three types of public speeches. In an informative speech, such as an introduction speech, the speaker seeks to deepen understanding, clarify, increase knowledge about a topic, and so on (Coopman & Lull, 2012: 250; Sprague & Stuart, 2000: 33). A persuasive speech, such as a government policy speech, has the purpose of convincing or stimulating the audience to accept the ideas, beliefs, or values or actions advocated by the speaker (Coopman & Lull, 2012; Letteri, 2002; Morreale, 2010; Sprague & Stuart, 2000). An evocative speech, such as a ceremonial speech, is to entertain, inspire, celebrate, and commemorate.

5.3 The language of public speeches

There have been opposing views regarding the differences in language use between spoken and written discourse. Some researchers have found that spoken and written language differ grammatically because they differ in their method of production, transmission and reception (Tanskanen, 2006: 74). Some reports show that the written language is more complex given the large proportion of “nominalizations, genitive subjects and objects, participles, attributive adjectives, conjoined phrases, series, sequences of prepositional phrases, and complement and relative clauses” (Biber, 1992; Chafe, 1982: 44). Halliday (2004: 34) states that spoken language is only “the most unself-mentioned spontaneous speech that people explore and expand their meaning potential”. He further claims that the complexity of written language is only a result of “the packing together of lexical content, but in rather simple grammatical frames”; however, in spoken language “much more of the meaning is expressed by grammar than by vocabulary” (Halliday, 1994: xxiv). Greenbaum and Nelson (1995: 17) and Crystal (1995b) do not support the notion of a significant difference between speech and writing in the use of coordination and subordination. Some researchers consider that the mode of communication alone is not sufficient to explain the differences and similarities in language use between the two types of communication means, but the nature of genres is a more prominent factor (Tannen, 1982). Mazzie (1987) also suggests that the content in different types of discourse is more important than the mode of communication in analyzing the differences between discourses.

A public prepared speech is to be delivered to a large audience, and the messages to be conveyed are usually planned and prepared beforehand based on the specialties and the purposes of the event (Tanskanen, 2006: 81). Public prepared speeches indicate “more overly expressed persuasion” and have “the highest degree of on-line information elaboration” (Tanskanen, 2006: 82-84). Other terms, such as “non-spontaneous oration”, are used to describe public prepared speeches (Tanskanen, 2006: 152). According to Biber’s (1988: 160-164) continuum of spoken and written language, public prepared speeches fall somewhere in the middle between face-to-face conversation and academic writing, “possessing the characteristics of

both spoken and written language”. The speaker has to deliver the speech packed with information to the audience who has to process the speech on-line as it is delivered. For the listeners of a spoken monologue, there are few opportunities to provide feedback.

5.4 Hedges and intensifiers in public speeches

A public speech usually has more than one purpose, but one purpose usually predominates (Sprague & Stuart, 2000: 34). Strictly speaking, a speech of a senior government official can be regarded as a political speech as he or she may use the speech either to inform the audience of the strategic plans of the government or persuade the audience to accept claims in the speech (Schaffner, 1998). Political speeches fall within the persuasive type of public speeches because politicians try to motivate the audience that “their position on public issues represent what you should think or do” (Morreale, 2010: 30-31).

Generally, in a political environment, politicians are representatives of different political parties or the government. They have to be strictly faithful to their parties or the principles of the government. Making speeches is a vital part of the politician’s role in announcing policies, outlining or defending decisions, criticizing or commenting on policies or decisions of critics or opponents and persuading people to agree (Beard, 2000). Apart from the immediate audience, political parties or groups, friends or the public at home or abroad are also among the addressees of a political speech (Schaffner, 1998). In fact, the language used in a political speech plays an important role in achieving a specific, politically motivated function (Schaffner, 1996).

From the point of view of linguistics and discourse analysis, political texts and political discourses use genre-specific linguistic features for achieving political objectives, but politicians know that on occasions they must develop linguistic strategies to reflect the truth of their statements in the speeches (Giora, 1994). However, there may be circumstances under which they may have to deny their assertions or any undesired interpretations of them. On such occasions, the language of a cautious politician must, therefore, be carefully and strategically formulated for

easily gaining acceptance from the audience. Sometimes, politicians may be confronted with topics which they would not like to commit themselves to, or about which they do not have the accurate or sufficient information. Owomoyela (1981: 11) uses a metaphor and says a politician making a speech “is like an egg: when dropped, it shatters”. A politician has to be cautious when delivering a speech because inappropriate use of language may lead to serious political consequences, e.g. loss of credibility or position. It is also politically risky when politicians speak candidly in a speech. In these situations, they may need to resort to hedging strategies, evasive strategies, and indirectness for the purposes of redressing the FTAs, as a marker of diplomacy and politeness (Obeng, 1997; Simon-Vandenberg, 1996), to avoid commitments to the truth of their statements, and to deny any assertions in front of the audience (Giora, 1994). Chilton and Schaffner (1997: 227) find that hedging strategies such as intransitive (no agency) and nominalization are used to avoid blame and responsibility in case of controversial issues. Fetzer (2002: 176) suggests that a hedging or attenuating strategy can be used with regard to the expected criticism or contradictory argument. Iles Jaffe (2013: 293) and Letteri (2002: 147) also indicate that the use of “qualifiers, which are words and phrases that limit or narrow the scope of your claim” is commonly found in political speeches.

For example, the ex-US Federal Reserve Board Chairman Mr Greenspan was a prominent government official in the economic and financial sector in USA. Resche (2004: 723) states that “every speech Mr Greenspan made was evasive, nebulous, opaque, oracular or even Delphic”. More generally, the speeches reflect the traditional way that the central banker in delivering the speeches with great care in order not to have any unexpected great impact on the financial markets (Resche, 2004: 724). His speeches tended to be very carefully worded for toning down his committal attitudes or making his statements more nebulous to reflect his cautiousness (Resche, 2004: 729). As such, the use of hedging devices is one of the Federal Reserve Bank Chairman’s discourse choices to help him “to be more cautious” and avoid any contradictory argument (Resche, 2004: 729). For example,

Some recent evidence *suggests* that the labour markets bear *especially* careful watching for signs that the return to *more normal* patterns *may* be in the process. The Bureau of Labour Statistics *reports* that people were *somewhat more willing* to quit their jobs to seek other employment in January than previously.²⁷

In this extract, Mr Greenspan used hedges such as *may* (modal auxiliary), *report*, *suggests* (non-factive verbs) and *some*, *somewhat* (approximators) (Resche, 2004). Mr Greenspan was more cautious in reporting some information to the audience. These hedging devices helped him to express a tentative and non-committal attitude so that critics would not be given an opportunity to challenge the certainty and accuracy of the information. The pronoun *some* is an approximative adverb (Varttala, 2001). Mr Greenspan might not have had the precise evidence in his mind. The use of *some* could help Mr Greenspan to express evidence of indefinite quantity, but also enabled him to give a certain degree of precision on the quantity of evidence to the audience.

In other situations, in order to uphold their ideas, policies, proposals and decisions, politicians may apply intensifiers to convince the audience, or to show their authoritative sources of information or knowledge, or to indicate their own standpoints intentionally as well as to “position themselves as a decisive but balanced and level-headed politician” (Jaworski & Fitzgerald, 2009: 20; van der Valk, 2001). The use of intensifiers is recognized as intensifying a standpoint or boosting the force of a proposition of a politician in a political debate (Nir, 1988: 195). Pinna’s (2006) findings indicate intensifiers have a pragmatic function to manipulate audience in a political speech. Bolouri (2008) states that intensifiers can increase the power of a political speech and make the utterances more forceful and effective. Iles Jaffe (2013: 316) indicates that the stronger modals such as *should* are used to establish validity

²⁷ Testimony made by Chairman Alan Greenspan on 10th June 1998: “An Update on Economic Conditions in the United States before the Joint Economic Committee, US Congress” (Resche, 2004: 743)

claims in a policy speech. In the extract above, Mr Greenspan used intensifiers (*especially, more normal, more willing*) to intensify his message to draw attention to the audience. With an intricate combination of audience profile and different communicative purposes, hedges and intensifiers play an important role in political speeches (Schaffner, 1998), which are one type of public speeches.

5.5 Speech preparation process of the FS

It is common for public officials like the FS to ask their assistants or ghost-writers, to prepare speeches for them. The ghost-writers for the FS, for instance, prepare the speech after gathering the background information of the event, such as the organizer, the purposes or specialties, the particular guests, or protocol and history of similar events to identify the messages to be delivered. The draft is then given to the Head of the Correspondence Office for review. The edited version of the speech is then submitted to the FS for approval one day before the speech is due to be delivered. The FS then conducts a final review and makes any necessary corrections or additions, such as conveying to the audience the recent government actions or proposals relating to financial, business or trade matters in Hong Kong. As such, the final version of a speech may contain a good deal of his own input. This information was given through an email enquiry to the Financial Secretary Treasury Bureau on 19th Nov 2009 and they replied by giving a brief description of the process of preparing the speeches for the FS. It is the belief of the author of this study that some sensitive financial issues that may not be disclosed yet, the target audience may influence either him, or his assistants writing for him, on the choices of linguistic devices and rhetorical choices when preparing his speeches.

When it comes to the stage of preparing the annual financial budget, the Hong Kong Government has adopted a more transparent and participatory approach in order to gain general support from the public and because of pressure from different groups in the society. The budget process starts in May each year. The Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau (FSTB) of the FS's Office co-ordinates a Resource Allocation

Exercise (RAE) in which all bureaux' secretaries²⁸ are invited to submit bids to the Star Chamber²⁹ for funding new expenditure projects as well as applying for funding increase in the demand for or improvement to current services for the next year³⁰. In August, the Star Chamber makes the final decision regarding allocation for operating expenditure to individual bureaux. In December, the bureaux are required to submit their budgets for the next year to the FSTB. Back and forth discussions are also held before the submission. The final budget of each bureau is submitted to the FSTB in January next year. Based on the individual budget, the FSTB prepares a draft consolidated budget for the FS for review. The FS holds dialogues with the secretaries of the bureaux to arbitrate or smooth over conflicts about the budgets. Those meetings are major challenges for the FS because he has to ask for compromises and to avoid internal bureaucratic conflicts – dividing scarce funds among an excessive number of programmes in an effort to satisfy everybody. In mid-February, final adjustments are made to the financial budget to account for any justifications of budget requests.

It is the usual practice for the FS to consult the Legislative Councillors in the course of reviewing the budget. In the wake of the Asian financial crisis and its impact on public expenditures, the FS consults the councillors in a more in-depth manner by seeking their views on the budget proposals. The FS also conducts consultations with political parties, academics and various organizations in commercial and other private sectors of Hong Kong. He appears in the media, radio phone-in programmes or

²⁸ There are twelve bureaux namely: Civil Service, Commerce and Economic Development, Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Development, Environment, Education, Financial Services and The Treasury, Food and Health, Home Affairs, Labour and Welfare, Security, and Transport and Housing (www.gov.org.hk)

²⁹ Star Chamber is chaired by Chief Secretary for Administration and comprising the Financial Secretary ("FS"), the Secretary for the FSTB of the FS's Office, and the Secretary for the Civil Service (the budget LC Paper No .FC9/02-03(01))

³⁰ Reference from the "Information note on key processes in the preparation of the budget LC Paper" No .FC9/02-03(01)

business meetings to discuss the principles behind the budget proposal in order to collect information and opinions from various sources. The FSTB also collects views from the public about the following year's budget via their website, which allows people to send their views and expectations to the FS before his forthcoming budget speech.

Although there is no time limit on submissions, the public are encouraged to send in their views by mid-February to ensure their views are taken into account in the preparation of the budget. All submissions are consolidated by a small team in the FSTB and are passed on the FS for consideration. The purpose of these information collection actions is to adjust the budgets proposed by the bureaux.

After reviewing different issues and negotiating cuts or increases among the bureaux, the FSTB completes the annual budget and presents it to the FS for review and approval. If the final version of the budget is approved by the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong SAR, the FSTB starts preparing the budget speeches for the FS by taking into account all the voices, opinions, and expectations from different sources during the budget preparation period.

The process of preparing the budget speech is similar to that of preparing an ordinary or business speech. The FS reviews the final version and adds his input, including any messages that he wishes to convey to the public. The FS fully understands that the budget may not satisfy all the parties concerned. However, in order to garner the support from the public and the Legislative Council members, the FS has to be very careful in the wording in order to increase the likelihood of a better acceptance and also at the same time to minimize the risk of being challenged by the Legislative Councillors and the public after the presentation.

In other public situations, the FS may want to convince the audience of the importance or truth of his propositions in both ordinary and budget speeches. The FS may also use intensifiers to express his positive and emotional feelings to uphold some of the government important principles or highlight some important aspects in the budget that he wants the audience to know.

5.6 Approaches to corpus studies

A corpus is a collection of texts that are chosen and “ordered according to explicit linguistic criteria in order to be used as a sample of the language” (McEnery et al., 2006: 4). Scholars generally accept that a corpus should have the characteristics of: “1) machine-readable; 2) authentic texts (including transcripts of spoken data”; 3) samples selected must be as representative as possible of the population; and 4) “representative of a particular language or language variety” (McEnery et al., 2006: 5). A corpus can be broadly classified into a general corpus or a specialized corpus (McEnery et al., 2006: 15). A “general corpus” (e.g. BNC) consists of sections from many different text types and domains (Rayson, Berridge, Francis, JADT 2004). It serves “as a basis for an overall description of a language variety” (McEnery et al., 2006: 15). The corpus may be of written or spoken data or both (ibid.). While, a “specialized corpus shares some commonalities in communicative purposes, it can be domain or genre specific spoken corpus, e.g. London-Lund Corpus” (McEnery et al., 2006: 62). Some researchers have expressed the importance of compiling specialized corpora for understanding of academic and professional language, and for multi-level analysis by taking functional, rhetorical and text linguistic aspects into consideration instead of focusing only on lexical grammatical functions (Connor & Upton, 2004; Flowerdew, 1998, 2004).

Corpus linguistic techniques in the study of hedges and intensifiers have been widely adopted in recent years, for example, in the study of grammatical structure in language (Biber, 1996: 171), a comparative study of mitigation of scientific claims in research papers (Martin-Martin, 2008), the study of characteristics of the Middle Eastern students’ current hedging skills (Crompton, 2012), a corpus-based sociolinguistic study of amplifiers in English (Xiao & Tao, 2007), a corpus compilation, analysis and findings on teenagers’ use of intensifiers (Stenstrom et al., 2002), the study of hedges and boosters in education conference papers (Holmes, 2009), and the study hedges and boosters in scientific articles (Hyland, 2000b).

There are two analytical approaches using a corpus in linguistic research: corpus-based and corpus-driven (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001). A corpus-based approach refers to a “methodology that avails itself of the corpus mainly to expound, test or

exemplify theories and descriptions that were formulated before large corpora became available to inform language study” (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001: 65). This approach starts with an interesting topic, develops the hypotheses, and then uses a corpus to test the hypotheses to see whether the original theory can be confirmed (Cheng, 2012: 187-188). A corpus-driven approach constitutes the use of a corpus “beyond the selection of examples to support or quantify a pre-existing theoretical category” (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001: 11). Tognini-Bonelli (2001: 11) states that “the theoretical statement can only be formulated in the presence of corpus evidence and is fully accountable to it”. She further remarks that a corpus-driven approach starts with particular observations in language. Through the analysis of a corpus, patterns and phenomena can be found and then hypotheses can be tentatively established (ibid.: 14-18).

Both approaches are different in respect of the process and the impact of the result (Cheng, 2012: 188). The two approaches have their own merits and demerits. For example, the corpus-based approach may reduce the potential for finding of new things or language theories. The corpus-driven approach relies on “the knowledge and experience and intelligence at every stage” during the investigating process. “The unexpectedness of the findings derived from corpus evidence leads to the conclusion that intuition is not comprehensively reliable as a source of information about language” (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001: 85-86). Therefore, some researchers suggest use of both approaches in a study (Rayson, 2008).

In this study, a corpus-based approach is used to describe the linguistic phenomena observed in language usage from the corpora of the FS’s speeches. With no adjustment, the data are used to verify and confirm the pre-set theoretical framework and taxonomy of this study (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001: 84). In fact, the use of the corpus-based approach provides additional supporting materials to the explanations and assumptions of the illustrative samples as Tognii-Bonelli states:

In this case, however, corpus evidence is brought in as an extra bonus rather than as a determining factor with respect to the analysis, which is still carried out according to pre-existing categories; although it is used to refine such

categories, it is never really in a position to challenge them as there is no claim made that they arise directly from the data (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001: 66).

When using a corpus-based approach for examining each instance of hedges and intensifiers, this study makes use of the Concord function in the application of WordSmith Version 5 to enable the examination of the lexical collocations, clusters, and semantic preferences of the most frequent hedges and intensifiers.

5.6.1 The corpora

The three corpora only contain the speeches of FS. All his speeches during 2003-2007 were collected as the data for analysis. All transcripts for this analysis come from a publicly available government website. They are authentic data because they are not produced for research purposes (Channell, 1994: 38) or verbal behaviours deliberately made through experimental procedures and instruments such as role plays or discourse completion tests (DCT). As such, these data are used to understand the semantic and pragmatic phenomenon of hedges and intensifiers in his speeches.

As explained in the previous section, the texts are highly monologue type scripted public speeches and the aspects of interaction with the audience are not seen in the speeches. The period studied is July 2003 to March 2007. Throughout this period, Hong Kong had encountered economic downturns as well upturns. Since Hong Kong has experienced economic volatility, the Government had to look for ways of dealing with them in order to maintain a healthy economy. Before implementing measures, the FS might obtain opinions from the public. Through his public speeches, the FS can begin his consultation exercise by providing more information about the government's plans to strengthen the financial sector or the allocation of financial resources among different bureaux such as health care and education. Likewise, positive and encouraging messages had to be conveyed in some speeches when he was invited to be the honourable guest at events.

As stated before, all speeches of the FS are studied. When describing the "external criteria" adopted in compiling a corpus, Sinclair (2004b: 2) states that "a

corpus should be designed and built by an expert in the communicative patterns of the communities who use the language that the corpus will mirror". He further states, "the contents of a corpus should be selected without regard for the language they contain, but according to their communicative function in the community in which they arise" (ibid.). Following the "external criteria" grouping process and the theoretical research approach of Biber's (1994) study, the speeches of this study were grouped into three corpora without first identifying the characteristic of the linguistic features of the corpora. The grouping was based on the situations, purposes and functions of the speeches. The three corpora are ordinary speeches, business speeches and budget speeches. The corpus of ordinary speeches, composing 85,934 words, is made up of 81 speeches in all. Only speeches longer than 300 words were included to ensure there was a sufficient amount of information in each speech. The speeches were made on various occasions depending on the purposes of the events. The presumed audience was described as the distinguished guests of the event.³¹ In view of the fact that the thematic purposes of each occasion were different, some of the speeches pertained to the economic outlook or financial matters of Hong Kong, but some did not. They were given just for the purposes of the events, although business or economic matters might have been touched slightly. Therefore the corpus of ordinary speeches was sub-categorized into the corpus of ordinary speeches (CORDS) which were speeches made in such events as inaugural ceremony of a symposium or business programme, a gala dinner and presentation of awards for services and competitions, or celebration of anniversary or awards. The corpus of business speeches (CBUSS) comprised speeches made in business luncheon meetings with different professional associations, overseas business speeches for the promotion of Hong Kong business, or meetings with journalists to explain the highlights of the annual budgets, and so on. The CORDS consists of 49 speeches with 29,913 words; the CBUSS consists of 56,021 words from 32 speeches.

³¹ Mentioned in the email of the Financial Secretary Treasury Bureaux on 19th Nov 2009

In view of the different nature of the budget speeches, they were separated from the ordinary speeches. In the corpus of budget speeches (CBUDS), there were four speeches from 2004 to 2007, making a total of 43,402 words. They were presented in the Legislative Council, describing the economic performance and the outlook of the financial situation in Hong Kong and were mainly used to convince the councillors and the public to support the budgets. CORDS are evocative speeches as they are ceremonial and inspiring in nature. The nature of both CBUSS and CBUDS are persuasive and informative because they have the purposes of informing and persuading the audience. As the main purpose of the study is to investigate the linguistic features of the speeches, any statistical figures and numerical tables in the three corpora are excluded in the words counted.

The software tool Wmatrix (Piao et al., 2005; Rayson, 2005) is also used to validate the separation of the speeches into three corpora.

Wmatrix is an online integrated corpus linguistic programme that makes use of part-of-speech (POS) and semantic tagging, frequency profiles and concordances to identify the significant concepts in the text. Part-of-speech (using CLAWS [the Constituent Likelihood Automatic Word-tagging System] tagger) annotation is used to extract different word classes from the text. The semantic analysis (semantic content and word sense tagger) is to group related words and multi-word expressions into different conceptual categories and word-sense. The semantic content component in the UCREL³² Semantic Analysis System (or USAS) consists of 21 major semantic fields.

³² University Centre for Computer Corpus Research on Language (<http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/usas/>).

Table 6: 21 Major semantic fields of in Wmatrix

A General and abstract terms	B The body and the individual	C Arts and crafts	E Emotion
F Food and farming	G Government and the public domain	H Architecture, buildings, houses and the home	I Money and commerce in industry
K Entertainment, sports and games	L Life and living things	M Movement, location, travel and transport	N Numbers and measurement
O Substances, materials, objects and equipment	P Education	Q Language and communication	S Social actions, states and processes
T Time	W The world and our environment	X Psychological actions, states and processes	Y Science and technology
Z Names and grammatical words			

(<http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/usas/>)

Within the 21 major semantic fields, there are 232 semantic sub-categories and 453 tagsets. Part of the tagsets in the semantic field A of General and Abstracts Terms are shown below.

- A13 Degree
 - A13.1 Degree: Non: specific
 - A13.2 Degree: Maximizers
 - A13.3 Degree: Boosters
 - A13.4 Degree: Approximators
 - A13.5 Degree: Compromisers
 - A13.6 Degree: Diminishers
 - A13.7 Degree: Minimizers
- A14 Exclusiviers/particularizers (<http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/usas/>)

Using the tagsets of A13 and A14, the semantic categories of the three corpora are examined in this study because they belong to the classifications of hedges and intensifiers in Quirk et al.'s (1985) framework. One of the features of Wmatrix is the statistical profiling analysis of the study corpus when compared with a reference corpus. In this study, the study corpus is the three FS's corpora and the reference corpus is the spoken section of the HKFSC.

5.6.2 Data analysis methods

Speeches were downloaded from the Hong Kong Government public website. The external criteria approach, which is judged from topics and subject matters of the speeches, is the main criterion to group all speeches into three different files. In order to analyse the data statistically, the speeches were converted into text files. Peripheral items such as tables, figures, appendices and bibliographies were removed from the text files of all speeches. Statistically, the text files were analysed using WordSmith Version 5 (WS) and Wmatrix. WS was used to search for lexical hedges and intensifiers. The search was based on a list of items adopted from previous studies, particularly from Hyland (1998a), Varttala (2001), and Lorenz (1999). These items are shown in Appendix I and II. Specifically, the following steps were taken.

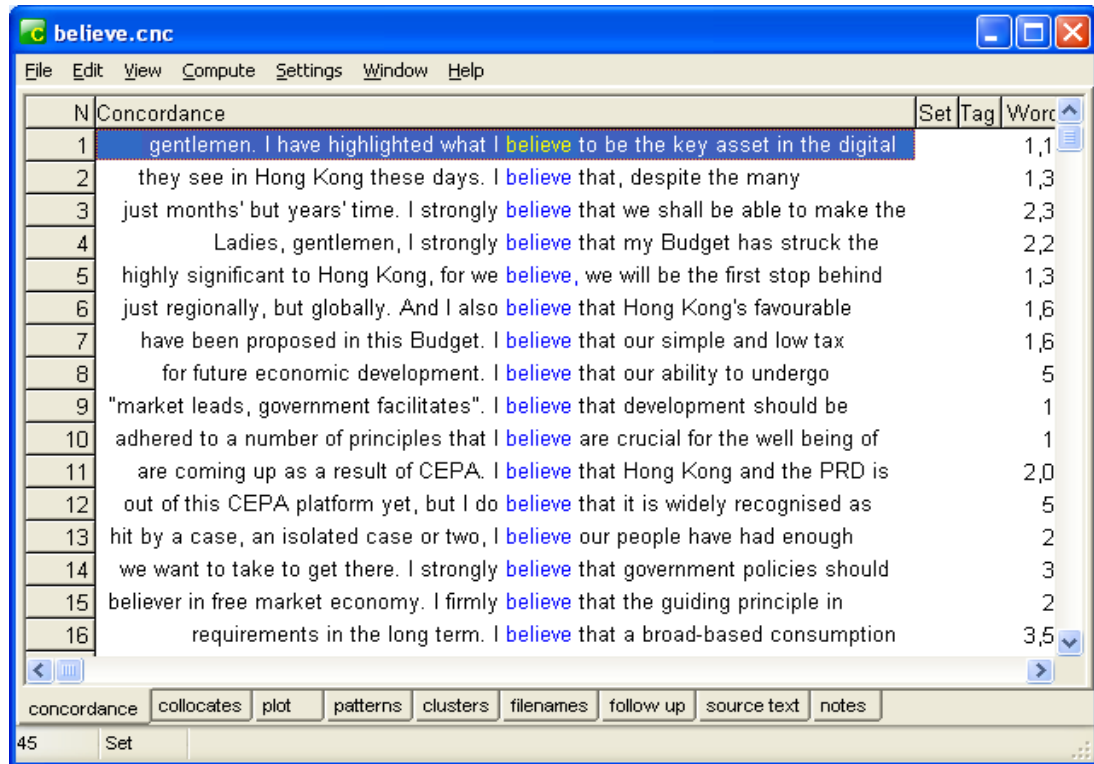
1. Frequency comparison of the sub-division of A13 and A14 of the three corpora and the spoken section of HKFSC

The three corpora and the spoken section of HKFSC were uploaded to the Wmatrix web server, their POS and word-senses (semantic contents) are tagged by CLAWS and USAS. Wmatrix arranged the words and multiword expressions (MWE) in the corpus to be grouped under the broadly defined top 21 semantic fields or their sub-divisions. The rankings, tagsets, frequencies, percentage and examples of each semantic field were generated. The frequency profiles among the three corpora and with the HKFSC were statistically compared. As such, the semantic level (to see key concepts) and keywords (to see the key word classes) could be compared. The log-likelihood statistic function was also used to show the most significant key items since the results were sorted by their LL (log-likelihood) value order and these were compared across the corpora. The semantic categories of sub-divisions A13 and A14 were analysed.

2. Production of concordance lines for the target hedges and intensifiers

The three corpora were uploaded to WS individually. The search item was loaded into WS to produce the frequency counts and concordance lines in each corpus. The hedges and intensifiers found in the above steps were carefully examined in contexts of use. Every word or phrase expressing a hedging or intensification function was counted and analyzed. The judgments rested on close contextual scrutiny and estimations concerning whether the devices perform hedging or intensification functions. Homographs, for example, *May* as in the month, were excluded. Each hedge and intensifier and a certain amount of the contextual information for later analysis were saved in WS format. In order to simplify the methodological problem, each word was treated as a separate example of a hedge or intensifier. Figure 3 below shows an example of the concordance lines of the word *believe* from the CBUSS corpus.

Figure 4: A screenshot of the concordance lines in WordSmith



The screenshot shows the WordSmith software window titled 'believe.cnc'. The menu bar includes File, Edit, View, Compute, Settings, Window, and Help. The main window displays a concordance table with columns for line number, text, and frequency. The word 'believe' is highlighted in blue in the text. The bottom of the window has a toolbar with buttons for concordance, collocates, plot, patterns, clusters, filenames, follow up, source text, and notes. The status bar at the bottom shows '45' and 'Set'.

N	Concordance	Set	Tag	Worc
1	gentlemen. I have highlighted what I believe to be the key asset in the digital			1,1
2	they see in Hong Kong these days. I believe that, despite the many			1,3
3	just months' but years' time. I strongly believe that we shall be able to make the			2,3
4	Ladies, gentlemen, I strongly believe that my Budget has struck the			2,2
5	highly significant to Hong Kong, for we believe, we will be the first stop behind			1,3
6	just regionally, but globally. And I also believe that Hong Kong's favourable			1,6
7	have been proposed in this Budget. I believe that our simple and low tax			1,6
8	for future economic development. I believe that our ability to undergo			5
9	"market leads, government facilitates". I believe that development should be			1
10	adhered to a number of principles that I believe are crucial for the well being of			1
11	are coming up as a result of CEPA. I believe that Hong Kong and the PRD is			2,0
12	out of this CEPA platform yet, but I do believe that it is widely recognised as			5
13	hit by a case, an isolated case or two, I believe our people have had enough			2
14	we want to take to get there. I strongly believe that government policies should			3
15	believer in free market economy. I firmly believe that the guiding principle in			2
16	requirements in the long term. I believe that a broad-based consumption			3,5

3. Normalization of frequencies of occurrence

Once the concordance lines were generated, they were saved for analysis. In the "View" manual of WS, the "Grow" function was used to expand the concordance lines so that more contexts could be seen. All individual concordance lines were examined to ascertain if they are hedges or intensifiers. Only those devices meeting the hedging or intensification criteria were counted and categorized to reflect their particular functions. Some were excluded if they were not regarded as hedges or intensifiers. A list of frequency use of each item of the hedges and intensifiers was compiled for individual corpus. The frequency of each item in the corpora was normalized to a common base of 10,000 words. Appendix I and II show the frequency lists of all the hedges and intensifiers examined in the corpora.

5.7 Statistical analysis

In order to find out whether the differences in frequency were statistically significant, statistical technique was used to examine whether the observed difference or relationship is due to chance and to determine the strength of the difference or relationship (Biber, Conrad, & Reppen, 2000). When making a decision to select a statistical test among others, one has to consider whether the data are normally distributed and the scale of measurement of the data (Oakes, 1998). As stated in previous sections, all the speeches were grouped into three files for ease of analysis. It was assumed that the data were not normally distributed among the speeches. A nonparametric test is usually required where there is no assumption on the distribution of data. Examples of nonparametric tests are the Mann-Whitney U or Wilcoxon signed-rank test, Wilcoxon rank sum test, and Chi-square test, and so on. The Chi-square test was chosen in this study as nominal variables³³ are involved. It is used to compare the frequency distributions in two or more groups (Romer, 2005) and cater for more than two categories (Healey, 2007).

The frequencies of the seven types of hedge and five types of intensifier were transferred to SPSS readable format. The total number of instances of each category of hedges and intensifiers were split into hedges and non-hedges, intensifiers and non-intensifiers in each of the three files. In other words, a contingency table containing 2 rows and 3 columns was formed. With the use of 2x3 crosstabs analysis function in SPSS version 16, the relative proportion of each category of hedges and intensifiers was analysed to determine whether the differences found among the three corpora were statistically significant. The final probability level was reported using a *p*-value which was interpreted in terms of the probability level less than some pre-defined threshold levels such as 0.05, 0.01, 0.001, and so on. The *p*-value is to find out the likelihood of an error, i.e. one concludes incorrectly that there is a

³³ A nominal variable “has values which have no numerical value. As a result, the order or sequence of nominal variables is not prescribed (http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/nominal_variable). For example: gender and occupation are nominal variables.

difference among the groups but in fact, they are the same. For instance, the p -value of 0.01 means that there is only one chance out of one hundred that the difference observed is due to chance. The smaller the p -value, the less likely that the observed difference was due to chance, i.e. the p -value of 0.001 has a higher significant level than a p -value of 0.01 (Coolican, 1990: 174).

However, Chi-square test has two limitations. Firstly, Chi-square test only indicates that there is a significant relationship between variables, but it does not indicate how significant and important it is. To measure the strength of the relationship among the variables, Cramer's V was used as a post-test to determine the magnitude of the effect of the association after the Chi-square test had determined the significance (Cramer, 1998). The results of Cramer's V vary between 0 and 1. For example, if the finding of the relationship of modal auxiliaries is small, it means that the frequency of the modals obtained in a corpus may not have the same frequency of the modals in the other two corpora. The following table gives an indication the effect of Cramer's V results. It is noted that the results and their dividing points are arbitrary³⁴ and merely provide an indication of the strength of association.

Table 7: An interpretation of the values of Cramer's V

Results of Cramer's V*	Effect size of the association between variables
$0.07 < V < 0.21$	Small effect
$0.21 < V < 0.50$	Medium effect
$V > 0.35$	High effect

(The above table is adopted from
www.psy.plymouth.ac.uk/teaching/stage1/psy145)

*DF=2 as the contingency table is 2 rows multiplied by 3 columns

³⁴ The numerical values and the descriptions in Table 7 are "general guidelines only for interpreting the value of measures of association for nominally measured variable" (Healey 2007: 316). Other measuring guidelines are available, for example, Healey (2007, 316).

The second limitation is that a Chi-square test only reports a significant relationship between variables, but it does not indicate “where in a contingency table the important discrepancies are” (Siegel & Catellan, 1988: 194). In other words, the result of a Chi-square test does not show which corpus in the contingency table caused the significance. From the full list of hedges and intensifiers, it was observed that the FS uses higher frequency of intensifiers in CORDS and higher frequency of hedges in CBUDS. In order to find out whether these two corpora have caused the statistical difference, another statistical calculation, relative risk (“RR”) was applied. RR is “a ratio of the probability of the event occurring in the exposed group versus a non-exposed group” (www.wikipedia.org/wiki). The three corpora were re-grouped three times. The frequency number of each category of hedges was re-grouped into CBUDS and non-CBUDS, CORDS and non-CORDS, and CBUSS and non-CBUSS. In each grouping, the RR was calculated for each category. For example, with a 95% confidence interval, if the RR of the modal auxiliaries in CBUDS is 1.30, this means that the number of frequency of modals auxiliaries in CBUDS is 1.30 times greater than non-CBUDS. If the overall RR in CBUDS is 1.20, it means the number of frequency of all the hedges in CBUDS is 1.20 times greater than non CBUDS. Likewise, the frequency number of each category of intensifiers was re-grouped into CORDS and non-CORDS, CBUSS and non-CBUSS, and CBUDS and non-CBUDS. In each grouping, the RR of each category and the RR of the overall hedges and intensifiers were also calculated.

5.8 Qualitative analysis

With reference to the particulars of the speeches, two examples of each category of hedge and intensifier were displayed and analysed. The examination of various kinds provides an insight into the possible contextual interpretations as to why the lexical items are regarded as hedges or intensifiers. Care was taken to consider the impact of subjective views and judgments on the decisions regarding what was considered as a hedge or an intensifier in each context. For example, some instances on the use of *will* are regarded as a hedge in this study because of the view that *will* may refer to futurity which has an element of uncertainty or doubt in nature

(Hyland, 1998a: 116). For example, the following was a speech given by the FS at the opening ceremony of the "3rd Hong Kong Tourism Symposium: Quality and Diversity" at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre on March 18, 2004.

Extract

The Hong Kong Tourism Board forecasts that we *will* receive more than 20 million visitors, a 30% increase over last year.

The prospect of receiving 20 million visitors was only a prediction by the FS when he gave the speech in March 2004. Future event is uncertain in nature and, therefore *will* in this example is counted as a hedge as it refers to the tentative judgment of the FS about future events.

5.9 Exploration of syntactic hedges and intensifiers

In addition to understanding the individual hedge or intensifier in the corpora, this study also explores other forms used by the FS for hedging or intensifying purposes. For example, the use of if-clause, agentless passive, and nominalization is for hedging functions. The use of *I know*, *will*, and *uphold* is for intensifying purposes. Also, there are instances where the meaning of hedging and intensification may be reflected in a combination of two, three or more words. For example, a modal auxiliary combined with a lexical verb with a hedging content (e.g. *it would suggest*) is treated as two separate instances of hedges. Likewise, there are phrases which are made up by several individual intensifiers. For example, an adverb together with a lexical verb with intensification content (e.g. *I am absolutely delighted...*), is treated as two separate instances of intensifiers. Recognizing the existence of two or more hedging or intensification items in one sentence, they are termed as compound hedges or intensifiers because they add further hedging or intensification force to the utterances. It is also acknowledged that the instances of these compound items are also counted and therefore they may inflate the total frequencies of the hedges and intensifiers.

5.10 Exploration of collocates, clusters and semantic preferences

With reference to Sinclair's (1992, 2004a) categories of co-selection, this study also examines the collocates, clusters, and semantic preferences of the most frequent items of each category of hedges and intensifiers. The "Concordance" function in WS was used to extract the concordance lines, collocates and clusters of the most frequent items. The frequencies of the collocations and clusters of these targeted words were also obtained. The Mutual Information (MI) value in WS was also used to identify whether the two words in a collocation "co-occur by chance or they are co-selected by the speaker or writer and so their association is significant" (Cheng, 2012: 94). Phrasal items used as hedges and intensifiers were excluded in this part of the exercise because MI values cannot be produced in WS when the node is greater than one word. Cheng (2006) states that through the examination of the concordance entries, patterns of co-text along with the syntagmatic dimensions were identified. The concordance entries of the most frequent hedges and intensifiers were checked manually to find out the associated co-texts. The recurrent patterns which belong to a certain semantic fields provide evidence of a particular semantic preference. For example, Stubbs (2001b: 449) defines semantic preference as "a lexical set of frequently occurring collocates that share the semantic feature", i.e. they belong to the same lexical field. He cites an example that the adjective "large" often co-occurs with words for "quantities and sizes" such as "number", "scale", and "amount" (Stubbs, 2001a: 65).

In summary, following a full and comprehensive description of hedges and intensifiers in the previous chapters, this chapter has given an explanation and justification of the methodological approaches adopted in this study. It then provided a description of the three corpora being used and an outline of the steps applied in conducting this empirical study. The next chapter describes the analytical framework used in this study.

Chapter 6 Analytical framework

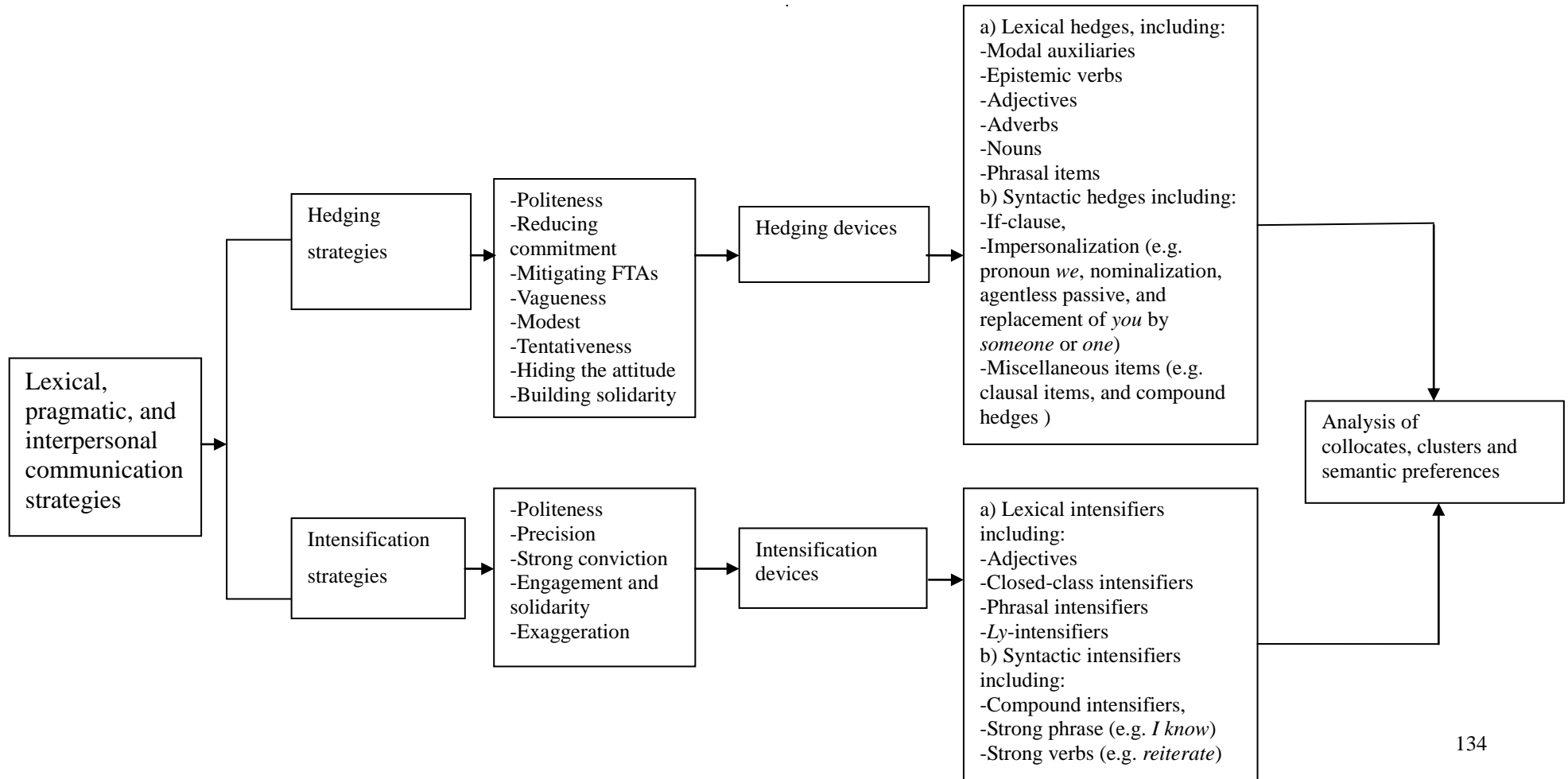
6.1 Introduction

To analyse both hedging and intensification phenomena in the FS's speeches, a feasible and practical analytical framework must be established. This study follows the definitions of Quirk et al. (1985: 590) and Grabe & Kaplan (1997: 160), that is hedges and intensifiers indicate the degree of certainty of the truth of a proposition but at both sides of the spectrum. That is hedges "have a lowering effect, denoting downward from an assumed norm" (Quirk & Greenbaum, 1973: 214; Quirk et al., 1985). As stated in section 1.1., they are expressions for indicating inexactitude or tentativeness, mitigating the assertiveness, modifying the degree of commitment or hiding the attitude or responsibility of the speaker, appearing to be modest, mitigating FTAs, and building solidarity (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Channell, 1994; Hyland, 1998a; Hyland, 1998c; Hyland, 2000a; Hyland, 2005a; Lakoff, 1972; Prince et al., 1982). Intensifiers have a heightening effect, denoting upward from an assumed norm (Grabe & Kaplan, 1997; Quirk et al., 1985). They are linguistic devices for exaggerating the actual claims or viewpoints, reinforcing the truth value of the proposition, intensifying the claims more certainly, or enhancing the politeness or showing interest (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Holmes, 1988a; Hyland, 1998c; Hyland, 2000a; Hyland, 2005a; Hyland & Milton, 1997; Quirk et al., 1985).

On the basis of the models and taxonomies developed by Quirk et al. (1985: 590), Grabe and Kaplan (1997), Hyland (1998a), Varttala (2001), and Lorenz (1999), an analytical framework for the analysis of hedges and intensifiers was developed in this study. The proposed categories were also based on the major lexico-grammatical and syntactic forms of hedges and intensifiers of these studies. Since, everything was subject to interpretation from different perspectives because the functions of hedging and intensifiers might be embedded in the context, contextual analysis was therefore necessary to decide whether any implicit hedges or intensifiers were embedded. The theoretical framework and the categories of hedges and intensifiers of this study are shown in Figure 5. Section 6.2 describes the development of the analytical

framework. Section 6.3 and 6.4 describe the taxonomies of hedges and intensifiers used in this study.

Figure 5: Analytical framework for the study of hedges and intensifiers



6.2 Development of the analytical framework

The proposed framework in this study adopts Quirk et al.'s (1985) framework which includes both amplifiers and downtoners. In order to develop a broader classification of hedges and intensifiers, some categories of hedges used by Grabe & Kaplan (1997), Hyland (1998a: 160) and Varttala (2001) are adopted. Some categories of intensifiers used by Collins Cobuild English Grammar (1990), Maat (2007) and Lorenz (1999) are also adopted.

Taking into account the fact that there is no agreement on the notion of hedges/hedging and intensifiers and the interpretation of both notions typically depends on contexts and situations, strictly applying the categories of hedging and intensifiers of other studies to the analysis of the FSSs' speeches may not be applicable to this study. However, regardless of the complexity involved in analyzing these phenomena, some applications of previous studies can still provide a useful reference to develop the categories of hedges and intensifiers in this study. For example, Holmes (1988a) finds that the most common realization of epistemic modality in English is through lexical hedges. Butler (1990) and Palmer (1990) indicate that modal verbs are significant in their study of hedging. Also, this study shares the view of Hyland (1996a: 260; 1998a: 103) that epistemic modal auxiliaries, lexical verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and nouns are the common realizations of hedging. Grabe and Kaplan (1997) list three categories (markers of verbal hedging, makers of non-verbal hedging, and markers of intensification expressions) in their study on cross-cultural aspects of hedging and intensification.

With reference to the above studies, the categories of hedges are grouped into lexical hedges and syntactic hedges in this study. Lexical hedges are lexical words that realize epistemic modality in meaning, such as modal auxiliaries, certain lexical verbs, adjectives, adverbs, nouns, and phrasal items. Syntactic hedges are "other forms beyond the prototypical ones that may be regarded as hedges in certain contexts" (Varttala, 2001: 25). For instance, a speaker uses impersonal expressions to hedge commitment to the proposition, or uses if-conditional sentences to hedge the assertiveness.

The categories of intensifiers are mainly referenced from Maat's (2007) study of intensifying adjectives, quantifiers, comparative and superlative degrees, adverbs,

numeral, and modal intensifiers, Salager-Meyer's (1994: 154-155) study of compound intensifiers, the emphasizing adjectives mentioned by Collins Cobuild English Grammar (1990: 69), and Lorenz's (1999) classification. Lorenz (1999: 95-123) categorises intensifiers into closed-class intensifiers, phrasal intensifiers, open-class *ly*-items, and the semantic feature of copying. The category of semantic feature of copying is when the adverb duplicates the intensification meaning by collocating with an adjective that also has an intensification meaning. Since the analysis of compound intensifiers in this study covers the meaning of semantic feature of copying, therefore this category is not included in this study. To be in line with hedges, this study also groups intensifiers into either lexical or syntactic intensifiers.

The most frequent hedges and intensifiers are further examined in terms of collocations, clusters and semantic preferences based on Sinclair's (1996, 2004a) model of an extended unit of meaning.

In summary, due to the lack of uniform definitions for hedges and intensifiers, the analytical framework and categories in this study are mainly developed from the taxonomies of the previous studies mentioned above. Contextual analysis was done on individual items to ensure they are performing a hedging or an intensification function. The taxonomies of hedges and intensifiers of this study are described below.

6.3 Taxonomy of hedges

In this study, the realization of hedges is in the forms of lexical and syntactic hedges. Lexical hedges have six types. Syntactic hedges include three types. Below are descriptions of each category of hedges.

6.3.1 Lexical hedges

1. Modal auxiliaries are one of the commonly means used to express modality in academic writing, with the prevalent examples of *may*, *might*, *can*, *could*, *would*, *should*, and *must*. For example, "It *might* be interesting to compare the..." (Hyland, 1994: 242).
2. Certain epistemic verbs are used to indicate acts such as doubting and evaluating rather than merely describing. For example, "Evidence *suggests* high emotional intelligence *could* buffer against the negative impact..." (together with *suggest* and *could*, it has a cumulative hedging effect) (Martin-Martin, 2008: 142).

3. Some probability adjectives such as *possible*, and *probable* are used to express epistemic meaning, for example, “One of our goals is exploratory; we seek to investigate *possible* relationships...” (Varttala, 2001: 135).
4. Certain nouns such as *assumption*, *claim*, *possibility*, *estimate*, and *suggestion* are associated with tentativeness in meaning, for example, “One cannot exclude a *possibility* that the activity of EF-2 Kinase in wheat germ....” (Hyland, 1996a: 272).
5. Some adverbs (which could be considered as non-verbal modals) such as *perhaps*, *possibly*, *probably*, *presumably*, *virtually*, and *apparently* are used to express epistemic modality, for example, “This is *probably* due to the fact that Greenland Eskimos consume...” (Salager-Meyer, 1997: 135).
6. Some phrasal items such as *sort of*, and *kind of* are also associated with hedging, for example, “Well Jonathan, let’s *sort of* consider the enormity of what you’ve just said” (Fetzer, 2009: 131).

6.3.2 Syntactic hedges

1. Conditional *if*-clauses or *unless*, for example, “yielding increased power to detect linkage *if* the affection status model is correct” (Varttala, 2001: 146).
2. Impersonalization, including:
 - a) Pronoun *we*, for example, “*we* still need to address the problem of the fiscal deficit” instead of “I still need...” (2007-2008 budget speech).
 - b) Nominalization, for example, “your good performance on the examinations” instead of “you performed well on the exam” (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 207).
 - c) Agentless passive, for example, “This argument is developed more fully” instead of “I developed the argument...” (Luukka & Markkanen, 1997: 175).
 - d) Replacement of *you* by indefinite such as *someone* or *one*, for example, “*one* shouldn’t do things like that” instead of “*you* shouldn’t do things...” (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 197).
3. Miscellaneous items include:

- a) Clausal items, for example, “*I know and however...*”
- b) Compound hedges, for example, “*I think that perhaps you should...*”
(Salager-Meyer, 1997: 135)

6.4 Taxonomy of intensifiers

In this study, the realizations of intensifiers are also grouped into lexical and syntactic intensifiers. Below are the categories of both items.

6.4.1 Lexical intensifiers

1. Adjective intensifiers such as *absolute* and *complete* (Collins Cobuild English Grammar, 1991: 69)
2. Closed-class intensifiers such as *very* and *most* (Lorenz, 1999: 63).
3. Phrasal intensifiers such as *a great deal* and *as much as* (Lorenz, 1999: 74).
4. Open-class intensifiers are all ending in *ly*. Open-class *ly*-intensifiers are further divided into:
 - a. “Scalar” intensifiers are adjective modifiers expressing the notion of degree (e.g. *completely*, and *absolutely*).
 - b. “Modal” intensifiers assess the truth value of speaker’s comments on the matter under discussion (e.g. *truly*, and *genuinely*).
 - c. “Evaluative” intensifiers reflect the “excessive” and “mostly emotive” judgments of the speakers (e.g. *remarkably*, and *seriously*).
 - d. “Comparative” intensifiers explicitly or implicitly express a meaning of “comparison between the referent and its peers (e.g. *especially*, *extraordinarily*, and *particularly*).

6.4.2 Syntactic intensifiers

Syntactic intensifiers include strong modals (e.g. *will*), strong verbs (*uphold*, *reiterate*), phrases (e.g. *I know*), and compound intensifiers which are phrases made up of two or several intensifier items (e.g. *firmly confident*).

To summarise, the established categories of hedges and intensifiers is adopted to fulfil the functions as mentioned in Chapter 2 and 3. In this study, the hedges are grouped into seven categories (modals, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, nouns, phrasal items, and syntactic items). Intensifiers are grouped into five categories (adjectives, closed-class intensifiers, phrasal intensifiers, *ly*-intensifiers, and syntactic intensifiers). Admittedly, sometimes it is difficult to distinguish whether a particular hedge or intensifier is used for a specific function. Therefore, qualitative analysis is needed to identify the specific function of a particular hedge or intensifier.

The study of frequencies and functions of hedging and intensifying devices in a particular situational context provides insights into the FS's use of these language devices in his speeches. Quantitatively, the frequency of a particular hedge or intensifier can be compared among the CORDS, CBUSS and CBUDS to determine its prevalence. Qualitative analysis highlights how a hedging or an intensifying device is used in a particular communicative context. This avoids simply identifying examples from the corpora to "crudely squeeze" (Sinclair, 2001: 340) them into a framework. The next chapter describes the findings.

Chapter 7 Hedges: Findings and discussion

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the results of the data analysis of hedges are presented. The results address the research questions of: 1) what are the relative frequencies of hedges; 2) what are the relative frequencies of the hedges and intensifiers when compared with the spoken section of the HKFSC³⁵; 3) what are the variations in the forms of hedges.

Firstly, Section 7.2 is the semantic fields comparison among the three corpora in Wmatrix. Section 7.3 is a frequency comparison in Wmatrix in the sub-divisions of A13 and A14 between the three corpora and the HKFSC. Section 7.4 is a frequency comparison of the seven categories of hedges among the three corpora. A statistical analysis in the frequency differences is discussed in Section 7.5. Section 7.6 is the qualitative analysis of the seven categories of hedges based on the logic, semantic, pragmatic, and interpersonal perspectives. Section 7.7 is a summary of the findings of this chapter.

7.2 Semantic fields comparison among the corpora in Wmatrix

As stated in Chapter 5, the three corpora were divided manually according to their communicative purposes. When the three corpora and the spoken section of the HKFSC were uploaded to Wmatrix, the corpora were automatically annotated, the POS tagged by CLAWS and semantically tagged by USAS. For this study, only the frequency of the 20 most frequent semantic sub-categories of the 21 semantic fields, the tagsets of Degree (A13) (including its sub-divisions A13.1, A13.2, A13.3, A13.4, A13.5, A13.6, and A13.7) and Exclusivizers/particularizers (A14) in the semantic field of General and Abstract Term, and their most frequent keywords are produced for comparison. The tagsets of A13 and A14 are regarded as hedges and intensifiers respectively.

³⁵ The comparison is done in Wmatrix which include both hedges and intensifiers in the tagsets of A13 and A14.

Table 8: Top 20 sub-categories of the semantic fields and frequencies in the corpora

	CORDS				CBUSS				CBUDS			
Rank	Semantic Field	Tagset	Frequency	%	Semantic Field	Tagset	Frequency	%	Semantic Field	Tagset	Frequency	%
1	Grammatical bin	Z5	8517	31.0	Grammatical bin	Z5	16073	31.4	Grammatical bin	Z5	11755	31.4
2	Pronouns	Z8	1838	6.7	Pronouns	Z8	3481	6.8	Pronouns	Z8	2005	5.4
3	Personal names	Z1	717	2.6	Existing	A3+	1212	2.4	Numbers	N1	960	2.6
4	Existing	A3+	677	2.5	Personal names	Z1	879	1.7	Money and pay	I1.1	665	1.8
5	Location and direction	M6	512	2.0	Unmatched	Z99	866	1.7	Helping	S8+	643	1.7
6	Unmatched	Z99	414	1.5	Location and direction	M6	863	1.7	Time: Future	T1.1.3	621	1.7
7	Helping	S8+	334	1.2	Business: Generally	I2.1	854	1.7	Government	G1.1	587	1.6
8	Numbers	N1	331	1.2	Money and pay	I1.1	853	1.7	Unmatched	Z99	555	1.5
9	Business: Generally	I2.1	324	1.2	Helping	S8+	735	1.4	Location and direction	M6	545	1.5
10	Time: Period	T1.3	316	1.2	General actions/making	A1.1.1	730	1.4	Existing	A3+	541	1.5
11	Belonging to a group	S5+	310	1.1	Places	M7	696	1.4	Money generally	I1	530	1.4
12	Places	M7	298	1.1	Numbers	N1	616	1.2	General actions/making	A1.1.1	512	1.4
13	Geographical names	Z2	293	1.1	Likely	A7+	547	1.1	Business: Generally	I2.1	479	1.3
14	General actions/making	A1.1.1	292	1.1	Business: Selling	I2.2	519	1.0	Wanted	X7+	414	1.1
15	Evaluation: Good	A5.1+	287	1.1	Geographical names	Z2	518	1.0	Getting and possession	A9+	413	1.1
16	In power	S7.1+	274	1.0	Money generally	I1	507	1.0	Belonging to a group	S5+	406	1.1
17	Business: Selling	I2.2	271	1.0	Belonging to a group	S5+	506	1.0	Change	A2.1+	401	1.1
18	Likely	A7+	255	0.9	Time: Future	T1.1.3	477	0.9	Time: Period	T1.3	394	1.1
19	Education in general	P1	247	0.9	Geographical terms	W3	475	0.9	Quantities: many/much(++)	N5++	384	1.0
20	Moving, coming and going	M1	244	0.9	Getting and possession	A9+	467	0.9	Personal names	Z1	381	1.0

The top 20 sub-categories and their frequencies in each corpus are shown in Table 8. When the 20 most frequent semantic sub-categories among the three corpora are compared, differences are seen. There are five sub-categories in CORDS (time-period; evaluation-good; in power, education in general; moving-coming and going) which are different from the five sub-categories in CBUSS (money and pay; money generally, time-future; geographical terms; getting and possession). Other than the grammatical bin and pronouns, the rankings of the 18 sub-categories are different. There are five different sub-categories in CBUSS (places; likely; business selling; geographical names; geographical terms) when compared with CBUDS (government; wanted; change; time-period; quantities-many/much (++)). It is also noted that four sub-categories (government; wanted; change; quantities-many/much (++) in CBUDS neither appear in CORDS nor CBUSS. There are four sub-categories (money and pay; money generally; time-future; getting and possession) which appear in both CBUSS and CBUDS but not in CORDS. In view of these differences, it was considered justified to group the speeches into three different corpora for analysis.

7.3 Frequency comparison of tagsets A13 and A14 between the corpora and HKFSC in Wmatrix

Frequency comparisons of the tagsets of A13 and A14 were performed among the three corpora and then the three corpora were compared individually with the spoken section HKFSC. For each comparison, the log-likelihood (LL) value of each item in the sub-divisions of A13 and A14 was generated. When an item in the study corpus is relatively more or less frequent than in the reference corpus, a plus sign/minus sign is shown against the reference corpus. The significance of the log-likelihood statistics is at a threshold value of 6.63 for $p < 0.01$ (Rayson, 2005). Items with a value at or above this cut-off point are considered statistically significant. Table 9 below shows the frequencies of A13 and A14 for the comparison among the three corpora. Table 10 is the frequency comparison between the corpora and the HKFSC. Table 11 is the comparison of the words used in A13 and A14 in the corpora and in HKFSC.

Table 9: Frequency comparison of the sub-divisions of A13 and A14 among the three corpora

	CORDS vs CBUSS					CORDS vs CBUDS					CBUSS vs CBUDS					
Item	01	%1	02	%2	LL	01	%1	02	%2	LL	01	%1	02	%2	LL	Semantic Tagset
A13	4	0.01	24	0.05-	5.95	4	0.01	9	0.02-	0.70	24	0.05	9	0.02+	3.21	Degree
A13.1	15	0.06	40	0.08-	1.39	15	0.06	12	0.03+	2.00	40	0.08	12	0.03+	8.46	Degree: Non:specific
A13.2	70	0.26	107	0.21+	1.81	70	0.26	74	0.20+	2.55	107	0.21	74	0.20+	0.15	Degree: Maximizers
A13.3	182	0.67	368	0.72-	0.62	182	0.67	149	0.40+	22.50	368	0.72	149	0.40+	40.16	Degree: Boosters
A13.3+++											2	0.00	3	0.01-	0.63	Degree: boosters Superlatives
A13.4	25	0.09	87	0.17-	8.12	25	0.09	121	0.32-	41.54	87	0.17	121	0.32-	21.14	Degree: Approximators
A13.5	4	0.01	14	0.03-	1.33	4	0.01	8	0.02-	0.38	14	0.03	8	0.02+	0.32	Degree: Compromisers
A13.6	7	0.03	26	0.05-	2.87	7	0.03	8	0.02+	0.13	26	0.05	8	0.02+	5.26	Degree: Diminishers
A13.7	7	0.03	14	0.03-	0.02	7	0.03	2	0.01+	4.79	14	0.03	2	0.01+	6.78	Degree: Minimizers
A14	55	0.20	122	0.24-	1.04	55	0.20	33	0.09+	14.93	122	0.24	33	0.09+	30.45	Exclusivizers/ particularizers

Table 10: Frequency comparison of the sub-divisions of A13 and A14 between each corpus and HKFSC and the combined corpus³⁶ versus HKFSC

	CORDS vs HKFSC					CBUSS vs HKFSC					CBUDS vs HKFSC					COMBINED vs HKFSC					
Item	01	%1	02	%2	LL	01	%1	02	%2	LL	01	%1	02	%2	LL	01	%1	02	%2	LL	Semantic Tagset
A13	5	0.02	319	0.06-	8.89	24	0.05	319	0.06-	0.69	9	0.02	319	0.06-	8.19	38	0.03	319	0.06-	10.93	Degree
A13.1	15	0.06	643	0.11-	9.36	40	0.08	643	0.11-	5.49	12	0.03	643	0.11-	28.72	67	0.06	643	0.11-	31.93	Degree: Non:specific
A13.2	70	0.26	1299	0.23+	1.03	107	0.21	1299	0.23-	0.66	74	0.20	1299	0.23-	1.41	251	0.22	1299	0.23-	0.44	Degree: Maximizers
A13.3	183	0.68	4484	0.79-	4.19	368	0.72	4484	0.79-	2.50	149	0.40	4484	0.79-	82.59	700	0.61	4484	0.79-	43.21	Degree: Boosters
A13.3+++	-	-	-	-	-	2	0.00	8	0.00+	1.37	3	0.01	8	0.00	4.86	5	0.00	8	0.00	3.45	Degree: boosters Superlatives
A13.4	25	0.09	985	0.17-	11.74	87	0.17	985	0.17-	0.01	121	0.32	985	0.17+	36.29	233	0.20	985	0.17+	4.48	Degree: Approximators
A13.5	4	0.01	427	0.07-	18.95	14	0.03	427	0.07-	18.94	8	0.02	427	0.07-	19.00	26	0.02	427	0.07-	50.90	Degree: Compromisers
A13.6	7	0.03	501	0.09-	15.89	26	0.05	501	0.09-	8.61	8	0.02	501	0.09-	25.85	41	0.04	501	0.09-	40.20	Degree: Diminishers
A13.7	7	0.03	211	0.04-	0.97	14	0.03	211	0.04-	1.27	2	0.01	211	0.04-	15.26	23	0.02	211	0.04-	9.35	Degree: Minimizers
A14	55	0.20	1295	0.23-	0.67	122	0.24	1295	0.23	0.31	33	0.09	1295	0.23-	39.31	210	0.18	1295	0.23-	9.29	Exclusivizers/ particularizers

³⁶ The average of CORD, CBUSS and CBUDS

In Table 9, when CORDS was compared with CBUSS, it shows a lower frequency of use of approximators (LL 8.12). When compared with CBUDS, a lower frequency of approximators (LL 41.54), a higher frequency of boosters (LL 22.50) and exclusivizers/particularizers (LL 14.93) are seen. When CBUSS was compared with CBUDS, a lower frequency of use of approximators (LL 21.14), a higher frequency of use of non-specific items (LL 8.46), boosters (LL 40.16), minimizers (LL 6.78) and exclusivizers/particularizers (LL 30.45) are also shown. It is noted that the only sub-division of approximators is significant across the three comparisons (LL 8.12; LL 41.54; LL 21.14). It shows that the FS uses more approximators in CBUDS (0.32%) than the other two corpora (0.09%, 0.17%) respectively. One possible factor that contributed to this finding is that the CBUDS are high-stakes speeches and many financial data need to be presented. As these data are more important and the consequences may affect the financial decisions of the audience, public and the market players. In order to protect the FS himself from being challenged for the inaccuracy of the data at a later stage, he may use approximators to hedge his claims. Another possible reason is that the budgets are making predictions about the future, the FS may have no precise data when preparing the budget speeches. The use of approximators allows him to adhere to the maxim of quality and quantity.

In Table 10, when the individual corpus was compared with the relative frequency with HKFSC, a lower frequency of use of non-specific items (LL 9.36), approximators (LL 11.74), compromisers (LL 18.95) and diminishers (LL 15.89) is seen in CORDS. In CBUSS, a lower frequency of compromisers (LL 18.94) and diminishers (LL 8.61) is seen. In CBUDS, a lower frequency of use of non-specific items (LL 28.72), boosters (LL 82.59), compromisers (LL 19.00), diminishers (LL 25.85), minimizers (LL 15.26), and exclusivizers/particularizers (LL 39.31) is seen. It also has a higher frequency of approximators (LL 36.29).

When the combined corpus was compared with the HKFSC, the non-specific items, boosters, compromisers, diminishers, minimizers and exclusivizers/particularizers are also found to be significant. This indicates that the FS uses these items less frequently than other speakers do in the HKFSC. The differences the sub-divisions of maximizers and approximators are not significant. One likely explanation for the finding of the comparison between the combined corpus and the

HKFSC is that, in some speeches in HKFSC, the senior officers of the companies report the companies' performance, business strategies, and plans to the audience. The officers tend to use more intensifiers to stress the positive aspects of their company's results or performance rather than the negative ones. The use of intensifiers may help the officers to reinforce the wisdom, usefulness and advantages, and so on of their policy decisions in front of the stakeholders. Another plausible reason is that intensifiers can be used as promotional language (Maat, 2007). The use of intensifiers may help the officers to maximize the chance for promoting the positive publicity of their companies. One possible reason for using a higher frequency of hedges (compromisers, diminishers, and minimizers) in HKFSC is that, when presenting the future forecasts or plans, the utterances are basically softening, showing realistic, and appear more cautious for the avoidance of possible blame for overestimation and exaggeration of the company's future plans in front of the stakeholders. Another possible reason would be, in order to build a long term interpersonal relationship with the stakeholders, the frequent use of hedges can help the officers to show deference or to signal courtesy. The greater frequent use of hedges can also help the officers to act as humble servants, make careful business decisions to strive for the support and trust from the stakeholders when presenting company strategies.

Table 11: Comparison of the lexical words in the of semantic fields of A13 and A14 between the corpora and HKFSC

Semantic tag	Semantic category	CORDS		CBUSS		CBUDS		HKFSC	
		Freq. %	Examples of words	Freq. %	Examples of words	Freq %	Examples of words	Freq %	Examples of words
A13	Degree	0.01	Relatively, as	0.05	Relatively, as	0.02	Relatively, as	0.06	Relative, relatively, as
A13.1	Degree: non-specific	0.06	Degree, degrees, even	0.08	However, degree, even	0.03	Degree, even	0.11	However, degrees, degree, even
A13.2	Degree: Maximizers	0.26	All, all time, all together, entirely, largely, wholly, fully, total, most,	0.21	By and large, entirely, largely, predominantly, above-all, all, completely, mostly, absolutely, all time, mainly, fully, total, most	0.20	Absolutely, completely, drastically, largely, perfectly, thoroughly, all time, mainly, fully, most, total	0.23	Indefinitely, outright, overwhelmingly, totalled, drastically, thoroughly, all time, by and large, on the whole, principally, above all, altogether, perfectly, wholly, literally, most of all, primarily, predominantly, completely, mostly, totally, absolutely, mainly, all, entirely, largely, fully, total, most
A13.3	Degree: Boosters	0.67	A lot, deeply, enormously, extremely, far, more and more, nice and, profoundly, really abundant, by far, increasingly, more, so, strongly, greatly, heavily, long way, highly, much, very much, such a, particularly, more, indeed,	0.72	Appreciably, considerably, doubly, hugely, immensely, more so, tremendously, unmistakably, long way, overly, phenomenally, this, extremely, far, more and more, seriously, abundant, greatly, really, strongly, heavily, very much, highly,	0.40	Deeply, more and more, really, very much, abundantly, considerably, indeed, so, extremely, increasingly, much, remarkably, strongly, such a, abundant, highly, ultra, greatly, heavily, particularly, very, more	0.79	As anything, awfully, incredibly, intensely, singularly, to pieces, ultra, unmistakably, untold, verdant, dearly, mightily, nice and, profoundly, vastly, amply, any, appreciably, earnestly, eminently, grossly, phenomenally, fiercely, hugely, to a large extent, enormously,

			very		increasingly, such a, so, much, indeed, particularly, very, more,				exceedingly, exceptionally, doubly, immensely, this, tremendously, by far, that, overly, abundant, deeply, more so, remarkably, long way, seriously, considerably, more and more, strongly, heavily, a lot, greatly, extremely, far, very much, really, increasingly, such a, highly, so, much, indeed, particularly, very, more
A13.3+++					As far as possible	0.01	As far as possible	0.00	As far as possible
A13.4	Degree: Approximators	0.09	Almost, close to, fairly, or so, practically, virtually, around, as much as, closely, about, nearly	0.17	Approximated, approximately, as much as, fairly, in a way, more or less, practically, roughly, up to 10, virtual, close to, or so, virtually, closely, around, almost, nearly, about	0.32	Broadly, close to, roughly, almost, approximately, moderately, or so, closely, around, nearly, about	0.17	Approximated, moderately, near to, pretty much, round about, slender, approximately, something like, in the region of, nearer to, practically, more or less, just about, broadly, close to, in a way, virtual, fairly, a much as, roughly, virtually, or so, around, nearly, closely, closely, almost, about,
A13.5	Degree: Compromisers	0.01	Pretty, quite, rather,	0.03	Marginally, reasonably, rather, quite,	0.02	Reasonably, to a certain extent, quite, rather	0.07	Half way, in some way, to a point, to put it mildly, to an extent, to a certain extent, sufficiently, marginally, reasonably, pretty, rather, quite
A13.6	Degree: Diminishers	0.03	A bit, a little, less, merely, under, simply,	0.05	Partly, somewhat, to some extent, under, slightly, a bit,	0.02	Simply, under, slightly, less	0.09	Up to point, a bit of a, but, partially, a little bit, to some

					less, simply				extent, slightly, a bit, partly, merely, under somewhat, a little, less, simply,
A13.7	Degree: Minimizers	0.03	Little, at least, least	0.03	At all, least, at least	0.01	At least	0.04	In the slightest, to say the least, scarcely, barely, at all, hardly, little, least, at least
A14	Exclusivizers/ particularizers	0.20	Alone, notably, especially, only, just	0.24	Alone, purely, sheer, notably, overall, especially, only, just	0.09	Especially, alone, overall, just, only	0.23	Expressly, one bit, right down to, stark, exclusively, solely, it anything, purely, overall, sheer, notably, alone especially, only, just

Table 11 shows that, among the three corpora, there are differences in the use of semantic categories. CBUSS has the highest frequencies of A13.1 (0.08%), A13.3 (0.72%), A13.5 (0.03%), A13.6 (0.05%), and A14 (0.24%). CORDS has the highest frequency of A13.2 (0.26%). Both CORDS and CBUSS have the same frequency in A13.7 (0.03%). CBUDS has the highest frequency of A13.4 (0.32%). When adding the intensifiers together (including maximizers, boosters and exclusivizers/particularizers) in each corpus, CBUSS and CORDS have the similar frequency of 1.17% and 1.13% respectively, and CBUDS has the least frequency of 0.69%. When summing up the hedges (including approximators, compromisers, diminishers and minimizers) in each corpus, the highest frequency in using hedges is CBUDS (0.37%) and followed by CBUSS (0.28%) and CORDS (0.16%).

The use of lexical items is also different. For example, the maximizers (A13.2) such as *all together* and *wholly* are only used in CORDS. The boosters (A13.3) such as *appreciably*, *doubly*, *hugely*, *immensely*, *more so*, *tremendously*, *unmistakably*, *long way*, *overly*, *phenomenally*, and *seriously* are exclusively used in CBUSS. The approximators (A13.4) such as *broadly* and *moderately* are only used in CBUDS. Some semantic categories in the same tagsets are identical in all three corpora. For example, In A13.2 (maximizers), *all time*, *fully*, *total*, and *most* are identical. In A13.3 (boosters), over ten items are identical (*more and more*, *so*, *increasingly*, *strongly*, *greatly*, *heavily*, *much*, *very much*, *such a*, *very*, *more*, *particularly*, and *indeed*). In A13.4 (approximators), *close*, *or so*, *around*, *closely*, *about* and *nearly* are the examples of identical items found in the corpora. In A13.5, A13.6, and A13.7, two to three items are found identical among the three corpora. A possible reason is that similar financial issues may be discussed in all three corpora, although the main purpose of CORDS is ceremonial in nature. The FS may take the opportunity to update the audience about some economic or financial issues, which relate to the purpose of the events. The differences suggest that the purposes of the events, the topics under discussion may affect the frequency as well as semantic categories. For example, in the 2006-07 budget speech, the FS said, “I would propose to provide 1,800 additional hostel places, at a total cost of roughly \$350 million”. The use of *roughly* is to forecast the expenditure of a project. Forecast involves uncertainty. The use of *roughly* may withhold his commitment to an exact amount. However, *roughly* is not seen in CORDS and CBUSS. One possible reason in the use of *all together*

exclusively in CORDS is that the FS may want to intensify his appreciation to the success of the event or awardees. For example, in the inauguration ceremony of Photo Exhibition Celebrating the 60th Anniversary of Festival de Cannes, the FS said, “it is film that brings us *all together* this evening”. Another possible reason is that the FS is the honourable guest in presenting the awards in the ceremonial events, the use of *all together* helps to intensify the number of persons who receive awards.

When the three corpora were compared with the HKFSC, the total frequency of use of the hedging and intensifying categories is different. HKFSC has the total frequency of 0.37% (excluding A13.1) whereas CORDS, CBUSS and CBUDS have 0.16%, 0.28% and 0.37% respectively. An average of 0.27% is seen among the three corpora. In the intensifying categories, HKFSC has the total frequency of 1.25% whereas CORDS, CBUSS and CBUDS have 1.13%, 1.17% and 0.69% respectively. An average of 1% is seen. HKFSC also has a wider variety of semantic categories. This shows that a greater variety of discussion topics and the usual practices of the speakers in HKFSC may affect the frequency use as well as the semantic categories.

In sum, the frequency rankings and the semantic categories of the hedges and intensifiers in the semantic fields of A13 and A14 in the three corpora and the HKFSC corpus are discussed in Section 7.2 and 7.3. It must be noted that Wmatrix are designed for general English. It does not take into consideration the specific content, context and the understanding of their relationships in specialised discourse. Although it may not be able to perform an analysis with 100% of precision, it is still useful to provide a greater awareness on higher usage of some semantic categories for specific purposes. In this regard, the domain concepts of potential significant can be identified when compared with a reference corpus. For example, in the comparison among three different types of speeches, the FS uses more approximators in the budget speeches than the other two types of speeches. In the comparison between the combined corpus with the spoken section of the HKFSC, the FS only uses a higher frequency of approximators, but lower frequency of non-specific items, boosters, compromisers, diminishers, minimizers and exclusivizers/particularizers. The findings also indicate that speakers in HKFSC use a greater variety of linguistic forms. One plausible reason is that the speeches in HKFSC are given by a greater variety of speakers where the different speakers may have their preference in using different devices.

7.4 Frequency comparison of the hedges among the corpora

Following the compilation of the list of hedges as stated in Section 5.6.1 and 5.6.2., the following sections describe the results of the analyses of various lexical items, which perform hedging functions in the corpora. Table 12 below is a summary of the seven types of hedge in the corpora. Individual item and their frequencies are shown in Appendix I. The frequencies are compiled from the number of concordance lines of each item and after adjusting the number of instances by removing those not performing a hedging function.

Table 12: Comparison of the seven categories of hedge in the corpora

Ordinary Speeches (CORDS)	Relative frequencies per 10,000 words	Percent	Business Speeches (CBUSS)	Relative frequencies per 10,000 words	Percent	Budget Speeches (CBUDS)	Relative frequencies per 10,000 words	Percent
1. Modal Auxiliaries	59.51	41.88	1. Modal Auxiliaries	77.47	35.28	1. Modal Auxiliaries	88.01	36.35
2. Verbs			2. Verbs			2. Verbs		
-Speculative verbs	26.41		-Speculative verbs	39.27		-Speculative verbs	48.85	
-Deductive verbs	1.67		-Deductive verbs	3.75		-Deductive verbs	11.06	
-Evidential verbs	3.01		-Evidential verbs	9.10		-Evidential verbs	6.22	
2.Total verbs	31.09	21.88	2.Total verbs	52.12	23.74	2.Total verbs	66.13	27.31
3.Adverbs			3.Adverbs		3.Adverbs			
-Probability adverbs	2.01		-Probability adverbs	4.28		-Probability adverbs	0.69	
-Indefinite frequency adverbs	0.33		-Indefinite frequency adverbs	0.89		-Indefinite frequency adverbs	0.23	
-Indefinite degree adverbs	1.34		-Indefinite degree adverbs	2.51		-Indefinite degree adverbs	2.53	
-Approximate adverbs	14.04		-Approximate adverbs	27.49		-Approximate adverbs	36.86	
3. Total adverbs	17.72	12.47	3. Total adverbs	35.17	16.02	3. Total adverbs	40.32	16.65
4.Nouns			4.Syntactic Items	19.10		4.Nouns		
-Nonfactive nouns	1.34		NA			-Nonfactive nouns	8.06	
-Tentative cognition nouns	4.68		NA			-Tentative cognition nouns	6.91	
-Tentative likelihood nouns	5.68		NA			-Tentative likelihood nouns	3.69	
4.Total Nouns	11.70	8.24	4. Total syntactic items	19.10	8.70	4. Total Nouns	18.66	7.71
5.Adjectives			5. Nouns			5.Adjectives		

-Probability adjectives	0.33		-Nonfactive assertive nouns	3.39		-Probability adjectives	4.61	
-Indefinite frequency adjectives	1.00		-Tentative cognition	4.64		-Indefinite frequency adjectives	0.23	
-Indefinite degree adjectives	5.35		-Nouns of tentative likelihood	7.68		Indefinite degree adjectives	6.22	
-Approximate adjectives	1.67		NA	0		-Approximate adjectives	1.61	
5.Total Adjectives	8.35	5.89	5. Total nouns	15.71	7.15	5.Total Adjectives	12.67	5.23
6.Syntactic items	8.36		6.Adjectives			6.Syntactic items	12.44	
NA			-Probability adjectives	5.89		NA		
NA			-Indefinite frequency adjectives	3.04		NA		
NA			-Indefinite degree adjectives	4.64		NA		
NA			-Approximate adjectives	0.89		NA		
6. Total Syntactic	8.36	5.88	6.Total Adjectives	14.46	6.59	6.Total Syntactic	12.44	5.14
7.Phrasal items	5.35	3.76	7.Phrasal items	5.53	2.52	7.Phrasal items	3.92	1.62
Total	142.08	100.00		219.56	100.00		242.15	100.00
	23.54%			36.36%			40.10%	100.00%

Table 12 shows that the frequencies of hedging devices are different across the three corpora. With respect to the overall frequency, CBUDS has the highest frequency at 242.15 (40.10%). CBUSS has a frequency of 219.56 (36.36%), which is 3.74% less than CBUDS. CORDS has a total frequency of 142.08 (23.54%), which is 16.56% less than CBUDS. The results suggest that the FS tends to use a higher frequency of hedges in CBUDS when delivering budget speeches. Table 12 also shows the ranking of each category in the three corpora. The modal auxiliaries, epistemic verbs and adverbs are the first three rankings across the three corpora. The rankings of nouns, adjectives and syntactic item are the same in CORDS and CBUDS, showing at the fourth, fifth and sixth positions respectively. In CBUSS, the rankings are slightly different where syntactic hedges, nouns, and adjectives posit from the fourth to sixth respectively. Phrasal items rank seventh in all three corpora.

As shown in Appendix I, CBUDS has the highest frequency of modals showing at 88.01 per 10,000 words. CBUSS and CORDS have the frequencies of 77.47 and 59.51 respectively. Within the three types of epistemic verb in the corpora, speculative verbs have the highest frequency at 114.53. Deductive and evidential verbs have the

frequencies of 16.48 and 18.33 respectively. In the four types of adverb, approximate adverbs have the highest frequency at 78.40. Probability adverbs, indefinite frequency adverbs and indefinite degree adverbs have the frequencies of 6.98, 1.46 and 6.37 respectively. In the four types of adjective, indefinite degree adjectives have the highest frequency at 16.21. Probability adjectives, indefinite frequency adjectives, and approximate adjectives have the frequencies of 10.83, 4.27 and 4.18 respectively. In the three types of noun, nouns of tentative likelihood have the highest frequency at 17.05 followed by nonfactive assertive nouns and tentative cognition nouns with the frequencies of 12.79 and 16.23 respectively. CBUSS has the highest frequency of phrasal items at 5.53 followed by CORDS and CBUDS with the frequencies of 5.35 and 3.92 respectively. CBUSS has the highest frequency of syntactic hedges and with a frequency of 19.10. CBUDS and CORDS have the frequencies of 12.44 and 8.36 per 10,000 words respectively. The possible reasons of these results are discussed in qualitative analysis section of each category.

7.5 Statistical analysis of the frequency differences of the hedges in the corpora

The results suggest variations in the instances of hedges and the relative proportion of different categories of hedges among the three corpora. In order to test whether the relative frequencies of the seven types of hedge are statistically significant³⁷ among the three corpora, a Chi-square test in SPSS version 16 was performed. Using the 2X3 Crosstabs Analysis Function in SPSS, the data were processed and the results were generated. A summary of the results of the test is shown in Table 13 below. The significance of the test adopted in this study is reported for three probability levels (p value = 0.05, 0.01, and 0.001) suggested by Coolican (1990: 174) as stated in Section 5.7

³⁷ Statistically significant means that an observed pattern would likely continue to exist if taking another sample from the entire population and that pattern would be evident if the whole population is taken for study.

Table 13: Summary of p-value, effect size, strength association, RR and the CI of the hedges in the three corpora

Hedging devices		Statistical significant level (p-value)	Effect Size (Cramer V)	Strength association	Relative Risk ("RR") Between CBUDS and non-CBUDS	95% Confidence Interval ("CI")	Relative Risk ("RR") Between CORDS and non-CORDS	95% Confidence Interval ("CI")	Relative Risk ("RR") Between CBUSS and non-CBUSS	95% Confidence Interval ("CI")
1	Modal auxiliaries	0.000	0.012	Small association	1.236	1.088-1.404	0.725	0.617-0.852	1.014	0.895-1.149
2	Epistemic Verbs									
	-Speculative verbs	0.000	0.013	Small association	1.404	1.178-1.673	0.608	0.478-0.772	0.989	0.831-1.178
	-Deductive verbs	0.000	0.015	Small association	3.358	2.084-5.410	0.314	0.127-0.779	0.469	0.283-0.777
	-Evidential verbs	0.004	0.009	Small association	0.891	0.566-1.403	0.384	0.192-0.765	1.854	1.210-2.840
	Total of epistemic verbs	0.000	0.018	Small association	1.476	1.267-1.719	0.534	0.429-0.664	1.006	0.864-1.171
3	Adjectives									
	a. Probability adjectives	0.001	0.011	Small association	1.165	0.670-2.023	0.063	0.009-0.453	2.057	1.190-3.554
	b. Indefinite frequency adjectives	0.002	0.010	Small association	0.099	0.013-0.738	0.554	0.163-1.880	5.562	1.872-16.529
	c. Indefinite degree adjectives	0.564	0.003	Small association	1.273	0.785-2.064	1.003	0.574-1.755	0.791	0.486-1.288
	d. Approximate adjectives	0.511	0.003	Small association	1.386	0.528-3.641	1.385	0.488-3.931	0.545	0.192-1.548
	Total of adjectives	0.053	0.007	Small association	1.027	0.742-1.423	0.611	0.399-0.936	1.325	0.973-1.804
4	Epistemic adverbs									

	a. Probability adverbs	0.002	0.010	Small association	0.198	0.060-0.649	0.739	0.305-1.789	3.49	1.622-7.507
	b. Indefinite frequency adverbs	0.318	0.004	Small association	0.330	0.040-2.741	0.554	0.067-4.601	3.272	0.635-16.863
	c. Indefinite degree adverbs	0.491	0.003	Small association	1.210	0.572-2.562	0.532	0.185-1.528	1.221	0.590-2.530
	d. Approximate adverbs	0.000	0.016	Small association	1.616	1.312-1.991	0.445	0.322-0.613	0.998	0.809-1.230
	Total of adverbs	0.000	0.015	Small association	1.386	1.143-1.681	0.474	0.353-0.631	1.131	0.935-1.368
5	Noun									
	a. Nonfactive assertive nouns	0.000	0.013	Small association	3.013	1.781-5.098	0.246	0.089-0.680	0.638	0.368-1.103
	b. Tentative cognition nouns	0.257	0.005	Small association	1.485	0.925-2.384	0.831	0.463-1.492	0.773	0.476-1.256
	c. Nouns of tentative likelihood	0.036	0.007	Small association	0.528	0.304-0.916	0.958	0.58-1.642	1.705	1.084-2.684
	Total of nouns	0.065	0.006	Small association	1.304	0.985-1.726	0.688	0.478-0.990	0.993	0.753-1.309
6	Phrasal items	0.492	0.003	Small association	0.716	0.411-1.247	1.108	0.629-1.951	1.229	0.753-2.007
	Sub-total of lexical hedges	0.000	0.026	Small association	1.296	1.198-1.403	0.627	0.564-697	1.052	0.973-1.137
7	Syntactic hedges	0.000	0.012	Small association	0.810	0.590-1.111	0.516	0.339-0.786	1.773	1.326-2.370
	Total of hedges	0.000	0.027	Small association	1.257	1.165-1.357	0.619	0.559-0.686	1.091	1.012-1.175

The above table shows that the *p*-values of the modal auxiliaries (0.000), epistemic verbs (0.000), adverbs (0.000), and syntactic hedges (0.000) are less than 0.001, which means that significant differences exist in the three corpora. The *p*-values of adjectives (0.053), nouns (0.065), and phrasal items (0.492) are greater than 0.05, which means that there are no significant differences in the three corpora. The *p*-value for the total hedges is 0.000 represents that statistical difference in the total frequency of hedges used among the three corpora exists and it is less likely that the observed difference is due to chance.

In order to determine the effect size of each category in the three corpora, Cramer V in SPSS was used. Table 13 above shows the results of Cramer V for each hedging category. As it was a 2x3 contingency table, two degrees of freedom were used.³⁸ All the Cramer V values are smaller than or equal to 0.07, which mean that each category of hedges has a weak association among the variables.

From the frequency distribution list of the three corpora, it is observed that CBUDS has the highest frequencies of hedges among the three corpora. In order to test that the significant difference was mainly due to CBUDS, the three corpora were re-grouped into CBUDS and non-CBUDS which contain CORDS and CBUSS. Then a RR test was performed. The RR result would show the ratio of the probability of the hedges occurring in CBUDS versus the non-CBUDS. The Table shows the RRs and the Confidence Intervals of each category. The following is the interpretation of the RRs on CBUDS.

1. $RR=1$, the frequency of hedges in CBUDS is likely to be equal to non-CBUDS.
2. $RR<1$, the frequency of hedges in CBUDS is likely to be less than the non-CBUDS
3. $RR>1$, the frequency of hedges in CBUDS is likely to be more than the non-CBUDS

³⁸ The appropriate degrees of freedom (df) are the number of rows minus 1 multiplies by the number of column minus 1 (Cramer, D, 1988: 357). In this study, the number of rows is 2 (e.g. modal auxiliary and non-modal auxiliary, lexical verbs and non-lexical verbs, and so on), the number of columns is 3 (CORDS, CBUSS and CBUDS). The df is equal to $(2-1) \times (3-2)=2$.

The results show that the RRs of modal auxiliaries (1.236), speculative verbs (1.404), deductive verbs (3.358), approximate adverbs (1.616), and nonfactive assertive nouns (3.013) in CBUDS have a higher frequency than those in non-CBUDS. The total frequency of hedges in CBUDS is 1.257 times more than non-CBUDS. All these RRs are statistically significant as they show a 95% CI, as the values of the confidence interval ("CI") exclude 1. The repeated processes of re-grouping the three corpora into CORDS and non-CORDS and CBUSS and non-CBUSS generated the overall RRs of 0.619 and 1.091. These two figures mean that the FS uses 0.619 times hedges in CORDS versus non-CORDS and uses 1.091 times hedges in CBUSS versus non-CBUSS. When compared with the RRs of the three groupings, CBUDS has the highest RR, showing that the FS uses higher frequency of hedges in CBUDS than the other two corpora. The overall Cramer Vs 0.027 shows that there is little association among the three corpora.

In sum, the above discussion shows that the frequency of each type of hedges used by the FS is different in the three corpora as they have different *p*-value. The statistically significant items are modals, epistemic verbs, adverbs, and syntactic hedges. There is little association among the corpora as all the values of Cramer V are less than 0.07. The individual overall RR for the three corpora also indicates the FS uses 1.257 times hedges in CBUDS which is more than the other two corpora. The following sections investigate in detail the hedging phenomena and their specific uses in the three corpora.

7.6 Qualitative analysis of the hedges

This study adapts a broader taxonomy in analysing the hedging potential based on logic, semantic, pragmatic and interpersonal perspectives. Following the theoretical framework of this study, hedging is basically a lexical phenomenon through the prototypical realizations of modal auxiliaries, lexical verbs, adjectives, adverbs, nouns, and phrasal items. In addition to the lexical items, other syntactic items, which have the hedging meaning, such as if-clause, impersonalization, and miscellaneous items are also included in this study. Hence, attention was given to examine the other information in the context that may have hedging potential. Below is the analysis of seven categories of hedges.

7.6.1 Modal Auxiliaries

The findings indicate that nine different modal auxiliaries, which may have an epistemic meaning are *would*, *may*, *could*, *should*, *can*, *will*, *might*, *must* and *shall*. Although some of modals such as *can* and *must* may not be interpreted as having epistemic meaning (Coates, 1983), qualitative analysis of the contexts indicate that they may have hedging potential. The relative proportions of the modal auxiliaries identified as hedges are shown in Table 14 below.

Table 14: Frequencies of the modal auxiliaries

	FS's Corpus of Ordinary Speeches(CORDS)		FS's Corpus of Business Speeches(CBUSS)		FS's Corpus of Budget Speeches(CBUDS)	
	n/10,000	Percentage	n/10,000	Percentage	n/10,000	Percentage
would	25.41	42.70	20.71	26.73	6.45	7.33
may	3.68	6.18	3.57	4.60	4.84	5.50
could	0.33	0.56	3.39	4.38	0.23	0.26
should	0.67	1.12	4.11	5.30	6.46	7.33
can	4.01	6.74	7.14	9.22	9.45	10.73
will	18.39	30.90	28.74	37.10	52.07	59.19
might	0.33	0.56	4.28	5.53	1.15	1.31
shall	0.00	0.00	0.71	0.92	0.92	1.05
must	6.69	11.24	4.82	6.22	6.44	7.30
Total	59.51	100	77.47	100	88.01	100

There are differences in the use of modal auxiliaries in the three corpora. In CBUDS, the frequency is the highest (88.01 per 10,000 words). The relative frequency in CBUSS is noticeably higher than in CORDS at 77.47 and 59.51 respectively. The reason for CORDS has the lowest frequency of modal auxiliaries is that CORDS has the lowest frequency of *will* when compared with the other two corpora. The main purpose in CORDS is to celebrate the events or praise the awardees, honourees or organizers. The FS is only required to introduce the specific purposes of the events and acknowledge the accomplishments of the celebrated persons or organizations. The need to use *will* to predict or forecast business or economic developments therefore is greatly reduced.

Some observations are also worth discussing among the corpora. The use of *will* is found to be the most frequent auxiliary in CBUSS and CBUDS. One of the communicative purposes of CBUSS and CBUDS is to inform the audience what the future policies and measures the government will implement. In addition, in CBUDS, predictions and forecasts for the economic and business developments in Hong Kong are usually discussed. These predictions and forecasts refer to things that are likely to happen. It is appropriate therefore for the FS to use *will* to indicate what is said may happen in the future. *Would* ranks first in CORDS and second in CBUSS and fourth in CBUDS. A possible explanation for the higher frequency of *would* is that the FS is the honourable guest in both CORDS and CBUSS. It is natural for him to use thanking formulaic language such as *I would like to thank you*, and *I would like to pay tribute to the organizer* to express his appreciation.

Could is one of the least common auxiliaries, ranking seventh in CORDS and eighth in CBUSS and ninth in CBUDS. One possible reason for the lower frequency is that *could* is the past tense of *can*. The information given in the speeches is mainly related to the current state of affairs such as expressing gratitude to the awardees, describing the current financial situations, and reporting the progress of the implementation of policies and measures. Therefore the frequency of *could* to describe things which have happened in the past is correspondingly lower.

Should ranks sixth in both CORDS and CBUSS, and third in CBUDS respectively. *Should* is a “medium strength modality” (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002). It is common for the FS to propose policies and measures related to the budget proposals. It would seem inappropriate for the FS to either use strong modals to demand the Legislative Councillors accept the proposals or weak modals to express his uncertainty. The use of *should*, on the one hand, can help the FS to indicate that what is proposed is based on tentative assumptions, but supported by facts known to him. On the other hand, the use of *should* allows the FS to add strength to his messages to convince the councillors to accept his proposals because they are ideal and desirable.

The relative rankings of *can* are fourth in CORDS, third in CBUSS and second in CBUDS. A possible reason why CBUDS has a higher frequency of *can* would be that it “is used in statements about events and states which are true” (Carter & McCarthy, 2006: 642). CBUDS are highly formal speeches delivered to the Legislative Councillors. Instead of introducing too many abstract principles or

technical terms, the use of *can* helps the FS, based on factual data, to describe what actually happened in Hong Kong for reinforcing his proposals. For example, in his 2003 budget speech when discussing the expansion of Renminbi business in Hong Kong, the FS said, "... regulatory bodies of both places *can* help to manage the risk involved". The use of *can* indicates that both the Mainland and Hong Kong have the possibility of helping each other to manage the risk. What is said by the FS is currently happened.

May ranks fifth, seventh and sixth in the three corpora. While both *may* and *can* have an indication of possibility, it may be the preference of the FS uses a higher frequency of *can* rather than *may* in his speeches. *Might* ranks eighth, fifth and seventh respectively in the three corpora. *Might* is the past tense of *may* but in modern English *might* is frequently used for present situations. The FS may use *might* and *may* interchangeably to indicate what is said is tentative or indirect.

Must ranks the third, fourth, and fifth in the three corpora respectively. One possible reason is that *must* also have a prominent epistemic phenomenon. It is frequently used by the FS because he feels obliged to advise the audience what he believes or knows the true status of the economic and financial matters in Hong Kong.

Shall is the most uncommon auxiliary, ranking ninth in CBUSS and eighth in CBUDS and it has no frequency found in CORDS. One possible reason for the lower use of *shall* is that it has a predictive meaning which is similar to *will* (Coates, 1983). It may be the FS's preference to use *will* rather than *shall* in his speeches. The qualitative analysis of each modal auxiliary in the corpora is discussed below.

7.6.1.1 Would

Table 15 below shows the number of instances of *would* and its functions in the corpora.

Table 15: Frequencies and functions of *would*

Communicative functions	CORDS	CBUSS	CBUDS	Total	Percentage
Past form with epistemic meaning	4	6	10	20	9.09
Courtesy/prediction Tentativeness/softening commitment/solidarity	71	106	17	194	88.18
Hypothetical Marker	1	4	1	6	2.73
Total	76	116	28	220	100

The data show that the corresponding frequencies of *would* when it is used as a hedge are (25.41; n=76), (20.71; n=116) and (6.45; n=28) per 10,000 words respectively.

Would has a number of uses. It is also used as a past form of epistemic prediction, courtesy strategy, tentativeness, hypothetical marker, softening personal commitment, and creating solidarity with the hearers. Examples of *would* used in the corpora are presented below.

Past form of epistemic prediction

CBUSS

At a speech presented to the Legislative Council relating to Hong Kong's economy and management of public finances on Oct 22, 2003, the FS revisited the suggestions made by his predecessor to sell some assets to meet capital works expenditure.

Extract

One way is to dispose of our assets selectively. My predecessor envisaged in the 2003-04 Budget that we *would* sell securities \$112 billion in assets over the next five years.

Would is used to refer to future in-the-past (Carter & McCarthy, 2006). The predecessor of the FS looked forward in time from a point in the past where he

envisaged the need to sell some securities. The use of *would* in this kind of future in-the-past structure is predictive in meaning, making the utterance more tentative. The previous FS expresses a certain degree of likelihood of selling securities.

Courtesy

CORDS

At the opening ceremony of the Hong Kong Watch & Clock Fair in Sept 2003, the FS extended his praise for the contribution of the Watch Manufacturers Association.

Extract

Finally, I *would* like to pay tribute to the Hong Kong Watch Manufacturers Association and the Federation of Hong Kong Watch Trades and Industries for your outstanding contribution to the development of Hong Kong's watch and clock industry.

The uses *would* at the end of the speech renders his intention more politely to thank the Hong Kong Watch Manufacturers Association of Hong Kong for their contribution.

Of the 76 instances of *would* in CORDS, there are 57 instances collocate with "I". The first person singular co-occurring with *would* is a thanking formulaic expression used by the FS to increase his level of courtesy in the event for creating an interpersonal relationship with the audience.

Tentativeness

CBUDS

In the 2007-2008 Budget Speech, the FS proposed to reduce the duty-free tobacco that visitors could bring into Hong Kong.

Extract

I propose, on the other hand, to reduce the quantity of duty-free tobacco that visitors are allowed to bring into Hong Kong to that for local residents. For example, the quantity of duty-free cigarettes for a visitor *would* be reduced from the current ten packets to three.

Would is used as non-assertive form. The FS proposes a reduction of the quantity of duty-free tobacco, which can be allowed to bring into Hong Kong. Whether such proposal will be accepted by the legislative councillors remains uncertain. The use of the epistemic *would* implies that it is only a non-directive stance of the FS, but the acceptance of proposal by the legislative councillors remains to be seen. The quantity of the duty-free cigarettes to be three packets is only a tentative suggestion from the FS.

Hypothetical marker

Coates (1983) states that a hypothetical marker in an utterance could be regarded as conveying conditional predictability which is epistemic in meaning. Coates (1983: 216-218) further states that *would* “is used pragmatically to make the utterance more polite or tentative to avoid naked assertion” even a condition is expressed. As such the status of *would* in a hypothetical utterance can be regarded as having a tentative meaning. In the data, the instances of *would* associated with hypothetical marker were rare, amounting to 1, 4 and 1 respectively in the three corpora. The following is an example from CBUDS and CBUSS each.

CBUDS

In the 2006-7 Budget Speech, the FS discussed the suggestions made by the local chambers of commerce and professional bodies for the revision of profit tax arrangement for corporate loss.

Extract

I estimate that the suggested exemption, *if* implemented, *would* cost billions of dollars a year in lost tax.

Hypothetical *would* has a meaning of less assured or expressing one's thoughts or feeling plainly (Collins, 2009: 141). The use of *would* in this utterance indicates that it is only a tentative assumption of the FS that, if corporate loss arrangement is allowed, the Government may lose billions of dollars.

CBUSS

At a Joint Business Community Luncheon meeting before the announcement of the 2006-2007 Budget, the FS informed the audience that there has been an accumulated deficit of up to the amount of \$190 billion over the past seven years. This implied the Government has to control expenditure over the coming year.

Extract

I, of course, *would* have liked to provide more welfare *if* the Government has more resources.

If *would* is found in “apodosis of an unreal conditional construction”, it expresses epistemic meaning (Collins, 2009: 141). Although the certainty marker “of course” is used, it does not weaken the tentative meaning of *would* which at the same time reduces the level of assuredness. In the extract, the FS makes a tentative and hypothetical assumption that if the Government has a surplus, he would provide more welfare to society. In fact, the Government has an accumulated huge deficit.

In addition, *I would like to* is termed as a metalingual mitigation marker (Dedaic, 2004) which is a hedge form that: a) allows the speaker habitually seek to downtone when speaking (Farr & O'Keeffe, 2002); b) to maintain the hearers' face wants by asking permission to speak (Dedaic, 2004); and c) in political/ideological level, creating a persuasive intention that is “masked” by this discourse-initial phrase (Dedaic, 2004). *I would like to* relates to Leech's (1983: 169) agreement maxim and

sympathy maxim.³⁹ By using *I would like to*, a speaker asks the hearers' permission and to seek their consent/approval and rapport (Dedaic, 2004). Similar to other spoken discourses, the use of the first person singular frequently collocating with *would* and the phrasal verb *like to* (Farr & O'Keeffe, 2002) can make the utterance becoming a thanking formulaic utterance. Of the 76, 117, 28 instances in the three corpora, there are 55, 38, and 8 instances respectively showing the phrases of *I would like to*. The following are examples from the corpora as a mitigation marker.

CBUSS

Extract

I would, however, like to draw attention to three challenges that arise in applying sustainability principles to business in Hong Kong.

CBUDS

Extract

I would like to emphasize that the duty under review is imposed not only on wine but also on other alcoholic beverages such as beer, rice and spirits.

In the speeches, the authoritative position of the FS emits the asymmetry of the dyadic power (Dedaic, 2004) between the FS and the audience. The FS frequently uses the first person singular "I" associated with *would like to*. *Would like to* is considered a politeness strategy frequently used in English language (Dedaic, 2004). This expression can also "reduce the risk of an ultimate

³⁹ Leech's (1983) six-paired politeness maxims are: "a) tact maxim - minimize cost to other, maximize benefit to other; b) generosity maxim - minimize benefit to self, maximize cost to self; c) approbation maxim - minimize dispraise of other, maximize praise of other; d) modesty maxim - minimize praise of self, maximize dispraise of self; e) agreement maxim - minimize disagreement between self and other, maximize agreement between self and other; f) sympathy maxim - minimize antipathy between self and other, maximize sympathy between self and other" Leech (1983: 16).

(symbolic) rejection by the hearers” because the propositions under discussion may create a face-threatening act to them (Dedaic, 2004: 53). In the above examples, the mitigation markers can also soften the sharp edges of the intensifiers such as *remind*, *draw attention*, and *emphasize* in the propositions. As such the face-threatening-acts created by the intensifiers can be mitigated because “symbolically they let the audience choose whether to grant the speaker the fulfilment of the desired action” (Dedaic, 2004).

It is also observed that, in the three corpora, there are 5, 6, and 4 instances respectively of *would* prefaced with the plural pronoun *we*. *We* is an indication to the hearer that “I do not stand alone” (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 202). The impersonalized use of *we* implies that the speaker tends either to avoid possible personal criticism on him/her (Luukka & Markkanen, 1997: 169) or create solidarity as an in-group member with the audience as well as indicating attention to the audience (Dedaic, 2004). The following are examples from the corpora of *we would* to soften personal commitment and create solidarity.

Softening personal commitment

CBUSS

At a speech presented to the Legislative Council relating to Hong Kong’s economy and management of public finances on Oct 22, 2003, the FS discussed the ways how Hong Kong made a closer tie with the Mainland China.

Extract

In this regards, *we would* as a first step, focus on securing the successful trial run of RMB deposits, remittances, money exchange and credit card business for individuals in Hong Kong.

CBUDS

In the 2004-5 Budget Speech, the FS said some public dissatisfaction with the government still existed for the Government slow economic adjustment after SARS.

Extract

In his Policy Address in January, the Chief Executive said that, while *we would* continue with economic restructuring and revival, we should allow the community to be given a respite.

Both examples above indicate that the FS wants to give the impression that *we* represents the HK Government rather than the FS himself. By using *we*, he can disassociate the proposition from himself by attributing it to the government. Therefore, the FS can soften his personal commitment or relieve himself of the responsibility for expressing unpleasant propositions

Creating solidarity with the hearers

CORDS

At a speech given to “2004 L’OREAL-UNESCO for women in Science” Award Presentation Ceremony on 23rd March 2004, the FS said he was pleased to see the co-operation between public-private partnership in building the R & D capability in Hong Kong.

Extract

I believe that with the concerted efforts of public and private sectors, *we would* be able to realize more scientific and technological achievements in future for the betterment of our people.

CBUDS

At the 2006-2007 Budget Speech, the FS said the Government had a preference to provide more welfare to the citizen.

Extract

We would have liked to developed more parks, piazzas, open space and cultural and heritage sites.

The above examples indicate that the use of *we* can create solidarity by letting the hearers to understand that they are in-group members of a community to which the FS also belongs. The expectations of the public are his expectations too. The collocation of *we* and the epistemic *would* makes it easier for the FS to obtain permission or agreement from audience or in-group members to carry out the missions he mentioned in the speech.

7.6.1.2 May

Table 16 below shows the relative instances of *may* and its functions in the corpora.

Table 16: Frequencies and functions of *may*

Communicative functions	CORDS	CBUSS	CBUDS	Total	Percentage
Epistemic possibility	2	7	8	17	32.69
Epistemic/deontic possibility	9	13	13	35	67.31
Total	11	20	21	52	100

Excluding those cases with meaning associated with permission, the relative frequencies of *may* bearing an epistemic meaning are (3.68; n=11), (3.57; n=20), and (4.84; n=21) per 10,000 words respectively in the three corpora.

May is commonly used to express epistemic possibility, or expressing the speaker's lack of confidence in the proposition. In this study, there are indeterminate instances where distinguishing them either to bear the epistemic or deontic meaning is not altogether straightforward. Such indeterminate instances between epistemic and deontic modality are counted as “merger” cases. Given that, the intended meaning of epistemic possibility does exist in the merger cases, all occurrences of merger cases are also counted as hedges in this analysis. The following examples of *may* are used as

a hedge. Each case of *may* tones down the degree of possibility or confidence expressed by the FS.

CBUSS

At the “World Pension Forum 2004 on 10th May, the FS said that the forum was for companies look for the possibilities and advantages of establishing investment opportunities in Hong Kong with an eye on the China market.

Extract

Some of you *may* already have heard about the signing of what we call CEPA, the Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement between Hong Kong and the Mainland.

In the speech, the FS introduced the Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) to the attendees who came from overseas countries and might not have heard of CEPA. In order to soften his assertion that all attendees have heard about CEPA, the FS uses *may* to indicate the possibility that a number of attendees have already heard CEPA. *Some* has the meaning of vague quantifier (Channell, 1994). The collocate of *may* with *some of you* indicates that it is a tentative judgement of the FS that a number of audience has heard about CEPA and the exact number does not require to be mentioned in this context.

CBUDS

In the 2007-2008 Budget Speech, the FS expressed his economic outlook in the year ahead.

Extract

We *may* therefore expect greater volatility in the financial markets this year.

In 2007, on the one hand, the global financial market faced a number of uncertainties such as the weakness of the US dollar, and the booming the US property market. On the other hand, the continuous over expansion of the

Mainland China's economy might affect Hong Kong. As such, the FS foresees a greater volatility in the financial market in Hong Kong. However, the degree of volatility is uncertain. Therefore, the FS uses *may* to tone down his certainty about the volatility. Together with *we*, it indicates that the judgement is not limited to the FS but rather including some other responsible departments such as Treasury Bureau in the Government as a whole.

There are instances in the corpora where the meaning of *may* lies between epistemic modality and deontic modality. In view of the fact that these instances may have the possibility of epistemic interpretation, they are included in the frequency count. Below are examples:-

CORDS

The speech was given at the Launching Ceremony of Youth Business HK on 12th July 2005. It was an event when the Federation of Youth Groups joined hands with business sector to help young people to develop their entrepreneurial skills.

Extract

When young people first seek to set up their own business, they *may* not have many financial resources to start with, so it is of paramount important that they should capitalize on their creativity and innovative ideas.

In its epistemic sense, it can be paraphrased "...own business, *it is possible that* they do not have a lot of financial resources..." It is the FS's subjective and tentative judgment that young people possibly have no financial resources. In its dynamic possibility sense, it can be paraphrased "...own business, it is possible for the young people not to have a lot of financial resource...". It expresses a "theoretical possibility" a term suggested by Leech (1987), involving a possibility that depends on the external situation. It implies that the possibility of having many financial resources depends on some external situations, such as rules and regulations of the banking sector giving financial resources to young people to start their businesses. Therefore, both interpretations are possible.

CBUSS

The speech was given at the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Telecom World 2006 Forum on 4th December. In the forum, participants shared visions, insights, expertise and experience regarding various aspects of the digital world.

Extract

Protection of Intellectual Property Rights Knowledge is most valuable to productivity and competitiveness when it is used for the creation of information goods. However, the nature of information goods is such that while it *may* take a significant amount of matter or energy to create them, it costs practically nothing to reproduce them.

Due to the use of impersonal *it*, it is difficult to distinguish whether it is the FS's subjective comments on the nature of information goods took a significant amount of matter or energy..., or it implies a deontic possibility. The epistemic meaning can be interpreted as the FS expresses his tentative judgment that the information goods take a significant amount of matter or energy to create them. The deontic meaning can be interpreted as, due to external constraints, there is a possibility that the information goods take a significant amount of matter or energy to create them.

Further, support for these merger cases is their co-occurrence with some other epistemic expressions, such as *perhaps*, *otherwise*, and *if*. The following are some examples:

CORDS

This extract was from the "Review 200" Conference cum Award Presentation Ceremony on 19 Feb 2004 in which the FS shared a few thoughts about the openness and transparency of FS's Office.

Extract

The Budget is not just an issue that can be addressed by the Government alone-it is an issue that concerns everyone in our society. You *may* have *perhaps* seen my face on television, asking people to give us your ideas and suggestions for the Budget.

CBUSS

This extract was from the Joint Business Community Luncheon on the 2005-2006 Budget. The FS suggested removing some negative factors to develop HK's financial markets. The abolition of estate duty was one of his suggestions.

Extract

The abolition of estate duty will also help SMEs, which *otherwise may* run into operational difficulty *if* their assets are frozen during the estate duty assessment period.

There are three instances in each of CORDS and CBUDS and four instances in CBUSS that *may* co-occurs with adverbs such as *but*, *although*, and *even though*. In such cases, it can be interpreted as a concession which is equivalent to unmodalized clauses which becomes a true fact but not a proposition. Palmer (2001: 31) states the use of *may* with *but* becomes “not in the terms of speculative, but of presupposed”. However, pragmatically, the co-occurrence of *may* can soften the FS's presupposition, by “addition a disclaimer as to the correctness” of his presupposition (Coates, 1983: 136). For example,

CBUSS

At the speech given at the Credit Lyonnais Securities (CLSA) Investors' Forum Closing Plenary in September 2003, the FS showcased the advantages that Hong Kong had as a place in which to make investments.

Extract

CEPA *may* be the most important development on our economic armoury in recent times, *but* it is certainly not our only initiative.

The utterance is equivalent to an unmodalized clause “Although CEPA is the most important development..., it is certainly not our only initiative”. The use of *may* and *but* serves to acknowledge the fact that CEPA is important to the development of Hong Kong, but it is not the only initiative. The concessive use can soften the importance of CEPA, on the one hand, by ascribing the FS’s tentative points of view to the audience. On the other hand, it serves as a way of influencing his audience.

7.6.1.3 Might

The relative instances of *might* used for different functions is shown in Table 17.

Table 17: Frequencies and functions of *might*

Communicative functions	CORDS	CBUSS	CBUDS	Total	Percentage
Epistemic	0	10	0	10	33.33
Hypothetical	0	1	0	1	3.33
Epistemic/deontic	1	13	5	19	63.34
Total	1	24	5	30	100

As shown in Table 17, CBUSS has the largest proportion (4.28; n=24) per 10,000 words, whereas the relative proportions in CBUDS and CORDS are (1.15; n=5) and (0.33; n=1) respectively.

When *might* has epistemic meaning, it is used to indicate a possibility that is weaker than *may*. *Might* also has the meanings of permission and suggestion⁴⁰. However, in the corpora, there is no instance of these two meanings. The examples below show that *might* is used to make the proposition more indirect and tentative.

⁴⁰ Might is also used to issue advice or suggestions politely or indirectly, especially when it is used together with *like* or *want*. For example “I won’t go any further with it now but you *might* like to take a copy of it out with you” (Carter & McCarthy, 2006: 647).

CORDS

At the “Stock Code Balloting for Charity Scheme” Cocktail Reception on 17 Oct 2005, the FS discussed the suggestion that companies could choose their own stock codes in the stock exchange by donating to the Community Chest.

Extract

Some of these Mainland companies *might* not have offices in Hong Kong, but they still chose to contribute to this worthy cause of the Community Chest.

It was found that a number of companies taking part in the Scheme was Mainland enterprises who wanted their companies to be listed on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange. Of these companies, the FS might not have known the exact number of companies that already had offices in Hong Kong. Therefore, he uses the vague quantifier *some*. The two hedges “*some*” and “*might*” reinforce the hedging potential that the FS has no knowledge on the number of Mainland companies that they have no offices in Hong Kong and his tentative proposition that these Mainland companies still contribute to the success of the event.

CBUSS

At the senior officials’ Boao Forum 24 April 2004, the FS said that the forum was a platform for interaction among government officials, business leaders and academics on how to promote trade and economic ties within Asia and with other parts of the world.

Extract

Judging by the number of such agreements planned or under negotiation, the total number of such FTAs in force *might* well approach 300 by next year.

The FS said that in pursuing open regionalism, there is an increasing trend to sign free trade agreements (FTAs) among APEC. The FS predicts that the increasing trend will continue in 2005, but he is less certain as to the exact

numbers. Based on the information he has, he makes tentative judgement on the numbers.

In the data, there are instances where *might* syntactically co-occurs with *not* (1, 1, 4 instances respectively). Coates (1983: 149) and Palmer (1986: 62) state that a negative form of *might not* is epistemic. Its paraphrase is “possible that”. Below are examples from the corpora.

CBUSS

At the conference on “China, Northeast Asia and the Next American Administration” on 2 December 2004, the FS outlined the main theme of the conference, which was to address the key issue of the US-China relationship.

Extract

We *might not* see eye to eye on every issue, *but* as Colin Powell said recently, “when we disagree, we do so candidly, openly, and in the spirit of trying to find a solution to the disagreement.”

In this use of *might not*, it can be interpreted as an indeterminate borderline between epistemic modality (“it is possible that ... not...”) or deontic modality (“it is not possible for...”). For epistemic meaning, the negation may affect the proposition of the speaker to make it less assured. In this sense, the FS takes a hypothetical proposition that if every country is not seeing eye to eye on every issue with other countries; it is entirely possible for each country can still benefit. The concessive use of *might not* and *but* can be interpreted as the FS makes a disclaimer of his prediction that even there is seeing eye to eye on every issue by each country, the issue can be solved. In terms of deontic meaning, it can be interpreted that whether the countries seeing eye to eye on every issue is related to obligation or permission emanating from the countries, i.e. the conditioning factors are out of the control of the FS. In this sense, it can be paraphrased as “it is possible for us to see eye to eye on every issue, but the problem can be solved by the cooperation of these countries”.

CBUDS

This example of *might not* occurred in the 2004-2005 Budget Speech when the FS addressed the employment situation.

Extract

Some labour organizations have told me they are worried that the local employment situation *might not* improve despite an economic recovery.

The FS's epistemic judgement of the employment situation is based on the evidential phrase "told me". It implies that the FS's understanding is not based on facts but on hearsay. As such, the FS expresses only a tentative assessment of the local employment situation. It can be interpreted as "it is possible that local employment situation might not improve...".

Two further observations are noteworthy. First, there are four instances in CBUSS and one instance in CBUDS of the collocations *might even*, *might well*, and *might also*. The co-occurrences appear to reduce the degree of qualification and express greater confidence⁴¹ in the utterances, but they still have an epistemic meaning because they only express a probable likelihood (Hoye, 1997: 88). For example,

CBUSS

Extract

Judging by the number of such agreements planned or under negotiation, the total number of FTAs in force *might well* approach 300 by next year.

CBUDS

⁴¹ Hoye (1997: 96-97) states that when *might* in combination with some adverb modifiers expresses a higher value of probability.

Extract

There *might even* be some scope for reducing other taxes, such as salaries tax and stamp duty.

Second, there is one instance in CBUSS and one in CBUDS that the FS uses *might* to indicate epistemic hypothetical possibility⁴². For example,

CBUSS

Extract

The pace of our economic growth, and our attraction as an international trade, transport and communications hub, *might* also be adversely affected *if* our physical infrastructure does not anticipate, or at least match the demands of the market.

At the Legislative Council on 22nd October 2003, the FS discussed pros and cons of reducing overall spending and infrastructure projects in view of the unfavourable economic situation. He made an epistemic assumption that if cutting infrastructure projects, Hong Kong would not be able to maintain the attraction as an international trade, transport and communications hub. It can be paraphrased as “*it is possible that* the pace of our... *would* be adversely affected...”

CBUDS

Extract

Owing to Hong Kong people's caring and generous spirit, the grass roots have a chance to improve their standard of living. Many middle-class or rich people

⁴² Coates' (1983: 146) study acknowledges that *might* has the characteristic of expressing of “hypothetical epistemic possibility” (“it is possible that ...would”).

today *might* have grown up in families living on public assistance. They did not lose heart or a sense of self-reliance as a result.

The FS states that the government has provided public assistance before to many people who have become middle-class or rich people today. The utterance can be paraphrased, as “It is possible that “many middle-class...would have grown up in families living on public assistance”.

7.6.1.4 Could

Table 18 summarises the relative instances of *could* used for different functions.

Table 18: Frequencies and functions of *could*

Communicative functions	CORDS	CBUSS	CBUDS	Total	Percentage
Indeterminacy of deontic ability or possibility*	2	3	2	7	14.58
Indeterminacy of epistemic ability or possibility	0	2	0	2	4.17
Hypothetical from	0	5	1	6	12.5
Epistemic past tense of can	1	3	0	4	8.33
Permission*	0	2	0	2	4.17
Deontic ability*	1	3	0	4	8.33
Epistemic possibility	0	9	0	9	18.75
Deontic possibility*	1	11	2	14	29.17
Total	5	38	5	48	100.00

*Since they have no hedging function, they are excluded in the analysis.

In the three corpora there are 21 instances of *could* that are used as hedges. The frequency of *could* is (0.33; n=1), (3.39; n=19), and (0.23; n=1) per 10,000 words respectively.

Although the epistemic status of *could* sometimes remains unclear, there are some instances which support an epistemic interpretation (Butler, 1990; Hoyer, 1997; Varttala, 2001). Due to its multiple possible meanings, there may be difficult to distinguish between deontic and epistemic possibility in some instances. In the corpora, there are nine instances of *could* that co-occur with *hope* (n=6), *trust* (n=1), *believe* (n=1), and *know* (n=1). These nine instances of collocation convey a hedging sense, making the utterances more tentative. An example is shown below.

CBUSS

At the "Hedge Funds World Asia 2003" conference at the Conrad Hotel on 1, December, 2003, the FS gave an opening speech for updating the Fund Management Industry in Hong Kong

Extract

I know some financial houses have estimated that the total assets under management in Hong Kong, including those funds which are not required to seek authorization from the SFC, *could* reach as high as US\$400 billion.

The use of *could* instead of *can* conveys a more tentative meaning (Hoyer, 1997; Palmer, 2001). It indicates the FS's tentative assessment of the possibility that the total assets under management may reach USD400 billion. The clause *I know* indicates that the speaker has a higher degree of certainty (Cappelli, 2009: 156) in the proposition. Although the co-occurrence of *I know* with the *could* may reduce the degree of tentativeness, it still has epistemic meaning because the amount mentioned by the FS is still uncertain and predictive in nature. The amount is only an estimation.

When *could* is used with a hypothetical form, it also expresses an epistemic possibility (Coates, 1983: 107). There are seven cases of *could* co-occur with a hypothetical form. For example,

CBUSS

In the same speech as stated in the above example, the FS further elaborated his view on the benefits that the hedge funds industry as a whole can bring to an economy.

Extract

If properly used as an investment tool, a hedge fund *could* help to diversify investment risks.

It can be interpreted as “it is possible that a hedge fund helps to diversify investment risks”. The co-occurrence of *could* and *if* has a hypothetical meaning (Coates, 1983: 110). Therefore, the FS only assumes that on condition that the hedge funds are used properly, they have the potential to help diversify investment risks. In this sense, the FS hedges by expressing that there is a possibility which is only theoretically conceivable if an important condition is met.

CBUDS

In the 2007-2008 Budget Speech, the FS stated that if there was an adjustment to the civil servants’ salary, the estimation of the adjustment was included in the prepared budget.

Extract

Should a decision be made on a civil service pay adjustment, it is estimated that the 2007/2008 Budget *could* meet this need.

The choice of a hypothetical form with *could* indicates an epistemic judgment of the FS that the expense amount in 2007/2008 Budget can still be sufficient meeting the amount of the adjustment of the civil service pay.

7.6.1.5 Can

Table 19 shows the relative instances of *can* and its functions in the corpora.

Table 19: Frequencies and functions of *can*

Communicative functions	CORDS	CBUSS	CBUDS	Total	Percentage
Permission	3	11	3	17	7.55
Ability	24	39	24	87	38.66
Epistemic possibility*	5	32	23	60	26.67
Indeterminacy of epistemic possibility or deontic possibility*	7	8	18	33	14.67
Indeterminacy of ability or permission	5	15	8	28	12.45
Total	44	105	76	225	100

In the corpora, the instances of *can* with an indeterminate interpretation between epistemic possibility and deontic possibility are counted in this analysis. Their respective frequencies in the three corpora are (4.01; n=12), (7.14; n=40) and (9.45; n=41) per 10,000 respectively.

Although it is generally used for expressing deontic and dynamic modality, *can* sometimes has an epistemic meaning (Coates, 1995). Some indeterminate cases have been identified in this study where *can* may be interpreted as having either epistemic, deontic, or dynamic meaning. The validity of the distinction depends on the interpretation of certain contexts. The indeterminate cases are counted as hedges as they may have an epistemic meaning. The examples below indicate epistemic meaning.

CBUSS

At the opening speech in the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) TELECOM WORLD 2006 Forum on 4th December, the FS discussed the important role of governments to create robust intellectual property rights regimes to preserve the value of knowledge and protect the information goods produced by the knowledge-based industries.

Extract

I sincerely hope that governments and law enforcement agencies all over the world *can* join hands to protect information goods in the digital world.

In view of the collocation with the non-assertive clause *I sincerely hope that*, the use of *can* conveys something like “I wish the governments of the world join hands to protect...”. The FS expresses his idealized scenario, which is inevitably expressed tentatively.

CBUDS

In the 2005-06 Budget Speech delivered on 16 March 2005, the FS described the economic prospects of different economies in the world for 2005.

Extract

Considering these factors, we *can* expect the global economy to fare well in 2005, though its growth rate may not be as impressive as in 2004.

The FS makes some predictions about the global economy in the year 2005. The co-occurrence of *can* and the hedge word *expect* reduces the assertiveness of his forecast. As such, the sentence can be paraphrased as “it is possible that we expect the global economy...”.

There are 7, 8 and 18 instances of *can* respectively in the corpora conveying either deontic possibility or epistemic interpretation. These cases are counted as hedges, for example,

CORDS

At the opening ceremony of the "3rd Hong Kong Tourism Symposium: “Quality and Diversity” dated March 18 2004, the FS said that the symposium was a timely occasion for members of the trade, academics, journalists... to work together and identify the opportunities and challenges that lay ahead.

Extract

As you *can* see, there are many exciting new projects in the pipeline that are due to come on stream in the next two years.

Palmer (1990: 83) distinguishes dynamic *can* into neutral/circumstantial or subjected oriented. Neutral orientation indicates that an event is possible while subjected orientation refers to ability of the subject. The co-occurrence of *can* with the impersonal *as you* has neutral oriented meaning (Palmer, 1990). In this sense, the extract can be interpreted as “it is possible for the audience to see many new projects in the pipeline...”, and not “the audience has the ability to see many exciting new projects...”. In addition, Palmer (1990: 86) states that *see* is a private verb of sensation. When *can* co-occurring with *see* has no meaning of ability. Alternatively, Palmer (1990: 10) suggests that subjectivity is an essential feature of epistemic modality. It expresses the possibility views of the speaker about the propositions. When referring to the context of the extract, it can also be interpreted as the FS expresses his view that members of the trade, academics, and journalists are probably aware of the many upcoming projects in Hong Kong.

7.6.1.6 Must

Table 20 below shows the number of instances of *must* and its functions in the corpora.

Table 20: Frequencies and functions of *must*

Communicative function	CORDS	CBUSS	CBUDS	Total	Percentage
Epistemic necessity	4	3	5	12	13.48
Merger of epistemic and deontic meaning	13	24	23	60	67.42
Merger of epistemic and dynamic	3	0	0	3	3.38
Deontic obligation*	5	0	3	8	8.98
Dynamic*	2	0	2	4	4.49
Merger of deontic and dynamic*	0	2	0	2	2.25
Total	27	29	33	89	100

*Since they have no hedging meaning, they are excluded from the analysis.

In the corpora, 75 instances of *must* have epistemic, or mergers of epistemic/deontic meaning or epistemic/dynamic sense. The distribution is (6.69; n=20), (4.82; n=27), and (6.45; n=28) respectively in the three corpora.

Must is frequently used for obligation, requirement or permission. It is also used to express epistemic necessity, or expressing the strongest of all possible judgements. Cases where *must* has either epistemic or deontic/dynamic meaning are counted as hedges as they may have hedging potentials. The following examples illustrate cases of *must* for epistemic necessity use.

CBUSS

At the speech jointly hosted by the Hong Kong Capital Markets Association, the Association of Corporate Treasurers and the Society of Financial Analysts on 13 April 2005, the FS exchanged views with the audience on the prospects of our financial markets and how the industry and the Government could work together to enhance our positioning as an international financial centre.

Extract

To grasp the opportunities brought about by our unique relationship with the Mainland, *I must mention* our RMB initiative. Last year, Hong Kong became the first place outside the Mainland to conduct personal RMB business.

Mention is a performative verb. *I must mention* is a hedged performative clause (Fraser, 1986). In the extract, the FS told the audience that government was doing something to facilitate the further development of Hong Kong financial markets. The use of *I must* indicates the FS intends to tell the audience that he feels obliged to mention the RMB initiative that can benefit the participants in the financial markets. In this context, the illocutionary act is that the FS intends to perform the act of obligating but not the act of ordering. In this sense, the FS hedges his utterance by merely stating that he has the obligation to advise the audience.

CBUDS

In the 2006-07 Budget Speech, the FS described how Hong Kong's competitive edge in financial services complements the Mainland's economic development and financial reform in Hong Kong.

Extract

I believe that we must continue to look for improvement in the following directions.

The presence of the non-harmonic (Collins, 2009: 39) hedging clause *I believe + must* indicates a higher degree of modality and correspondingly reflects the weaker certainty of the FS. It gives the impression that the FS is neither in a position to lay any obligation to the reform of economic development nor there are circumstances that force him to act. The FS merely states what he believes is right. In this sense, the *must* in the extract is regarded as rational modality (Palmer, 1990).

In many speeches, there is no doubt that the FS confidently describes financial matters especially when he has solid information about Hong Kong's financial matters. Some uses of *must* can be interpreted as having an epistemic sense as it is used to draw attention to the audience that the FS is providing information that is highly likely, but not absolutely certain as it is based on logical inference. The auxiliary in some speeches can be interpreted as having a deontic sense as it is used to express a strong obligation or requirement in the subject under discussion (Murphy, 2010). Therefore, the instances and examples of strong obligation are counted and discussed in the section analysing intensifiers.

7.6.1.7 Will

Table 21 below shows the relative instances of *will* and its functions in the corpora.

Table 21: Frequencies and functions of *will*

Communicative functions	CORDS	CBUSS	CBUDS	Total	Percentage
Insistences	0	4	3	7	0.65
Intention	17	35	116	168	15.69
Willingness	14	53	92	159	14.85
Indeterminacy of Predictability/Prediction	14	74	132	225	21.01
Predictability	40	72	89	196	18.30
Prediction	21	45	37	103	9.62
Hedges	20	42	57	119	11.11
Intensifiers	39	28	26	93	8.68
Noun	1	0	0	1	0.09
Total	166	353	552	1071	100

In the three corpora, *will* is the most common modal auxiliary used by the FS. Only instances associated with hedging, prediction, or indeterminate cases of prediction or predictability are counted and analysed in this study and their relative instances are (18.39; n=55), (28.74; n=161) and (52.07; n=226) per 10,000 words respectively in the three corpora. The instances, which have the meaning of intensification, are examined in chapter 8.

Various degrees of modal meaning are associated with *will*. When it has the epistemic meaning of predictability, it is semantically strong and equivalent to *must* (Coates, 1983; Huddleston & Pullum, 2002). When having the meaning of prediction, *will* may be associated with uncertainty in meaning. In this sense, *will* can be used as a hedge (Hyland, 1998a: 116). In combination with some hedging words such as *probably*, *will* expresses epistemic probability.

Examples of *will* below involve epistemic in meaning as an element of uncertainty or doubt exists. In addition, some indeterminate cases between predictability and prediction are found. All indeterminate cases are included as hedges

as they may have an epistemic interpretation (Coates, 1983: 171). This study also includes some instances when *will* co-occurs with another hedging word.

CORDS

At a spring reception hosted by the Hong Kong Polytechnic University on February 10, 2006, in addition to congratulating the remarkable achievement of the School of Hotel and Tourism Management of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, the FS also described some future developments in the Hong Kong tourist industry.

Extract

Looking ahead, new tourist attractions like the "Ngong Ping 360" cable-car project and the Hong Kong Wetland Park *will* come into operation in the months ahead. And our hotel stock *will* increase to *some* 53,000 rooms by the end of this year.

In the first utterance, it seems it is true that the degree of modality is low because the "Ngong Ping 360" cable-car project and the Hong Kong Wetland Park are likely to emerge because they are in process of completion. It involves factual assertion and does not have the element of judgement from the FS (Palmer, 1990). However, the definite date of completion is not specified because he just mentions that "in the months ahead". In this sense, the first utterance has an element of tentativeness because this project is out of his control. In the second utterance, *by the end of this year* is an indication of futurity which also involves an element of uncertainty (Hyland, 1998a). *Some* is a vague quantifier (Channell, 1994: 111). The use of *will* in the second utterance can be interpreted as it is only a prediction of the FS because some factors which could intervene to prevent the hotel stock to increase to 53,000, such as the completion of the "Ngong Ping 360" cable-car project and the Hong Kong Wetland Park. In this regard, the FS uses the co-occurrence of *will* and *some* to hedge his epistemic judgement on the hotel stock as well as the completion date.

CBUSS

At the Luncheon meeting in the US Chamber of Commerce in San Francisco in October 2005, the FS provided an update about the close economic ties between Hong Kong and the Mainland.

Extract

We expect that the Mainland *will* continue to be the principal growth driver of our capital market as more stated-owned enterprises undergo restructuring.

The hedge word *expect* expresses a degree of likelihood only. *Will* involves claims about the future and it is more a matter of assumption or expectation (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002: 189). Whether the Mainland can continue to play the growth driver in the Hong Kong capital markets is therefore not entirely certain. The co-occurrence of *expect* and *will* conveys the FS's general expectation.

7.6.1.8 Shall

Table 22 below shows the number of instances of *shall* and its functions in the corpora.

Table 22: Frequencies and functions of *shall*

Communicative functions	CORDS	CBUSS	CBUDS	Total	Percentage
Epistemic hedge	0	4	4	8	61.54
Non Hedge	0	3	2	5	38.46
Total	0	7	6	13	100

Shall is the least frequent modal auxiliary used by the FS in its epistemic sense. No instance of interrogatives is found in the corpora. There is also no instance in CORDS, only (0.71; n=4), and (0.92; n=4) per 10,000 words are used epistemically in CBUSS and CBUDS respectively. Some of the instances co-occur with a stative verb making the meaning epistemic. There are cases when *shall* conveys epistemic meaning. Below are examples,

CBUSS

At the Joint Business Community Luncheon on March 23, 2005 when discussing the 2005-06 Budget matters, the FS described the rationale behind not implementing Gross Sales Tax (“GST”) that year.

Extract

More importantly, an improved economy could give us a window of opportunity to consider and implement long-term tax reform. Since we *shall* have ample time to consider GST, there is no need for anyone to jump to a conclusion.

In the context, the FS indicates that the government is going to consider the implementation of GST because of the problems of too narrow tax base and an over-reliance on volatile revenue. However, he also states that the improved economy could give a window of opportunity to consider and implement long-term tax reform. In this extract *shall* does not express necessity and with non-future reference. It expresses rather epistemic possibility. Together with the adjunct *since* and with the stative verb *have* increases the epistemic meaning. The co-occurrence of *shall* and *since* indicates an epistemic judgement of the FS that the GST could be considered as a source for widening the tax base (Palmer, 1990: 138).

CBUDS

In the 2006-2007 Budget Speech, the FS said that he developed his budgetary blueprints from the outset based on a pair of intertwined principles. These were “Market Leads, Government Facilitates” and “Prudent Management of Public Finances”. With these two postulates, he believed that Hong Kong could overcome many challenges and had a bright future.

Extract

We *shall* be able to make the most of the present opportunities and we *shall be* the brightest pearl of our nation.

The co-occurrence of *shall* with the static verb *be* makes the utterance epistemic in meaning (Collins, 2009). It refers to an event that is generally hoped for. The extract can be interpreted as the FS's general hope that Hong Kong could become the brightest pearl of China.

7.6.1.9 Should

Table 23 below lists the number of instances of *should* and their functions in the corpora.

Table 23: Frequencies and functions of *should*

Communicative functions	CORDS	CBUSS	CBUDS	Total	Percentage
Epistemic*	2	23	25	50	30.30
Deontic	5	49	13	67	40.61
Dynamic	3	6	36	45	27.27
Hypothetical*	0	0	3	3	1.82
Total	10	78	77	165	100

The frequencies of *should* in the corpora are (0.67; n=2), (4.11; n=23), and (6.45; n=28) per 10,000 words respectively.

Should is used for obligation, logical expectation and as a softener or hedge in the same way as *would* (Carter & McCarthy, 2006: 650), with an indication of tentative assumption, or assessment of the likelihood of a speaker's prediction. Warchal (2008: 24) also states that *should* has a certain degree of tentativeness, and it imparts "some notion of conditionality". Examples of *should* used as a hedge in the corpora are shown below.

CBUSS

In the Joint Business Community Luncheon for discussing the 2004-5 Budget on March 15, 2004, the FS described the economic and fiscal strategies, giving the audience some insights into the thinking that went into his Budget.

Extract

In order to reduce operating expenditure from \$218 billion in 2003-04 to \$200 billion in 2008-09, the total for 2004-5 *should* be \$214.4 billion.

Estimation is made as to how much money could be saved after the government controlled its spending. An assessment is provided on what is known to the FS. The tentative meaning of *should* is used, indicating that the reduced amount \$214.4 billion is only an approximation. The use of *should* means that the utterance is heard as an estimation, associated with tentativeness.

CBUDS

In the 2007–08 Budget Speech, the FS provided some data for the past few years about economic development and confirmed that the government was on the right track.

Extract

The inflation rate for 2007 is expected to come down to 1.5 per cent. Moderate inflation is *generally* regarded by economists as a healthy sign in an economy, and *should* not be a cause for concern.

The FS assumes that the moderate inflation rate in 2007 would not be a cause for concern. *Should* is used, together with the tentative adverb *generally*, to express a reasonable prediction. The negation *should not* does not affect the tentativeness of the utterance and it can be interpreted as “possible not” (Palmer, 1986: 62). The FS expresses his assumption that there will be no substantial effect when moderate inflation is regarded as a healthy sign.

In sum, there are differences in the use of modal auxiliaries for epistemic purpose in the three corpora. In CBUDS, the frequency is the highest (88.01 per 10,000 words). The relative instances in CBUSS are noticeably higher than in CORDS, showing 77.47 and 59.51 per 10,000 words respectively. Below is the analysis of epistemic verbs.

7.6.2 Lexical verbs

Although there have not been many investigations providing empirical results in the area of hedging by means of full verbs, Hyland (1998a: 126) does provide a list of epistemic verbs, with numerical results in his study. The list can be treated as hedges to mitigate the strength of an expression or to signify the non-factual status of a proposition.

By using Hyland's (1998a) model and based on the basic meanings of different verbs, the instances of epistemic lexical verbs are examined in the data by assigning them to distinct lexical sets such as judgemental verbs, speculative verbs (*e.g. hope, speculate*), deductive verbs (*e.g. estimate, agree*) and evidential verbs (*e.g. report, note*). A summary of the frequency and functions of each category of the lexical verbs is shown in table 24 below.

Table 24: Frequencies and functions of verbal hedges

Communicative functions	CORDS per 10,000 words	CBUSS per 10,000 words	CBUDS per 10,000 words	Total per 10,000 words
Speculative verbs	26.41	39.27	48.85	114.53
Deductive verbs	1.67	3.75	11.06	16.48
Evidential verbs	3.01	9.10	6.22	18.33
Total	31.09	52.12	66.13	149.34

Altogether, the FS used 33 different hedging verbs 672 times. The three corpora contain 17, 30, and 25 different verbs respectively. Turning to the relative total instances of verbs in the speculative, deductive, and evidential categories, the results show that the FS uses 114.53, 16.48, and 18.33 per 10,000 words respectively. This shows that the instances of deductive verbs and evidential verbs are noticeably lower than the speculative verbs. Further differences are detected among the three corpora. The relative instances in CBUDS, CBUSS and CORDS are 66.13, 52.12 and 31.09 respectively. This shows that the FS uses more hedging verbs in the budget speeches while CORDS has the lowest usage.

Why do these differences exist? There may be a number of possibilities. A government budget gives details of the amount of money a government will probably

spend and collect in the coming year. Since a budget is for future reference, it requires lots of predictions. Therefore the FS may apply a more conjectural or speculative approach in order to show his tentative and cautious judgements in the budget. Another possible reason for the higher use of speculative verbs is that the FS uses more verbs of cognition such as *hope*, *wish*, and *think* in his speeches. They are associated with the mental state of mind of speaker and are more likely to occur in spoken events than academic discourse (Biber et al., 1999; Declerck, 1991: 168; Holmes, 1988a). It is also of the fact that the FS frequently uses performative verbs (e.g. *propose*, *believe*, and *consider*) to vary the illocutionary forces of his speeches to avoid direct involvement or commitment on the propositions uttered or to make his opinion tentative.

Thus, the greater use of speculative verbs in CBUDS by the FS, on the one hand, can avoid future challenges in his propositional content if he is inaccurate in his predictions. On the other hand, he may soften his assertiveness with the legislative councillors for further negotiation of the proposals. It is because the budget proposals need the endorsement from the councillors. Another plausible reason is that he does not know things in future as it involves many elements of uncertainty and changes. The information presented in CBUSS may sometimes be related to the current financial status in Hong Kong rather than future projections. Therefore, speculative markers are less frequent in CBUSS when compared with CBUDS.

The results also show that the FS uses fewer speculative verbs in CORDS (26.41) when compared with CBUSS (39.27) and CBUDS (48.85). CORDS usually involves the FS making a speech at events such as inaugural ceremonies of symposia or business events, or celebrations of anniversaries or awards. The audience may not be interested in matters other than the specific purposes of the events. On these occasions, the FS usually addresses the purposes of the events by expressing thanks to the host offering him the opportunities to contribute to the event. Giving deference, showing interest, or claiming in-group membership with the host and audience are the strategies commonly seen in this corpus. Addressing business issues related to purpose of the event is only supplementary information that the FS would like the audience to know. As such, addressing the economic outlook or financial matters is not commonly seen in CORDS. Therefore, any anticipation of disagreement with his

views or receiving challenges is unlikely and therefore the expression of doubt and tentativeness in CORDS are less common.

Deductive verbs appear to give the impression that the information comes from inferential reasons or theoretical calculations from evidence (Hyland, 1998a: 121). When comparing with the frequency of deductive verbs, CBUDS has the highest frequency (11.06) among the three corpora. A budget is a plan for the careful use of money in a way that will bring most advantage to the people of Hong Kong. Although there are a lot of estimations and projections, many figures in the budget are derived from a process of reasoning and principles based on repeated circumstances in the past. Thus, the higher frequency of deductive verbs in CBUDS seems to indicate that the FS has considered the factual status of the situation in Hong Kong or the evidence he has on hand. Using a higher frequency of deductive verbs can help the FS, on the one hand, to achieve broader acceptance because it can indicate that the budget is based on a deduction of known facts. On the other hand, the FS can evade possible criticism from the legislative councillors because the use of deductive verbs can also indicate that the budget propositions are also based on some uncertain factors, which are unknown to the FS.

The FS uses a higher number of evidential verbs in CBUSS when compared with CORDS and CBUDS in which their frequencies are 9.01, 6.22 and 3.01 respectively. In CBUSS, the FS is usually asked to give information about the current financial status in Hong Kong. The speeches are not such high stakes events as those in CBUDS because they do not require appealing for acceptance of the budget proposals from the legislative councillors. This information may come from the sources of “seen”, “heard”, “told”, “deduced from evidence”, “hearsay from a known source”, and “hearsay from an unknown source” (Palmer, 2001: 38). Applying more evidential hedging verbs may help to mitigate the responsibility of FS because the degrees of reliability may vary depending on the sources (Chafe, 1986). Another possible reason is that a greater variety of topics is seen in CBUSS when compared with CORDS and CBUDS because different professional bodies and overseas market players invite the FS to give speeches for specific purposes. The FS may need to collect more information from various sources to match the purposes of the events. Citing the sources of the information can allow the FS to limit his commitment because they are

from “hearsay” or “reported” evidence. Below is the qualitative analysis of each type of verbs.

7.6.2.1 Speculative verbs

CORDS

The speech below was from the HKU-Fudan University MBA Graduation Ceremony in November 2003 at the Shanghai International Convention Centre. The FS welcomed the co-operation between the two universities and said establishing such co-operation might foster closer economic ties between the two cities.

Extract

Given our motherland’s rapid growth, it is a win-win situation as there is ample room for more than one trade and financial centre in China. Indeed, it would be odd to *suggest* that one financial centre, or one trade and commerce hub, could serve the entire country, particularly a country that is growing fast and with rising living standards and such a huge population.

In the speech, the FS encourages closer co-operation between Shanghai and Hong Kong so that these two financial centres can serve the whole country. The tentative nature of the speculative verb *suggest* can soften other people’s idea that one financial centre, or one trade and commerce hub could serve the entire country. The use of *suggest* can also mitigate the negative effect of the adjacent word “odd” which may be unwelcome to the hearers.

CBUDS

In the 2006-2007 Budget Speech, the FS introduced the infrastructure projects that the government wanted to commence.

Extract

Future plans include the Concept Plan for Lantau, which *proposes* to develop green and cultural tourism in South Lantau.

There is no final decision as to how South Lantau is to be developed. The Concept Plan of Lantau may change. The use of the speculative verb *proposes* reflects that the development plan is tentative not yet in finalized.

7.6.2.2 Deductive verbs

CORDS

At the opening ceremony of the "3rd Hong Kong Tourism Symposium: "Quality and Diversity" at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre on March 18, 2004, the FS discussed the prospect of the tourism industry in Hong Kong in 2004. He also urged members of the industry, academics, journalists and all those who played a role in our tourism industry, to work together and identify the opportunities and challenges that laid ahead Hong Kong.

Extract

We received more than 15 million visitors in 2003, the second highest on record. The estimated expenditure related to inbound tourism topped \$70 billion, and more than 120,000 jobs were associated directly with the tourism industry. The prospect for 2004 is even better. The Hong Kong Tourism Board *forecasts* that we will receive more than 20 million visitors, a 30% increase over last year.

Forecasts has the meaning of predicting future events. Based on the available information in 2003, the FS deduces what is the prospective number of visitors in 2004. The prospective figures only account for tentative results obtained from observable facts, but not empirically proven. By referring to the source from the Hong Kong Tourism Board, the FS can avoid committing himself to a precise number, which he may not know.

CBUSS

At the Joint Business Community Luncheon on the 2005-06 Budget at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre on March 23, 2005, the FS gave his forecast for government expenditure in the next few years.

Extract

Barring unforeseen circumstances, we *project* that the share of public expenditure will drop below 20% of GDP in 2006-07, two years ahead of our target date.

Based on the available information, the FS presents his estimation for public expenditure in 2006-07. As the projected 20% dropped may not be empirically validated, the use of the verb *project* is more or less his subjective judgement to avoid committing himself to the precise percentage of the decrease of which cannot be known exactly. But the use of *project* still can give the impression that the information presented is derived from inferential reasoning (Hyland, 1998a: 131).

7.6.2.3 Evidential verbs

CBUSS

Extract below was from the Penta Forum Feb 2004 for participants from different sectors to brainstorm future strategies to bring Hong Kong to new heights in its leading financial role in the Asian Pacific region.

Extract

Under the principle of “Big market, Small Government”, public expenditure would also be controlled and reduced to 20%, or below, of our GDP. As stated in the Policy Address, we will *seek* to strike a delicate balance between reducing the fiscal deficit and safeguarding people’s livelihood, and give our community adequate time to recover.

The use of the evidential verb *seek* indicates that, based on his justification from evidence such as reports from other departments, the FS tries to adjust a balance between reducing the fiscal deficit and safeguarding people’s livelihoods. The use of *seek* underlines the uncertainty of achieving such a balance in the future.

CBUDS

In the 2005-2006 Budget Speech, the FS presented his plan to develop Lantau.

Extract

The public is generally in support of a balanced and co-ordinated approach to planning the future development of Lantau. However, there are those who *feel* that no further development in Lantau should be carried out.

The FS may have sensed or heard that there are suggestions from the public not to further develop Lantau. The use of a verb of perception⁴³ *feel* helps to indicate that what is said relies on the speaker's sense or perception after analysing the evidence collected from other sources. The FS uses *feel* to hedge the strength of his utterance, by only expressing the views collected from other sources that some people are reluctant to see further development in Lantau.

In sum, the FS uses all three categories of epistemic lexical verbs in his three types of speech. The relative instances of speculative verbs are higher than evidential verbs and deductive verbs. CBUDS has the highest usage and followed by CBUSS and CORDS respectively across the three categories of verb. The results also show that the FS has a preferential use of these three types of verb to adjust the different strength of claims of the three corpora, such as: i) speculative and deductive verbs in CBUDS over CBUSS and CORDS; and ii) evidential verbs in CBUSS over CORDS and CBUDS.

7.6.2.4 Past tense forms

Researchers have attempted to describe tense usage to hedge scientific discourse (Malcolm, 1987; Trimble, 1985). Hyland (1998a: 129) considers that tense usage may play an important role in presenting information. The use of present forms may be related to making immediate or present claims or that the speaker or writer is confident of their proposition. The use of epistemic verbs in the simple present form to hedge

⁴³ Verbs of perception are denoted “private” states which can only be subjectively verified: i.e. states of mind, volition, and attitude (Quirk et al, 1985: 203)

may give the impression about the validity of a proposition at the present moment while the non-present form indicates “a greater distance to be created between the statement and the writer” (Hyland, 1998a: 129). As such, Hyland (1998a) postulates that past or perfect tenses can be used to “increase the strength of the hedge by removing the statement from the present, making the claim more remote, and thus de-emphasising its current importance” (Hyland, 1998a: 129).

Table 25 below shows the frequencies of the grammatical forms of verbs used by the FS for hedging purpose.

Table 25: Comparison of grammatical forms of verbal hedges in the corpora

Verb forms	CORDS		CBUSS		CBUDS		Total No.	Total %
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Simple Present	52	82	233	77	187	75	472	77
-base form	52	82	224	74	183	73	459	75
-s form	0	0	9	3	4	2	13	2
-ed/ing form	12	18	69	23	62	25	143	23
-past form	6	9	34	11	38	15	78	13
-ing participle	6	9	35	12	24	10	65	10
Total	64	100	302	100	249	100	615	100

Table 25 shows that 77% of the epistemic verbs are used in the present base and third person singular forms. Past tense or past perfect forms account for 13% and present participle forms 10%. Both CBUSS and CBUDS are similar in the use present tense forms at 77% and 75% respectively whereas CORDS uses a higher frequency of 82%.

Present tense forms refer “to a situation that includes or coincides with the moment of utterance” (Malcolm, 1987: 34). Hinkel (1997b: 290) views that “spoken interactions most frequently take place in real or objective time, with the context structured around the notion of *now*”. Hinkel (1997b: 290) further remarks that “the use of tenses in English is determined by context and should be examined in respect to events in the physical world and relationships among them”. Therefore, a possible explanation for the greater usage of present tense forms is that the information

presented is based on temporal contexts when the FS is making a speech. The information is mainly related to factual events or the current financial situations in Hong Kong such as providing progress reports on large infrastructure projects, and the current development of CEPA with Guangdong Province. Another possible explanation is that the FS uses a higher number of performative hedging verbs, such as *believe*, and *think*, in his speeches. *Believe*, and *think* are cognitive verbs and usually occur in the present tense form (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002: 170). The use of the disclaimers (e.g. *I believe*, *I think*) can help the FS to hedge his statements for avoiding FTAs in case his opinions may be questioned at the speeches.

The three corpora have similar percentages of past forms, 9%, 12%, and 10% respectively. Past forms refer “to a situation that occurred prior to the moment of utterance” (Malcolm, 1987: 34). One possible explanation for the higher usage of past tense to hedge in CBUSS is that the FS may need to refer back to some background information from a past point of view to support his explanation and comparison between the previous and present business environment. It is of the fact that, at certain sensible issues, the FS may want to remove his utterances from the present time when presenting the speech to make his claims more indirect. Examples of the past form in the corpora are shown below.

CBUSS

At the Joint Business Community Luncheon on the 2004-5 Budget, the FS expressed his thanks to the international business community in their support to the economic recovery of Hong Kong after the SARS crisis. He further explained the new vehicle licence policy to the audience.

Extract

Under the new Personalised Vehicle Registration Mark scheme, you'll be free to put vanity plates on your car that say "RICH GUY" or "TOPNOTCH". Someone *suggested* I could display "TAX MAN" on my car, but I rather like "USER PAYS".

The use of the past tense form “suggested” without mentioning a definite time⁴⁴ in the past is understood that the suggestions were received at a given time in the past. The utterance seems more remote as it does not specify the length of time between receiving the suggestions in the past to the moment when giving the speech. In such way, it adds strength to the speculative hedging verb so as to make the proposition “display “TAX MAN” on my car” more hypothetical and remote which is obviously the case as the FS is joking.

CBUDS

In the 2005-06 Budget Speech on 16th March 2005, the FS discussed the recent establishment of a Commission to help the poor, and promoting self-reliance.

Extract

At the first meeting of the Commission, members *agreed* that its objectives should be to prevent and alleviate poverty and promote self-reliance.

The syntactic use of *agreed* can provide a gap between a time in the past and the time of giving the speech (Leech & Svartvik, 1975: 69). As such, the cognitive hedge verb may serve to remove the FS’s claim that the Commission has finalized its objectives and corrective actions have been implemented to prevent and alleviate poverty.

In sum, present forms dominate the speeches across the three corpora at 77%. Past and perfect forms make up 23%. The dominance of the present forms may be due to what the FS presents in his speeches is usually tied to the current events or the current financial status of Hong Kong. The following section is an analysis of nouns.

⁴⁴ The past tense form can sometimes be used when no definite time is easily apparent. For example, “Hello, did you get any letters?” (Leech, et al, 1975: 69)

7.6.3 Nouns

This study subcategorises nouns into nonfactive assertive nouns, tentative cognition nouns, and nouns of tentative likelihood as suggested by Varttala (2001). A summary of the three types of noun and their relative frequencies is shown in Table 26 below.

Table 26: Frequencies and functions of noun hedges

Communicative functions	CORDS Frequency Per 10,000 words	CBUSS Frequency Per 10,000 words	CBUDS Frequency Per 10,000 words	Total Frequency Per 10,000 words
Nonfactive assertive	1.34	3.39	8.06	12.79
Tentative Cognition	4.68	4.64	6.91	16.23
Tentative Likelihood	5.68	7.68	3.69	17.05
Total	11.70	15.71	18.66	46.07

Across the three types of noun, six different nouns are found in the nonfactive assertive category with 58 instances. The noun most frequently used as a hedge is *forecast(s)* at 7.03 per 10,000 words. In the tentative cognitive category, 70 instances with 15 different nouns are found across three corpora. The most frequent tentative cognitive noun used as a hedge is *estimate(s)* at 3.4 per 10,000 words. Both *forecast(s)* and *estimate(s)* have a greater use in CBUDS than in CBUSS, but they do not appear in CORDS. One possible reason is that CBUDS, unlike CORDS, always involves predictions of the fiscal reserves, percentage of GDP growth, and interest rates. The use of these two nouns can help FS to hedge the exactitude of the numerical data when providing financial data in both CBUSS and CBUDS. The main purpose of CORDS is ceremonial in nature and so economic or financial predictions may not be necessary. Eight different devices with 76 instances are found in the nouns of tentative likelihood category across the three corpora. The most common noun used as a hedge is *potential(s)* at 9.52 per 10,000 words. Among the three corpora, this noun appears most frequently in CBUSS. One possible explanation is that one of the main purposes of giving the business speeches is to promote the financial image of Hong Kong. In the speeches, the FS may need to use *potential(s)* to describe the likelihood of financial

growth and developments in Hong Kong to arouse the interest of the potential investors. The use of *potential(s)* can help the FS to manipulate the degree of precision of the information provided.

Across the three corpora, the FS uses a higher frequency of nouns in hedging the budget speeches. In CBUDS, the highest relative share is nonfactive assertive nouns (8.06; n=35), followed by tentative cognition nouns (6.91; n=30), and tentative likelihood nouns (3.69; n=16). CBUDS are high stakes speeches where plans for using the public's money by the government are presented. Many predictions based on financial data are presented. The FS may use a higher frequency of noun hedges to indicate that what is said is for future projections, which involves uncertainty. One plausible explanation for the higher frequency of nonfactive assertive nouns in CBUDS is the higher frequency of *forecast(s)* and the possible reason for the higher use of this noun is stated above. In CBUSS, nouns of tentative likelihood exhibit the highest frequency (7.68) followed by tentative cognition nouns (4.64) and nonfactive assertive nouns (3.39). In CORDS, nouns of tentative likelihood have the highest frequency (5.68) followed by tentative cognition nouns (4.68) and nonfactive assertive nouns (1.34). One possible reason for the higher use of nouns of tentative likelihood in both CBUSS and CORDS is the greater use of *potential(s)* and the possible reason for the higher use of this noun is stated above. The widest variety of nouns is found in CBUSS, with 25 different nouns whereas CBUDS and CORDS show 16 and 14 different nouns respectively. One reason for a greater variety of topics in CBUSS is that the FS is invited to give speeches to different local and overseas professional bodies for various purposes such as promoting the financial image of Hong Kong. The FS may need to collect more information from various sources to support his claims. However, the validity of information may not be known. In this regard, a wider range of nouns is used to enable the FS to establish a series of reasoning for his utterances becoming more abstract and uncertain. Examples of each type of noun from the three corpora are shown below.

7.6.3.1 Nonfactive assertive nouns

CBUSS

At the luncheon of the Second Pearl River Delta Conference on 17th Oct 2003, the FS indicated that it was an opportune time to discuss the benefits of the Greater Pearl River Delta business model.

Extract

We government, are here to assist, whenever appropriate, in your business endeavours. And as always, we very much welcome views and *suggestions* from you on how best to further take forward the cooperation between the Mainland and Hong Kong and our initiatives in the great Pearl River Delta.

Suggestion has the meaning of putting forward a proposal for consideration. It may be the fact that the FS does not want to commit or implement the ideas from others. The use of *suggestion* is a courtesy gesture only to indicate his openness accepting new ideas.

CBUDS

In the 2004-05 Budget Speech, the FS described the sustained rapid economic growth in the Mainland and how the continued opening-up of its market would create abundant business opportunities for Hong Kong.

Extract

But we still have to be alert to certain caveats including developments in the US economy following this year's presidential election, movements in US interest rates and the US dollar exchange rate, the ongoing situation in the European Union economy, and geopolitical risks. Changes in these factors will have *implications* for the global economic climate, and in turn for the medium-term outlook of our economy.

Implications has the meaning of possible later effects of an action. Thus, the effects are only possible but not certain. The use of *implications* indicates that the FS hedges his opinion that the US interest rate, US dollar exchange rate and the geopolitical risks may have possible effects on the economy of Hong Kong,

but the effects are by nature speculative, nonfactive and not empirically validated.

7.6.3.2 Tentative cognition nouns

CORDS

At the Opening Ceremony of Institute of Nanomaterials and Nanotechnology Technical Advisory Committee Meeting on December 3, 2004, the FS expressed his thanks to the Institute for providing a regional and international focal point for nanotechnology research and development.

Extract

Since the Chief Executive officiated at the Inauguration of this Institute last year, we all have high *expectations* that it *could* give Hong Kong a headstart in this cutting-edge emerging science.

Expectations is a noun of cognition which refers to the state of mind but no action performed (Declerck, 1991). It may also convey a vague idea (Varttala, 2001: 175). The FS may not have the specific details given by the Chief Executive (CE) when the CE officiated at the inauguration of the Institute last year. The use of *expectations* indicates that, as a polite gesture, the FS only refers to a belief, brief indication or vague idea of the CE at the inauguration for minimizing the face threat to the organizers

CBUSS

At the opening of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) TELECOM WORLD 2006 on December 4, 2006, the FS shared with the audience his views on the roles of governments in the digital world.

Extract

There are many people throughout the world, whether in developed or developing economies, who may be deprived of the opportunity to access

information digitally and process it into knowledge. *In my view*, it is squarely governments' responsibility to reduce this "digital divide" in a modern society. The United Nations ICT Task Force has identified three types of digital (1)

In my view has similar meaning to *in my opinion* as both describe the belief or assumption of the speaker. The use of *view* indicates that what is put forward as a tentative thought of the FS and the accuracy of the view is open to interpretation.

7.6.3.3 Nouns of tentative likelihood

CBUSS

At the second Citigroup Asia Pacific Fixed Income Investor Conference in January 2005, the FS discussed the bond market development in Hong Kong, which had long been the focus of HKSAR Government, and which the audience had a real interest in.

Extract

But the stock market picked up most of the slack, accounting for nearly 70% of total financing in 2003. The bond market's share rose marginally to just 7%. That compared with over 47% in the US. So you can see the huge *potential* we have yet to realize.

Potential indicates that what is discussed is “likely to apply, this may not be necessarily so” (Varttala, 2001: 142). The use of *potential* indicates a likelihood of growth of the bond market of Hong Kong in line with other bond markets. However, the growth is not a must. In other words, the likelihood of growth in the Hong Kong bond market is only putative but not empirically validated.

CBUDS

In the 2007/2008 Budget Speech, the FS indicated the economic development of Hong Kong, its continued integration with the Mainland and the continuous upgrading of productivity had been seen in Hong Kong's economy.

Extract

The continuous upgrading of productivity has seen our economy achieving strong growth whilst keeping our inflation rate at the relatively low level of 2 per cent during 2006. The underlying *trend* is for a further mild increase in 2007, with the inflation rate forecast to average 3.5 per cent over the following four years.

The meaning of *trend* involves an element of probability as it is based on the results of the reported tendency in the past. The use of *trend* helps the FS to hedge his utterance by incorporating an element of possibility or likelihood in his 2007 inflation rate forecast. However, the 3.5 per cent inflation rate may not be invariably accurate. The sentence is more tentative when “trend” is associated with “over the following four years”

In summary, the nouns identified in the corpora share a component that the FS tends to express a degree of tentativeness or manipulate the degree of numerical precision in presenting budget speeches. Similar to the findings regarding the use of hedge verbs, the FS uses more nouns to hedge in CBUDS than in CBUSS and CORDS. However, the total frequency of noun hedges (46.07; n=204) is lower than the frequency of verbal hedges (149.34; n=672). Below is an analysis of adjective hedges.

7.6.4 Adjectives

This study subcategories adjective into probability adjectives, adjectives of indefinite frequency, adjectives of indefinite degree, and approximative adjectives. The classification is based on their communicative functions. A summary of the four types of adjective and their relative frequencies is shown in Table 27 below.

Table 27: Frequencies and functions of adjective hedges

Communicative functions	CORDS Frequency Per 10,000 words	CBUSS Frequency Per 10,000 words	CBUDS Frequency Per 10,000 words	Total Frequency Per 10,000 words
Probability adjectives	0.33	5.89	4.61	10.83
Adjectives of indefinite frequency	1.00	3.03	0.23	4.26
Adjectives of indefinite degree	5.35	4.65	6.22	16.22
Approximative adjectives	1.68	0.89	1.61	4.18
Total	8.36	14.46	12.67	35.49

Table 27 shows that there are slight differences when the FS uses adjectives to hedge. A bigger selection of adjectives of indefinite degree is found across all the three corpora. As to the other categories, the frequency of probability adjectives ranks the second. The frequencies of indefinite frequency adjectives and approximative adjectives are relatively lower. Fewer differences in the indefinite frequency adjectives and approximative adjectives are found across the three corpora.

The frequencies of adjectives manifested in CBUSS and CBUDS are similar, with (14.46) and (12.67) respectively. In CORDS, the frequency is comparatively lower, (8.36). The results suggest that in an ordinary speech, such as the opening ceremony of a trade fair, the FS may not necessarily to use adjectives to hedge his messages, as the purposes of the event do not require him to provide sensitive or unclear information. The variety of devices used in the different corpora is 11, 22 and 17 respectively in the corpora. The reason for the wider range of different devices in CBUSS is similar to the findings of nouns described in section 7.6.3.1.

It is also noted that a narrower array is found in the approximative adjective category, with two different items identified across the three corpora. One of the reasons would be that other categories of hedging with approximative meaning could easily replace the approximative adjectives. For example, *estimated* can be replaced by *about*, a category of approximative adverbs. Below is an analysis of the each category of the adjectives.

7.6.4.1 Probability adjectives

Probability adjectives (e.g. *possible*, *probable*, *likely*, *necessary*) are used to present the speaker's propositions as an opinion instead of as facts. Devices of this category can also indicate various degrees of probability, certainty and accuracy (Varttala, 2001). In the three corpora, eight different probability adjectives with 54 instances are identified. The most frequent items across the three corpora are *possible* (3.75) and *proposed* (3.22). *Possible* is also one of the most frequently occurring epistemic adjectives in Holmes' (1988a) ESL textbooks study and Varttala's (2001) scientific discourse study. Varttala (2001: 175) states that *possible* "can be used to express both deontic and epistemic possibility" just like the "distinction between the auxiliaries *can* and *may* as stated by Perkins (1983: 79)" (ibid.). The deontic use of *possible* has a parallel construction of *it is possible for/to* and the epistemic use of *possible* also has a construction of *it is possible that*. However, in many cases the distinction becomes blurred when *possible* is used attributively or predicatively. When there are indeterminate cases between deontic and epistemic meaning, the adjective is counted as a hedging device because theoretically it also has an indication of tentativeness. The following are examples of *possible* and *proposed* used for hedging purposes.

CBUSS

At the Legislative Council meeting in October 2002, the FS provided an update on Hong Kong's economy and the management of public finances to the councillors.

Extract

Another *possible* source of funding for capital spending, I stress capital, not recurrent, spending is the issuance of bonds. This is one option that I have already raised since taking up this post.

"*Another possible*" indicates that there might be alternative sources of funding for capital spending, and the issue of bonds is only one of the sources. The FS

expresses his epistemic judgment that there may be other suitable alternatives for funding in the financial markets.

CBUDS

At the 2005-06 Budget Speech, the FS proposed some suggestions for how the government might restore the fiscal balance in the years ahead. The introduction of GST is one of the suggestions.

Extract

Our proposal to abolish estate duty will encourage the further development of Hong Kong as an international financial centre. For the *proposed* introduction of GST, the Government will give the public ample opportunity to express their views.

The use of *proposed* indicates that the FS expresses his view that the introduction of GST is only at the stage of being put forward to public for consultation. No decision is made yet that GST will definitely be introduced. Another possible explanation is that *proposed* indicates various degree of probability. It has a down toning function, lowering the degree of urgency on the introduction of GST. It may indicate that the FS is reluctant to introduce the GST, but just briefly mentioning the possibility of the introduction of GST. It suggests the lack of commitment to the introduction of GST by the FS.

7.6.4.2 Adjectives of indefinite frequency

Frequency expressions are usually used to answer the question of “How many times?” or “How often?” (Leech & Svartvik, 2002). They are devices which range along the commonly used scale from *always*, *through*, *usually*, *often*, *sometimes* to *never* (Kennedy, 1987). Indefinite frequency adjectives are devices between the two poles on the scale as “a rough indication of frequency” (Leech & Svartvik, 2002: 91). Varttala (2001) also states that this type of adjective (e.g. *general*, *common*, *normal*, *ordinary*, *usual*) relates to tentative quantifications in an expression in which the indication of exact frequency may not be necessary. The use of these adjectives is

sufficient to show the general characteristics of a given phenomenon. It also indicates that “what is said may not capture the full picture of the phenomenon insofar as it may not necessarily apply to each and every case” (Varttala, 2001: 136). Below are examples.

CBUSS

The following speech was given at the Gala Dinner in Auckland on 22nd May 06. In the speech, the FS informed the audience about the business opportunities in Hong Kong for the people of New Zealand.

Extract

Strong ties with New Zealand and Hong Kong have a history of excellent relations. We have many things in *common* as well.

The adjective hedge has the meaning of similar. The collocate *common* with *many things* indicates that what is said is only a general view of the FS but no further definite frequency as well as the clarification of the similarity are mentioned. The FS might think that the use of the vague adjective is well enough for this social setting rather than to convey precise information.

CBUDS

At the 2005-06 Budget Speech, the FS said our financial services industry was a high value-added industry and very important to our economy: its direct contribution was 13 per cent of GDP. The industry also fostered growth in a number of professional services, and this in turn became a strong driving force for other sectors, such as real estate and the consumer market.

Extract

With globalisation of the industry, the flows of capital, financial talent and expertise have become easier and more *frequent*, and have created new opportunities for Hong Kong.

The use of *frequent* is an indication that the number of times is increasing and this is “based on the most characteristic features of a given phenomenon” (Varttala, 2001: 136). The use of *frequent* is only a tentative quantification marking that the number of times of the flows of capital, financial talent and expertise are increasing. The FS might think that numerical precision of the number of times of the flows is not required but showing a general phenomenon is sufficient in this social setting.

7.6.4.3 Adjectives of indefinite degree

Adjectives of indefinite degree are a useful means for indicating “epistemic qualification” (Varttala, 2001: 131). This type of adjective is frequently used to mitigate “the definiteness of the utterance or to avoid committing to precise numbers” (Varttala, 2001: 137). Below are examples of the indefinite degree hedges.

CBUDS

At the 2007-2008 Budget Speech, the FS discussed his plans to create new posts in the civil service to pre-empt possible succession problems and meet the increasing demand for public services.

Extract

By adhering to the principle of broad comparability between civil service and private sector pay, we ensure that civil service remuneration is considered *fair* by both civil servants and the public.

The use of *fair* is to reduce the degree of precision of what is said to avoid committing to any exact level. In addition, *fair* is collocated with a tentative cognition verb *considered* to make the utterance more tentative in nature, allowing the FS to reduce the certainty on the level of the civil remuneration for avoiding the risk of rejection by the audience.

CORDS

At the Welcome Luncheon hosted by BASELWORLD, organizer of the watch and jewellery fair on April 15, 2004, the FS described the watch and jewellery industry in Hong Kong

Extract

Hong Kong and Switzerland share many similarities – we are both *relatively small* economies but significant players in the international trade and services community.

Small has the meaning of indefinite degree. It leaves “open the exact degree to which the information presented” (Varttala, 2001: 131). The use of *small* allows the FS to manipulate the degree of exactness of the economic sizes of Hong Kong and Switzerland. In addition, the collocation of *small* + *relatively*, which also increases the degree of indefiniteness, might be considered vague. But it still can provide sufficient information in this context.

7.6.4.4 Approximative adjectives

Numerical expressions and quantities can be commonly hedged by approximative adjectives so as to avoid committing to precise quantification (Hyland, 1998a: 139). Such approximative adjectives allow the FS to manipulate the approximate nature of the information presented. The following are examples where the approximative adjectives are used for hedging purposes.

CORDS

At the Presentation Ceremony of Awards for Industry dated 15th November 2004, the FS emphasized that the role of the manufacturing industry in Hong Kong's economy should not be overlooked even though the majority of the factories have moved northwards.

Extract

So far, the Hong Kong SAR Government has approved over 2 600 applications of certificate of Hong Kong origin for CEPA on goods produced in Hong Kong

valued at *close to* \$1 billion, covering textiles and clothing, medicine, plastics, electrical and electronic products, chemicals, etc.

At the time of giving the speech, the FS may not have, on hand, the exact amount of goods originated for CEPA. The use of *close to* can help him to lessen the definiteness of what is being said to avoid mentioning an inaccurate figure in the conference. Another possible reason is that mentioning a precise figure may not be necessary and a tentative indication of the figure is sufficient in this context.

CBUSS

At the closing plenary session of Credit Lyonnais Securities (CLSA) Investors' Forum on the 22nd September 2003, the FS discussed the tremendous advantages that Hong Kong has as a place in which to make investments.

Extract

Indeed, the demonstrations on July 1st - when an *estimated* half a million people took to our streets in a peaceful and sensible manner, without violence that often mars incidents in other capitals around the world - shows how the people of Hong Kong value and respect our freedom.

The use of *estimated* is to manipulate the exactness of the numbers (Hyland, 1998a). One possible reason is that it helps the FS to avoid a potential challenge on the accuracy on the number of people taken to the streets. Another possible reason is that the exactness of the number of people may not be necessary in this context, the use of *estimated* can still give an indication as to the amount of people demonstrating. Below is an analysis of adverbial hedges.

7.6.5 Adverbs

This study classifies adverbs into probability adverbs, adverbs of indefinite frequency, adverbs of indefinite degree, and approximative adverbs as suggested by Varttala (2001). Table 28 below shows the frequencies and functions of adverbs in the three corpora.

Table 28: Frequencies and functions of adverb hedges

Communicative functions	CORDS Frequency Per 10,000 words	CBUSS Frequency Per 10,000 words	CBUDS Frequency Per 10,000 words	Total Frequency Per 10,000 words
Probability adverbs	2.01	4.28	0.69	6.98
Adverbs of indefinite frequency	0.33	0.89	0.23	1.45
Adverbs of indefinite degree	1.34	2.50	2.53	6.37
Approximative adverbs	14.04	27.49	36.86	78.39
Total	17.72	35.16	40.31	93.19

In Table 28, frequency differences are seen. For example, there is much lower frequency in CORDS. Across the three corpora, there are eight different probability adverbs with a frequency of 6.98. CBUSS has the highest instances of probability adverbs at 4.28. In the indefinite frequency adverbs category, only four different adverbs with a total frequency of 1.45 are found, which is the lowest among the four types of adverb. The frequency is at 6.37 with 29 instances in the category of adverbs of indefinite degree. The indefinite degree adverbs in CBUDS have the highest frequency of 2.53 followed by CBUSS and CORDS respectively. As to the variety of choice, a wider selection of eight different devices of indefinite degree adverbs is found in CBUSS. CORDS and CBUDS have four and six different devices respectively. In the last category of approximative adverbs, there is a total frequency of 78.39, which is the highest among the four categories. CBUDS is the most heavily hedged with a frequency of 36.86 and followed by CBUSS and CORDS. Altogether, nine different devices are used across three corpora. Totally, twenty-five different devices are found in CBUSS and 15 and 17 different devices are used in CORDS and CBUDS respectively.

The findings show some differences among the corpora in the use of the four categories of adverb as hedges in respect of either the frequencies or different devices used. Approximative adverbs are the most frequently used ones among the four categories. They are used as modifiers of numerical expressions. Similar to the findings on the use of adjectives, CBUDS has the greatest use and is followed by CBUSS and CORDS. Such a frequency pattern seems to be associated with the nature

of CBUSS and CBUDS. The FS always needs to provide numerical data relating to the financial matters in Hong Kong in these two types of speeches. Approximative adverbs can give tentative approximations insofar as to hedge the exactness of his information while at the same time indicating that the information provided is relevant. With regard to the selection of different devices used as hedges, 11 different adverbs of indefinite degree are found, which is the highest among the four categories. It is used frequently to hedge the numerical data when exact figures or numbers are not necessary or unobtainable when giving speeches in both CBUSS and CBUDS. It is interesting to note that the frequency of indefinite frequency adverbs is the lowest among the four categories of adverbs. They are used to hedge by not indicating the precise frequency. One possible reason for their low frequency is that, for one reason or another, the FS does not need to provide the precise number of times in the information presented. The following discusses the findings for each type of adverb found in the corpora.

7.6.5.1 Probability adverbs

Probability adverbs are linked to modality as they convey the speaker's tentative judgment on the proposition (Perkins, 1983). Of the two groups⁴⁵ of disjuncts suggested by Quirk, et al. (1972: 511; 1985: 620-621), these adverbs usually express "some degree of doubt" or "state the sense in which the speaker judges what he says to be true or false" (ibid.) and are related to hedging. One common characteristic of these adverbs is that they "express a certain level of probability between the absolutes of true and false" (Varttala, 2001: 128). Below are examples showing how the FS uses these adverbs to hedge his statements.

CORDS

⁴⁵ Adverbs as disjuncts are classified into: "style disjuncts – convey the speaker's comments on the form of what he is saying, defining into some way under what conditions he is speaking (e.g. *generally*, *roughly*, *simply*); attitudinal disjuncts – comment on the content of the communication" (*maybe*, *perhaps*, *possibly*, *supposedly*) Quirk et al. (1972: 620-621).

At the Launching Ceremony of Youth Business Hong Kong on 12 July 2005, the FS stated that he was pleased to note that the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups is giving help to young people develop their entrepreneurial skills. He also gave advice to young people.

Extract

To have the courage to concede defeat, accept responsibility, learn from your own mistakes and rise above future challenges is the most precious experience and *perhaps* the biggest blessing in life. So my advice to our young entrepreneurs is quite simple: be creative, pursue your dreams, plan carefully, work hard and don't be afraid of failure.

The use of *perhaps* expresses an intermediate degree between the true and false poles (Leech & Svartvik, 2002). In this sense, the FS expresses a certain of degree of probability that the blessings in life are courage to concede defeat, accept responsibility, and so on. The use of *perhaps* gives the impression that the FS is modest and does not wish to be assertive in order to be on safer ground, when giving his advice to the youth.

CBUDS

In the 2006/2007 Budget Speech, the FS reported on the current political and economic environment in Hong Kong

Extract

Our most valuable asset is the very special community we have in Hong Kong, we observe the rule of law and love freedom of speech; we are resilient and hard-working; we respect open markets and fair competition, and value economic development;...; and we *probably* have the fastest pace of living in the world, but we also pause to help the needy.

Probably only indicates the mental perception of the FS on the probability continuum between true and false, but no conclusive remarks are made as the

fastest peace of living is hard or impossible to measure. It suggests that the FS only give a vague expression describing the dynamic life of Hong Kong.

7.6.5.2 Adverbs of indefinite frequency

Adverbs such *sometimes*, *normally*, are described as “indefinite time frequency adjuncts” by Greenbaum (1969), Quirk et al (1972; 1985: 543), and Declerck (1991). Salager-Meyer (1994: 154) groups such adverbs in the category of “approximators”. In view of their indefiniteness in meaning, they may be used for hedging purposes, allowing the speaker to have room for manipulation of frequencies, if they “cannot be obtained”, or “if they are not categorically accurate, or numerical precision is not required” (Varttala, 2001: 129). *Sometimes* is a frequent adverbs used by the FS. Examples below indicate how the adverbs are used as hedges.

CBUSS

At the luncheon of the Second Pearl River Delta Conference on October 17, 2003, the FS discussed the benefits certain industries could get from CEPA.

Extract

These concessions will be of particular benefit to industries engaged in the manufacture of brand-name products, or those requiring high intellectual property content where a high percentage of value-added work is carried out in Hong Kong. *Normally* they are *around* 30 per cent. Companies can expand their operations in Hong Kong.

Normally is a non-bounding frequency adverb (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002: 715). It only indicates a frequency or standard according to what is expected, usual or average. The use of *normally* allows the FS not committing to the definiteness of percent of benefit obtained by the industries from CEPA. The collocation of *normally* + *around* increases the degree of indefiniteness of the information presented.

CBUDS

In the 2004/2005 Budget Speech, the FS discussed ways the government could increase government revenue.

Extract

In recent years, economies in all parts of the world have successively introduced a goods and services tax (GST), *sometimes* known as a value-added tax, to broaden their tax base and increase tax revenue.

Sometimes is an indefinite frequency *adjunct* (Declerck, 1991), and it has the meaning of on some occasions but not all. The use of it allows the FS not to commit himself making any categorical assertion that GST is also called value-added tax. Another possibility is that the exact number of countries calls GST as value-added tax may not be necessary in this context. An application of an indefinite frequency adjunct is sufficient and desirable to reflect the real situation that some countries call value-added taxes as GST.

7.6.5.3 Adverbs of indefinite degree

Syntactically, Quirk et al. (1985: 567) treat this kind of adverb as a subjunct. Pragmatically, Quirk et al (1985: 597) subcategorize “some adverbs of indefinite degree” as downtoners (e.g. *quite, somewhat*) which “generally have a lowering effect” on the utterance. Hyland (1998a: 139) groups this kind of adverb as an adjunct. However, both agree that indefinite degree adverbs can be used as diminishers which may either “seek to express only part of the potential force of the item concerned” (e.g. *slightly, partly*) or “seek to imply that the force of the item concerned is limited” (e.g. *merely, simply*) (Quirk et al., 1985: 598). Varttala (2001: 131) states that “adverbs of indefinite degree are treated as *approximators*” in Salager-Meyer’s (1994) classification of hedges in a study of medical writing discourse. Varttala (2001: 131) also remarks that previous studies have shown indefinite degree adverbs can be used to express epistemic meaning, making utterances less than absolute. Below are examples from the corpora.

CBUDS

In the 2006 -7 Budget Speech when discussing the global economic climate, the FS forecast the GDP growth rate in 2006.

Extract

Taking all these factors into account, and subject to there being no serious incidents or major external shocks, Hong Kong's economy is expected to achieve solid growth in 2006, with GDP forecast to increase by 4 to 5 per cent, *slightly* higher than the trend growth.

The use of *slightly* in this context is to provide a comparison between percentage of GDP forecast and "the trend growth". *Slightly* has a meaning of imprecise degree (Varttala, 2001: 131). It leaves open to the audience to judge to what degree of the GDP increase in 2006 is higher than the trend growth. In addition, in the same speech, the FS adds a disclaimer such as "no serious incidents or major external shock", making his forecast on the percentage of increase more tentative or uncertain.

CBUSS

At the Joint Business Community Luncheon on the 2006-07 Budget dated 22nd March 2006, the FS shared with the guests the principles regarding how the FS's Office administers public finances.

Extract

To address people's concerns over GST, I am suggesting a nine-month public consultation setting out our detailed proposals, including tax relief and compensatory measures. As a mature society and with a *relatively lengthy* consultation period, I am confident that Hong Kong people are capable of holding a rational discussion on GST.

Relatively has a meaning of boosting, similar to *quite* when compared to others. *Lengthy* shows indefinite degree in meaning. *Relatively* is collocated with the adjective *lengthy* for boosting the strength of *lengthy*. Whether nine-month

public consultation period is sufficient or not may still be debatable. Although *relatively* has the boosting in meaning, it still leaves open for the audience to judge if the nine months consultant period is sufficient or in excess because *lengthy* still renders the utterance less than absolute in degree and providing the FS not committing to the exact consultation period.

7.6.5.4 Approximative adverbs

Some items (e.g. *about, nearly, some, approximately*) are cited as approximative adverbs (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002: 431). The literature has shown that such items can be used to reduce the force of the verb so as to hedge the effect of the predicate (Hyland, 1998a: 135). Quirk et al (1985: 567) categorises approximative adverbs as approximators which they state as a subtype of downtoner. Approximators “serve to express an approximation to the force of the verb, while indicating that the verb concerned expresses more than is relevant” (Quirk et al., 1985: 597). Hedging by using approximative adverbs is associated with the manipulation of numerical expressions and quantities (Hyland, 1998a: 139), or vague language (Channell, 1990, 1994), and imprecise numerical expressions (Dubois, 1987). Furthermore, Quirk et al. (1985: 449) also indicate that approximative adverbs can be used to “modify pronouns (e.g. *Nearly everybody came to our party*), or predeterminers (e.g. *He received about double the amount he expected*)” in which they are associated with manipulating quantification. Below are examples from the corpora.

CORDS

At the Prize Presentation and Exhibition Opening Ceremony of the Hong Kong Institute of Architects Annual Awards on 15th March 2003, the FS devoted an evening to honour a group of outstanding architects.

Extract

Over the next five years, Government's capital expenditure will amount to \$43 billion a year on average, of which *around* \$29 billion will be allocated to works projects.

Around is used as an approximator to indicate an approximation to the figure of \$29 billion. It helps the FS to give an approximation on the amount of money allocated to work projects that is considered sufficient for the ordinary speech context.

CBUDS

In the 2007/2008 Budget Speech, the FS reported that the government had run a deficit of over \$60 billion for two consecutive financial years, and the fiscal reserves were expected to shrink further.

Extract

In view of this, I set the target level of fiscal reserves at an amount equivalent to *about* 12 months of government expenditure. The current fiscal reserves have exceeded this level. However, opinions are divided over whether this target should be maintained.

On the one hand, *about* indicates an approximation to the figure following it. On the other hand, it is also used as a hedge to tone down the level of the fiscal reserves, which is equivalent to 12 months of government expenditure, is not so high. Below is an analysis of phrasal items.

7.6.6 Phrasal items

Some phrasal items can be used to hedge the degree of precision in quantification, or the proposition itself is not conclusive. Hedging in phrasal items is not common in this study. There are only 12 different phrasal items identified in the text. The full list of the phrasal items is shown in Table 29 below.

Table 29: Frequency of phrasal items for hedging purposes

Phrasal items	CORDS Frequency Per 10,000 words	CBUSS Frequency Per 10,000 words	CBUDS Frequency Per 10,000 words	Total Frequency Per 10,000 words
kind of	0.34	0.36	0	0.70
more or less	0	0.18	0	0.18
close to	1.00	0.71	0.46	2.17
or so	0.34	0.71	0.69	1.74
a little	1.00	0	0	1.00
a bit	0.34	0.53	0	0.87
in a way	0	0.18	0	0.18
up to	1.00	1.25	1.39	3.64
at least	1.00	1.43	0.46	2.89
in principle	0.33	0.18	0	0.51
a large number	0	0	0.46	0.46
in excess of	0	0	0.46	0.46
Total	5.35	5.53	3.92	14.80

As seen from the above table, the frequencies for using phrasal items for hedging purposes are similar in the three corpora with CBUSS has the highest frequency of 5.53. The frequency is slightly lower in CORDS and CBUDS. Nevertheless, the difference is not relatively huge. In some occasions, the use of phrasal items to hedge is sufficient as they still can provide the right amount of information in the matters being discussed or possibly the exact figures or data may not be necessary in the speeches. One possible reason for the lower frequency in the corpora is that phrasal items are commonly used for hedging numerical data (Channell, 1994). There are other types of hedging devices such as approximate adjectives and adverbs, which can also indicate numerical imprecision. It may be the preference of the FS to use approximate adjectives and adverbs rather than phrasal items to hedge the quantifications. Some phrasal items such as *in principle* and *or so* are used as a pragmatic maker for hedging purposes. The three corpora contain similar numbers of

different phrasal items at eight, nine, and six respectively. Below are examples from the corpora for hedging purposes.

CORDS

At the 40th Anniversary Luncheon of the Hong Kong Standards and Testing Centre dated 21st October 2003, the FS made a joke with organizer.

Extract

When my dear old friend, Bill called me up a little while back, inviting me to lunch, I *kind of* expected that he would give me a free lunch.

Kind of is used as a hedge because this phrase can “not only modify the force of the propositional context of an utterance but also to take into account the feelings of the addressee” (Murphy, 2010: 57). In the speech, the FS joked that when the organizer called him a date before the speech, he expected the organizer would buy him a lunch. In fact, it was not but asking him to give a speech. The use of *kind of* by the FS, as a pragmatic marker, allows him to hedge skilfully in diluting the embarrassment of the organizer when making the joke in the speech. In this sense, the FS is conscious of protecting his own face as well as the face of the organizer, who might not be pleased when the FS uses him for joking in the speech.

CBUDS

In the 2004-2005 Budget Speech, the FS reported on the progress of selling some assets through securitization.

Extract

This Council has recently approved the securitisation of revenues from the government toll tunnels and bridges. We expect to realise *up to* \$6 billion from this transaction in the next few months.

Up to has the meaning of to include a certain amount or level. *Up to* is often found with tentative quantification (Dubois, 1987). When the FS presents the speech, the process of securitizing the government toll tunnels and bridges has not yet started. The exact amount of revenue that will be received from the securitization has yet to be counted. Whether the total revenues, after including the revenue from securitization, can reach the level of \$21 billion is still uncertain. In order to avoid providing precise figures, the use of *up to* helps the FS to hedge the definiteness of the amount. Yet another possible explanation is that it would be too pedantic to provide an exact amount in a budget speech. The use of *up to* as a quantity modifier can help the FS renders sufficient information to the councillors. In addition, the utterance becomes more tentative because *up to* is preceded by a speculative verb *expect*.

Having described the findings for modal auxiliaries, verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and phrasal items, it is of interest to investigate some items whose meaning may have the hedging potential similar to the items mentioned above. These items include if-clauses, impersonalization, and miscellaneous items. All these items are grouped under the category of syntactic hedges and discussed below.

7.6.7 Syntactic hedges

In this study, syntactic hedges are categorized into if-clause, impersonalization, and miscellaneous items. Impersonalization is subcategorized into pronoun *we*, nominalization, agentless passive, and the replacement of *you* by the indefinites such as *someone* or *one*. Miscellaneous items include clausal items and compound hedges. Table 30 below shows the frequencies and the items of the syntactic hedges in the corpora.

Table 30: Frequencies and categories of the syntactic hedges

	CORDS		CBUSS		CBUDS		Total	
Syntactic Hedges	No. of instances	Frequency Per 10,000 words	No. of instances	Frequency Per 10,000 words	No. of instances	Frequency Per 10,000 words	No. of instances	Frequency Per 10,000 words
<i>If</i> -clauses	2	0.67	35	6.25	24	5.53	61	12.45
Impersonalization								
a) pronoun (we)	2	0.67	8	1.43	5	1.15	15	3.25
b) nominalisation	5	1.67	5	0.89	5	1.15	15	3.72
c) agentless passive	2	0.67	9	1.61	0	0	11	2.28
d) indefinite-someone, one	0	0	2	0.36	0	0	2	0.36
Sub-total	9	3.01	24	4.29	10	2.31	43	9.62
Miscellaneous (the compound hedges, and <i>clausal items</i>)	14	4.68	48	8.57	20	4.61	82	17.86
Total	25	8.36	107	19.11	54	12.45	186	39.92

Syntactic hedges account for 4.41% of the total hedges. CBUSS has the highest frequency accounting at 19.11 per 10,000 words. It is followed by CBUDS and CORDS respectively. Hence, the results are in line with some other previous observations that CBUSS has the highest frequency in some categories such as adjectives, phrasal items when compared with the other two corpora.

When looking at the individual item of the syntactic hedges, the use of *If-clause* has the higher frequency of 12.45. One possible explanation for the greater use of the *if*-clause is that it can be used for various purposes such as mitigating the force of the suggestion, making it the hearer's choice, and indicating that what is said is hypothetical in nature (Hyland, 1998a; Varttala, 2001). The use of *if-clause* helps the FS to hedge his commitments or to explain the uncertainties or limitations when providing in the information. Compound hedges and clausal items are the other two kinds of hedges that the FS frequently uses. Their total frequency stands at 17.86. One reason for the use of compound hedges would be that the FS may want more protection when he foresees that his claims may be challenged. The use of compound hedges makes the utterances even less assertive or more modest. For example, in the speech given to the Capital Markets Association dated 13rd April 2005, the FS said

“...a deposit protection scheme which *we hope would* come into operation in the second half of 2006”. The inclusive use of *we* may refer to the Hong Kong Government or a group of persons in the Government who are responsible for the introduction of the scheme. The use of *we* may help the FS to protect himself from possible criticism if the scheme has not been launched in the second half of 2006 because the inclusive *we* indicates that he does not stand alone as he is not the only person responsible for the launch. The use of *would* may help him to make the proposition more tentative. One possible reason for the higher frequency of use of clausal items is that the modal *must* is frequently collocated with the performative verbs such as *advise* to form a specific part of the sentence. In view of this characterization, it is perceived as a clausal hedge where the FS uses it epistemically by indicating that he has the obligation to draw attention to the audience in the matters discussed.

CBUSS has the highest frequency of compound and clausal hedges totalling at a frequency at 8.57. The relative frequencies in CORDS and CBUDS show a lower frequency of 4.68 and 4.61 respectively. One possible reason for higher use of compound and clausal items in CBUSS is that although the speeches are not such high stakes events as those in CBUDS, lots of information need to be provided to the audience for their high expectation of the information in the speeches. It may also be the fact market players may use this information for their investment decisions. The use of compound hedges and the clausal items may help the FS add strength to dissociate himself from the claims as well as make the claims even more tentative or uncertain. The use of nominalisations, agentless passives, and indefinite pronouns has lower frequencies among the syntactic hedges. Below are examples of each category of the syntactic hedges.

7.6.7.1 If-clause

Below are examples of the use of *if-clause* for the FS to make his utterances more tentative or hypothetical.

CORDS

At the speech given at the "Review 200" Conference cum Award Presentation Ceremony organised by the Far Eastern Economic Review on February 19, 2004. The FS said that good communications with the community and the Legislative Council were essential when running the Financial Secretary's Office because it could stimulate debate.

Extract

But presenting and communicating a clear vision is only the start. Getting people on board, gaining trust and respect, are equally, *if* not more, important elements in making that vision become a reality.

The *if*-clause gives the impression of expressing an open condition to the audience that "getting people on board, gaining trust and respect" are some of the hypothetical conditions. In this way, the FS hedges his expression that there are other elements, which are also important in achieving the vision.

CBUDS

In the 2005-06 Budget Speech, the FS presented the budget forecast of the government to the legislative councillors.

Extract

The financial position of the Government has gradually improved with the steady economic upturn. As I mentioned earlier, the 2004-05 forecast outturn shows that the operating deficit will be lower than expected. *If our economy continues to pick up, we expect to achieve, ahead of schedule, most of the fiscal targets set in last year's Budget.*

The *if*-clause expresses the FS's uncertainty as to whether or not the economy will continue to pick up. It is used to hedge the FS's own assumption that HK can achieve most of the fiscal targets set in the year before. The italicized part in the sentence has three lexical hedges (*if*, *expect*, and *most of*) that make the proposition more hypothetical and tentative.

7.6.7.2 Impersonalization

a) Pronoun *we*

There is a close connection in the use of the personal pronouns *we* as hedging expressions. Extracts below show the hedging use of *we*, allowing the FS collectively includes other persons in the government to share the responsibility for him.

CORDS

At the Ten Outstanding Young Persons Selection 2003' Award Presentation dated 28th November 2003, the FS discussed the policy that should introduce to help young people.

Extract

But these measures can only augment our own home-grown talent. It is Hong Kong's younger generation who hold the key to our future. *We* must provide them with the opportunities they demand. In return, *we* need them to challenge conventional thinking, to sail uncharted waters, to explore the unknown.

One of the meaning of *we* is exclusive (i.e. *we* = I + my group + HK Government). The use of exclusive *we* can interpreted as providing opportunities to the young people is the duty of the FS himself as a senior government official in Hong Kong, his team in the Financial Secretary's Office and the Government of Hong Kong. With this interpretation, the FS expresses his view the Government of Hong Kong is responsible for providing opportunities and training to the young persons. In this sense, the collective use of *we* can allow the FS to evade individual responsibility.

Another meaning of *we* can be interpreted as inclusive (i.e. *we* = I + you, the audience). The use of inclusive *we* can be interpreted as the provision of opportunities and training to young people is the responsibilities of the government, the institution organizing the award presentation as well as the audience. In this sense, the FS makes an implicit demand to the organizer and audience by offering opportunities when demanded. This may involve a threat to their negative faces as it could intrude upon the freedom of them. The

interpretation of inclusive *we*, without explicitly mentioning the referents to provide opportunities and training to the young persons, will not threaten the face of the audience and the organizer.

CBUDS

In the 2007-2008 Budget Speech, the FS proposed some new measures to improve the regulatory framework.

Extract

Despite this cautiously optimistic economic outlook, *we* still need to address the problem of the fiscal deficit. The health of our public finances has a major bearing on the stability of our monetary and financial systems, investor confidence and overall economic development.

The FS discusses the issues of managing public finances, achieving a fiscal balance in Hong Kong. The use of *we* can be exclusive (i.e. $we = I + \text{the government}$) or inclusive (i.e. $we = I + \text{the government} + \text{the legislative councillors}$). As the Head of the Financial Secretary's office, it is his responsibility and the government to monitor public finances prudently, keep expenditure within the limits and strive to achieve a fiscal balance. In this sense, the use of *we* is exclusive. Another possible explanation of the exclusive of *we* is that it is a direct self-reference (Du Bois, 2012) in which the FS foregrounds the position that managing public finances are the main duties of the himself and the government. This interpretation of exclusive *we* helps the FS to hedge his utterance not to give any threat to the councillors because they are excluded from the list of monitoring public finances. However, monitoring public finances prudently, setting expenditure within the limits, and addressing the problem of fiscal deficit are also the responsibilities of the councillors as they have the authorities to approve and disapprove any expenditure. In this sense, the use of *we* has the meaning of inclusive. With its exclusive/inclusive ambiguity, the use of *we* may mitigate the responsibility of the FS by indicating to the councillors that it is all of us who need to address the budget deficit.

b) Nominalization

Below are examples using nominalization construction for hedging purpose.

CORDS

At the South China Morning Post Fund Manager of the 2003 Year Award presentation on 19th February 2004, the FS gave credit to the fund management industry in Hong Kong. He said that he had received some suggestions to help the development of the bond market in Hong Kong.

Extract

The introduction of the Capital Investment Entrance Scheme is also going to benefit the fund management industry.

This formal structure could have been written in a more spoken manner like “The Government is going to introduce the Capital Investment Entrance Scheme which will benefit the fund management industry”. The removal of the actor, “the government”, gives the impression that it is not the Government attributing to the introduction of Capital Investment Entrance Scheme but some other actors who are not mentioned in the sentence. The nouny construction at the beginning of this sentence can allow the FS and Government to distance themselves from the introduction or implementation of the Capital Investment Entrance Scheme. Another possible explanation is that the Capital Investment Entrance Scheme is in the consultation stage and the department responsible for the Scheme may not under his control. The nouny construction allows the FS to avoid mentioning the responsible department, which is not under his management.

CBUSS

At the Child Development Forum in November 2006, the FS explored ways to strengthen the efforts to promote the development of children, especially those from a disadvantaged background.

Extract

A study on intergenerational earnings mobility has been included. *The preliminary findings* show that 87% of children with fathers in the lowest earnings quintile group have actually moved up to higher earnings group in their adult life.

The theme could have been organized in a more spoken manner like “The study of XXX found that...”. One possible explanation for the use of nouny construction is that the FS either does not wish to reveal the identity of the agent who performs the study or wants to avoid taking responsibility himself of the direct reference to the source of information. Another possible explanation is that the FS has no knowledge of source of the study.

c) Agentless passive form

Below are examples using agentless passive construction in which the agents are not revealed for hedging purposes.

CORDS

At the opening ceremony of Institute of Nanomaterials and Nanotechnology Technical Advisory Committee Meeting on 3rd December 2004, the FS discussed the development of the nanotechnology business in Hong Kong.

Extract

Nanotechnology has been identified as one of the focus areas where Hong Kong has good potential.

The theme could have been organized as “XXX (name of the institute) has identified nanotechnology as one...”. One plausible reason to state the theme in agentless form could be that the FS may have the information from various sources that the development of nanotechnology has good prospects in Hong Kong. Instead of providing the sources to support his claim, the use of the passive form can help the FS not to detail the sources and focuses on the fact that Hong Kong has the potential to develop nanotechnology. Another possible

reason may be that in this context, the precise sources are not needed because it is an opening ceremony.

CBUSS

At the Policy Dialogue Session on Free and Stable Movement of Capital of the 12th APEC Finance Ministers' Meeting on 8th September 2005, the FS discussed the risks posed by highly leveraged offshore institutions in Hong Kong

Extract

Since, then, substantive work has been done on reducing banks' overexposure to hedge funds through better counterparty risks management, but direct regulation of hedge funds was ruled out.

One possible reason is that those banks who have over-exposure to hedge funds might have received directions from the regulators such as Hong Kong Monetary Authority or Securities and Futures Commission to reduce the exposure. The banks might have taken corrective actions. The use of passive form is to avoid explicitly mentioning which banks have been given directions to reduce exposure for avoiding reputation risk of those banks.

- d) Replacement of pronoun “you⁴⁶” by indefinites such *someone* or *one*

Below are examples of *someone*, and *one* where they serve to reduce the FTAs because the names of the persons are not mentioned.

CBUSS

At the Joint Business Community Luncheon on the 2004-5 Budget in March 2004, the FS talked about the economic and fiscal strategies, giving some insight into the thinking that went into his Budget.

⁴⁶ *You* can be interpreted impersonally, functioning generally with reference to “people” in general (Quirk, et al, 1985: 353)

Extract

Under the new Personalised Vehicle Registration Mark scheme, you'll be free to put vanity plates on your car that say "RICH GUY" or "TOPNOTCH". *Someone* suggested I could display "TAX MAN" on my car, but I rather like "USER PAYS".

One possible reason for using *someone* is that the FS does not want to mention directly the name of the agent suggesting to him to display "TAX MAN" on his car because in so doing, it may create face-threat to the agent. The use of indefinite agent allows the FS to hedge his message not to mention the specified agent. Another possible explanation is that the *someone* does not exist.

7.6.7.3 Miscellaneous items

The remaining hedges in the group of syntactic hedges are mainly the use clausal items and compound hedges.

a. Clausal items

Clausal items are mainly illustrated as an entire sentence or specific part of a sentence that produces hedging effects. Examples from the corpora are shown below.

CORDS

At the opening ceremony of Institute of Nanomaterials and Nanotechnology Technical Advisory Committee Meeting on December 3, 2004, the FS said he was pleased to see the Institute was able to provide a regional and international focal point for nanotechnology research and development.

Extract

Talking about nanotechnology, *I must admit that I am a true layman.*

I must admit is a strong performative (Fraser, 1975: 188) since the modal *must* has an effect on the illocutionary act denoted by the performative verb *admit*. It is the speaker's intent "to create in the hearer an understanding of the speaker's

position toward the proposition expressed in the sentence uttered” (ibid.: 189). The use of *I must admit that I am a true layman* indicates that the FS wants to indicate that he has the obligation to tell the audience that he is not familiar with nanotechnology. In this sense, it can relieve the FS’s responsibility if he says something inaccurate about nanotechnology.

CBUSS

At the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce 11th Annual Hong Kong Business Summit –“Hong Kong in 2005: Continuing the Global Outlook” on 25th November 2005, the FS spent a few moments on the issues of 2005-06 budget.

Extract

Any policy decisions the Government makes, including Budget initiative, will always have the factored in. *I know that this is of great concern to the business community, and I want to assure you that we will continue to listen to your views.*

The use of *I know* generally indicates that the speaker has a high degree of confidence on his/her proposition (Cappelli, 2009: 156). The utterance shows emphasis that the FS acknowledges the concern of the public. *Want* is a stative verb but also shows the tentative attitude of the agent (Quirk et al., 1985: 203). The use of *I want to assure you that we will continue to listen to your views* indicates that the FS has a desire to assure the audience that any policy decisions made by the Government have taken into consideration of the views of the public and the Government will continue to listen to the public’s views before making policy decisions. The whole statement gives the impression that on the one hand the FS expresses his recognition on the concern of the business community. On the other hand, he hedges his statements by adopting a diplomatic tone in order to indicate his openness to consider the views of the public in making policy decisions.

b. Compound hedges

Below are examples of compound hedges for addition more protection for the utterances.

CBUSS

At the luncheon jointly hosted by the Hong Kong Capital Markets Association, the Hong Kong Association of Corporate Treasurers and the Hong Kong Society of Financial Analysts on April 13, 2005, the FS discussed the upcoming launch of deposit protection scheme.

Extract

Meanwhile, we are also preparing for the implementation of a deposit protection scheme which *we hope would* come into operation in the second half of 2006.

The modal auxiliary *would* reinforces the verb *hope*, which already has an inherent meaning of a hedge. In this sense, the co-occurrence of *would* and *hope* indicates that the operation date for deposit protection scheme in the second half of 2006 is only very tentative at the time of speaking.

CBUDS

In the 2004-05 Budget Speech, the FS said in recent years, economies in all parts of the world had successively introduced a goods and services tax (GST), sometimes known as a value-added tax. He hinted that he would initiate a consultation on GST.

Extract

During the Budget consultation, *quite a number of professional bodies, business chambers and academics indicated* that they *would* support the introduction of GST, set at a low level, in order to provide a steady source of income.

Quite a number is a vague quantification because its precise numerical number is not mentioned. *Indicated* has the meaning of drawing the attention. The use of the past tense form of *indicate* allows the FS to further distance the statement

from present to more remote condition. *Would* is a modal auxiliary showing epistemic meaning. The combination of *quite a number*, *indicated*, and *would* suggests that the FS, based on his own belief and some imprecise numerical figures, conveys his tentative view on the introduction of GST.

7.7 Summary of the findings on hedging categories

In summary, as observed in the previous sections, hedging occurs frequently in the FS's speeches. The findings of this chapter have answered research questions 1-3.

1. CBUDS has the highest frequency at 242.15 (n=1,051) per 10,000 words followed by CBUSS and CORDS with frequencies of 219.56 (n=1,230) and 142.08 (n=425) respectively.
2. When the combined corpus is compared with the HKFSC, it is found that the FS uses fewer items than the speakers in the HKFSC in the sub-categories of non-specific items, boosters, compromisers, diminishers, minimizers and exclusivizers/particularizers in the semantic tagset of Degree (A13 and A14) of the semantic field of General and Abstract Terms in Wmatrix. The differences in the sub-categories of maximizers and approximators are not significant.
3. Of the seven categories of hedge, the most frequent instances occur in the modal auxiliary category at 224.99 (n=994) per 10,000 words. The most infrequent category is phrasal items, accounting for only 14.80 (n=64). The modal auxiliary *will* is the most frequent individual item at 99.20 (n=442). One hundred and fifty different hedging devices are used in the corpora. CBUSS has 127 different devices, which are the highest among the three corpora. CBUDS and CORDS have 95 and 79 different devices respectively.

As discussed, there may be various reasons for the use of hedging such as to qualify commitment, lack of precise numerical data, and to reduce face-threats. Some other observations and issues arising from the above findings will be further discussed in Chapter 10. In what follows, an analysis of how the FS uses intensifiers is presented.

Chapter 8 Intensifiers: Findings and discussion

8.1 Introduction

The findings in this chapter address research questions: 1) what are the relative frequencies of intensifiers. 3) what are the variations in the forms of intensifiers.

With reference to the linguistic realizations of intensifiers in the studies of Quirk et al. (1985), Collins Cobuild English Grammar (1990) and Lorenz (1999), this study categorizes intensifiers into adjective intensifiers, closed-class intensifiers, phrasal intensifiers, *ly*-intensifiers and syntactic intensifiers. Syntactic intensifiers include strong modals, strong verbs, and strong phrases, which have an intensification meaning (e.g. *will*, *reiterate*, *I know*, and *so on*). Compound intensifiers, which contain two or more items of intensifier in a sentence (e.g. *firmly confident*), are also included in the category of syntactic intensifiers. These five categories cover, in a broad sense, the realizations of intensifiers in this study. Section 8.2 is the frequency comparison and statistical analysis. Section 8.3 presents the qualitative analysis of each type of the intensifiers, and Section 8.4 is a summary of the findings in this chapter.

8.2 Frequency comparison and statistical analysis of the corpora

Following the taxonomy of intensifiers developed in the Chapter 6, any realizations found in the text that have an intensifying function, are classified into one of categories mentioned above. A frequency summary of all intensifiers found in the corpora is shown in Table 31 below.

Table 31: Frequencies and types of intensifier in the corpora

Types of intensifiers	CORDS Frequency Per 10,000 words	CBUSS Frequency Per 10,000 words	CBUDS Frequency Per 10,000 words	Total Frequency Per 10,000 words
1) Adjective intensifiers				
-Ed-adjectives	24.07	6.78	4.84	35.69
-Adjectives	17.05	17.14	19.12	53.31
-Ing-adjectives	3.00	5.18	3.92	12.10
-Sub-total	44.12	29.10	27.88	101.10
2) Closed-class intensifiers	96.28	74.26	34.10	204.64
3) Phrasal intensifiers	46.13	34.63	14.98	95.74
4) <i>Ly</i> -intensifiers				
-Scalar intensifiers	11.37	16.78	15.67	43.82
-Modal intensifiers	10.70	16.07	4.61	31.38
-Evaluative intensifiers	2.34	1.79	1.61	5.74
-Comparative intensifiers	6.69	9.82	2.30	18.81
-Sub-total	31.10	44.46	24.19	99.75
5) Syntactic intensifiers	32.43	20.53	12.21	65.17
Total	250.06	202.98	113.36	566.40

Table 31 shows that CORDS has the highest frequency followed by CBUSS and CBUDS. These findings are different from the hedges where CBUDS has the highest frequency (242.15) followed by CBUSS (219.56) and CORDS (142.08) respectively.

The higher frequency in CORDS indicates the FS uses more intensifiers to modify his utterances to signal his high degree of assurance and appreciation of the events or the participation of the audience. CBUSS ranks second for the use, but does not have a significant difference when compared with CORDS. The main purposes of the business speeches in CBUSS are elaborations of the Government's budgets and policies, invitations to foreign investors to invest in Hong Kong or provisions of some

information on the upcoming implementation of new financial measures. On these occasions, the FS may on the one hand, use intensifiers to emphasize the strength of his sincerity or good intention to invite investors to invest in Hong Kong. On the other hand, the FS uses intensifiers as a courtesy strategy to intensify his appreciation for being invited to explain the details of the budget, or to intensify the importance of the upcoming financial plans, policies and measures of the Government. The speeches in CBUDS are mainly used to inform the public about the budget plans and encourage the Legislative Councillors and the public to agree with the proposed budget. Using fewer intensifiers can avoid giving the impression that either the FS is forceful by demanding the Legislative Councillors to accept the budget or the Government has no intention to change the budget. The higher frequency use of intensifiers in CBUDS may appear too direct or dogmatic which may not be welcome by the councillors and public. In addition, a budget proposal involves a lot of numerical data forecasts, predictions, and estimations. It may not be possible for the FS to intensify these data which are uncertain at the time of giving the speeches.

The least frequently used category is the syntactic intensifiers. It may be the fact the FS or his team habitually does not use syntactic intensifiers to intensify his claims. In the distribution of different devices in the three corpora, CORDS has 104 different devices and CBUSS and CBUDS have 119 and 99 different items respectively. One possible explanation why CBUSS has the highest number of different devices is that a greater variety of topics is discussed in CBUSS. The FS may need to resort a greater variety of intensifiers to arouse the interest of the audience.

Of the five types of intensifier, CORDS has the highest frequencies for adjective intensifiers, closed-class intensifiers, phrasal intensifiers, and syntactic intensifiers except the *ly*-intensifiers, which rank second. CBUSS has the highest frequency of *ly*-intensifiers, whereas adjective intensifiers, closed-class intensifiers, phrasal intensifiers and syntactic intensifiers rank second. CBUDS has the lowest frequencies in all five types of intensifier.

As observed in the foregoing discussion, intensifiers occur quite frequently in the FS's speeches, especially in CORDS. As discussed, there may be various reasons for the use of intensifiers such as the FS expresses his high degree of sincerity or appreciation in participating the events. Some other observations arising from the above findings are further discussed in Chapter 10.

In order to test whether the frequency of each category of intensifier is statistical significant among the three corpora, as was done for the hedging devices, a nonparametric chi-square test was performed. Table 32 below shows the results of the test.

Table 32: Summary of p-value, effect size, strength association, RR and the CI of the intensifiers in the three corpora

Intensifiers		Statistical significant level (p-value)	Effect Size (Cramer V)	Strength association	Relative Risk ("RR") CBUDS vs non-CBUDS	95% Confidence Interval ("CI")	Relative Risk ("RR") CORDS vs Non-CORDS	95% Confidence Interval ("CI")	Relative Risk ("RR") CBUSS vs Non-CBUSS	95% Confidence Interval ("CI")
1	Adjectives intensifiers									
	a. Ed-adjectives	0.000	0.024	Small association	0.378	0.237-0.603	4.056	2.876-5.721	0.535	0.367-0.780
	b. Adjectives	0.718	0.002	Small association	1.118	0.854-1.463	0.947	0.694-1.292	0.938	0.722-1.218
	c. ing-adjectives	0.312	0.004	Small association	0.886	0.500-1.569	0.650	0.318-1.328	1.460	0.860-2.478
	Total of adjectives intensifiers	0.000	0.012	Small association	0.811	0.657-1.002	1.550	1.261-1.905	0.842	0.692-1.025
2	Closed class intensifiers	0.000	0.030	Small association	0.416	0.349-0.497	1.697	1.473-1.955	1.249	1.092-1.428
3	Phrasal intensifiers	0.000	0.022	Small association	0.388	0.297-0.506	1.771	1.441-2.176	1.251	1.028-1.522
4	Ly-intensifiers									
	a. Scalar intensifiers	0.143	0.005	Small association	1.052	0.784-1.411	0.698	0.482-1.009	1.206	0.912-1.596
	b. Modal intensifiers	0.000	0.015	Small association	0.325	0.202-0.521	0.967	0.652-1.433	2.265	1.610-3.186
	c. Evaluative intensifiers	0.767	0.002	Small association	0.815	0.338-1.966	1.369	0.568-3.300	0.935	0.415-2.104

	d. Comparative intensifiers	0.000	0.013	Small association	0.264	0.136-0.511	1.023	0.620-1.688	2.399	1.538-3.743
	Total of ly-intensifiers	0.000	0.015	Small association	0.608	0.489-0.756	0.873	0.695-1.097	1.644	1.366-1.983
5	Syntactic intensifiers	0.000	0.017	Small association	0.495	0.366-0.669	1.919	1.495-2.463	1.003	0.787-1.279
	Total of intensifiers	0.000	0.040	Small association	0.517	0.468-0.570	1.526	1.401-1.663	1.200	1.108-1.300

The chi-square test shows that the five types of intensifier are significant as the p-values are less than 0.05. This means significant differences exist among the three corpora. The chi-square value of the overall intensifiers is also significant as the p-value is also less than 0.05. This means that statistical differences exist in the total frequencies of intensifiers used among the three corpora. The observed difference is less likely due to chance. All the Cramer Vs indicate a small association among variables as all values are less than 0.07. From the list in Appendix II, it is observed that CORDS has a higher frequency of intensifiers than CBUSS and CBUDS. In order to test whether the higher frequency of intensifiers in CORDS is statistically significant, a RR test of each category among the three corpora was performed. The three corpora were grouped into CORDS and non-CORDS which contains CBUSS and CBUDS. The results of the RRs of adjective intensifiers, closed-class intensifiers, phrasal intensifiers, and syntactic intensifiers in CORDS are 1.550, 1.697, 1.771, and 1.919 times higher than non-CORD. The RR of the total intensifiers in CORDS is 1.526 times higher than non-CORDS, which means at the 95% CI, the FS is likely to use 1.526 times more intensifiers in CORDS than in non-CORDS. The process was repeated to re-group the three corpora into CBUDS and non-CBUDS and CBUSS and non-CBUSS. The RRs of each category were calculated in each of the re-grouping process. The overall RRs of the other two re-groupings are 0.517 and 1.20 respectively. The results show that the FS uses significantly higher frequency of intensifiers in CORDS than the other two corpora. What follows is a discussion of each type of intensifier in the taxonomy.

8.3 Qualitative analysis of the intensifiers

This study classifies intensifiers into adjective intensifiers, closed-class intensifiers, phrasal intensifiers, *ly*-intensifiers, and syntactic intensifiers. A qualitative analysis was carried out on all potential items to determine their uses. The following section is the analysis by exhibiting each type of intensifiers from the speeches.

8.3.1 Adjective intensifiers

Apart from some adjectives that have the intensification characteristics which are used to emphasize the feeling of a person, Collins Cobuild English Grammar (1990:

69) cites some verb participles which also have an intensification function. Quirk et al (1985: 413) call these as “participial adjectives”. “Participial adjectives” are mainly a conversion from a verbal to an adjectival use ending in *-ed* or *-ing*. Lorenz (1999: 41) states that the forms of *-ed* or *-ing* are “highly productive morphemes. For the purpose of this study, only those *-ed* or *-ing* constructions correspond to a “mental and emotional state” rather than an “action” or “process” are included because they indicate a heightening effect. Examples of *-ed* and *-ing* adjectives from the corpora are shown below.

a. Ed-adjectives

CORDS

At the presentation ceremony of the 2003 Hong Kong Awards for Services in January 2004, the FS presented the awards to leaders and innovators from the services sectors who contributed to Hong Kong's economic success.

Extract

There are now more than 270,000 service companies in Hong Kong, generating over \$1 trillion, or 87 per cent of our GDP. The Government is *fully committed* to facilitating the development and growth of our services industry by providing a business-friendly environment and world-class infrastructure.

The used of *committed* is to increase the trust and confidence of the audience that the Government is doing something for the development and growth of the service industry. The co-occurrence *fully* with *committed* is also a further reinforcement of the emphasis of the utterance.

CBUDS

In the 2005-06 Budget Speech, the FS said the Government had sought views from the logistics industry on the Lantau Logistics Park's operational characteristics and planning parameters.

Extract

As regards the Lantau Logistics Park project, the Government has sought the views of the logistics industry on the park's operational characteristics and planning parameters. A *detailed* feasibility study has been commissioned to meet the statutory requirements for the planning and reclamation of the park site.

The use of *detailed* indicates that the FS wants to draw the attention to the audience that the Government takes it seriously and has commissioned a thorough and comprehensive feasibility study on the development of the Lantau logistics Project.

b. Ing-adjectives

At the same CORDS speech mentioned above, the FS discussed the demand of services industry in the years ahead.

Extract

Last year was a *challenging* one for Hong Kong, particularly for our services industry.

The use of *challenging* conveys an emphasis to the audience that last year Hong Kong needed to exert a higher degree of effort to meet the demands of the services industry.

CBUSS

At the Credit Lyonnais Securities (CLSA) Investors' Forum 2003 Closing Plenary Session on September 22 2003, the FS stated that the co-operation between Hong Kong and Guangdong extends well beyond economic issues to encompass infrastructure projects as well.

Extract

This will be an *awe-inspiring* engineering feat and will enable people and goods to cross between here and the western part of the Pearl River Delta within half an hour, opening up endless possibilities for trade and commerce that will contribute to the growth of Hong Kong, as well as to the southern part of China.

The use of *awe-inspiring* intensifies the magnificence of the bridge between Hong Kong and Guangdong, which will contribute to the economic growth of Hong Kong.

c. Adjectives

Some adjectives are used as intensifiers (Declerck, 1991:349; Quirk et al., 1985:429; Sinclair, 1990: 69). Usually, they are associated with something which is important to talk about, or relevant (Lorenz, 1999: 53). Below are examples of adjectives functioning as intensifiers.

CORDS

At the "Stock Code Balloting for Charity Scheme" Cocktail Reception on October 17 2005, the FS acknowledged the generous contributions made by many newly listed companies in Hong Kong under the innovative Stock Code Balloting for Charity Scheme.

Extract

The Community Chest has been serving our community well for almost 37 years, helping millions of people to meet their *special* needs.

The use of *special* is to emphasize that the help from Community Chest has met the intended needs of the people. It emphasizes that the help is organized in such a way that they can meet the particular needs for those people.

CBUSS

At the luncheon of the Second Pearl River Delta Conference held on October 17, 2003, the FS discussed the benefits of the Greater Pearl River Delta (“PRD”) business model with the newly signed Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement with the Mainland.

Extract

Abundant land and *abundant* labour, together with increased consumer spending power and business sophistication, will continue to be the main draw cards of businesses wanting to make the most of PRD's resources.

The use of *abundant* intensifies the fact that the land and labour resources in PRD are more than enough for our requirements. It emphasises that Hong Kong can benefit from the existing large quantities of land and labour in the PRD.

8.3.2 Closed-class intensifiers

Closed-class intensifiers stand for intensifiers that are not *ly*-adverbs. Lorenz (1999: 61) states that “closed-class intensifiers are by definition a finite, non-productive set”. Most of the items are modifiers to be used to grade adjectives (e.g. *just* unbelievable). They are usually known as demonstratives, or quantifiers, expressing emphasis on degree/extent. Examples of closed-class intensifiers are shown below.

CORDS

At the Opening Ceremony of the Hong Kong Watch & Clock Fair in September 2003, the FS officiated the opening and said he was pleased to see that the Fair was not affected by the typhoon lingering on in Hong Kong.

Extract

I would also like to extend a *very, very* warm welcome to our overseas buyers here today. Your presence demonstrates clearly that Hong Kong has resumed our natural state, which is a vibrant and cosmopolitan business-oriented city.

Very has the meanings of completely, extremely, entirely, or quite (Paradis, 1997: 16, 73). It is a “booster par excellence” (Lorenz, 1999: 64). It is also a highly versatile degree modifier and can combine freely with adjectives. In the extract, the use of *very* is to intensify the adjectival phrase *warm welcome* to show appreciation of the FS for the participation of the overseas buyers in the conference. The second *very*⁴⁷ duplicates the meaning of the first *very* to indicate an even higher degree of appreciation to the audience in their participation of the fair.

CBUSS

At a luncheon hosted by the US Chamber of Commerce in San Francisco in October 2005, the FS took the opportunity to promote Hong Kong’s securities business to the American business community.

Extract

Hong Kong's advantages are many and well-known - the world's freest economy; rule of law; a level-playing field; a clean government; free flow of information; a low and simple tax regime; and world class infrastructure. *All* help strengthen Hong Kong's position as Asia's world city and as the pre-eminent international financial and services centre for the Mainland...

All is used as a quantifier (Carter & McCarthy, 2006) and it means everything (Declerck, 1991). The FS uses *all* to express an emphasis on every advantage of Hong Kong, such as world’s freest economy, low taxation, and so on, which can help to strengthen its position as one of the best cities in Asia.

⁴⁷ The second *very* is termed as semantic feature coping intensifier which is characterized by “duplicating the meaning of their adjacent collocates” (Lorenz, 1999: 127).

Just is a subjective or interpersonal modal particle which can modify the illocutionary force either intensifying or hedging the utterance of the speaker/writer (Aijmer, 2002: 154; Brown & Levinson, 1987: 148; Mauraanen, 2004b: 189). The use of *just* may seem to flout the maxims of conversation (Grice, 1975), “by providing information which, from the point of view of rational, economical and efficient communication in a social vacuum, could be described as over-informative, irrelevant, vague or imprecise” (Holmes, 1984a: 363). It can attenuate the force of what a speaker says in order to giving the signal to the hearer, on the one hand, he/she is less than full adherence to the maxims, but on the other hand, he/she adheres to the maxims as a cooperative interactant. In this sense, *just* can be used as a quality, manner, relevance, or quantity hedge by limiting the scope of the information or reduce its significance of the speaker’s utterances. *Just* also has the meanings of “exactly” or “temporal” (Lindermann & Mauraanen, 2001) which do not reflect the role of hedging or intensification. The other use of *just* is an emphatic particle which can boost the force of the utterance (Holmes, 1984a; Mauraanen, 2004b). Lee (1987) states that *just* has depreciatory, restrictive, specificatory, and emphatic meaning.⁴⁸ Lee (1991) also suggests that there are borderline cases in which it is difficult distinguish whether *just* has depreciatory or emphatic meaning. Below are examples of *just* which are used as intensifiers.

CORDS

⁴⁸ Depreciatory meaning illustrates that a speaker uses *just* to mitigate the significance of a process (“a process” covers “the terms for events, actions and situations”) by comparing with that particular process with another process. For example, “I don’t feel unwell, I *just* feel seedy” (Lee, 1987: 379). *Just* is used to downplay the significance of the process of “feel unwell”. *Just* has restrictive meaning when it “occurs in a main clause followed by a subordinate clause introduced by *when*” (ibid. : 385). *Just* has specificatory meaning when “a particular process happened within a time frame identified by reference” to another process (ibid.: 388). *Just* also has emphatic meaning when it emphasizes an expression. For example, “it was *just* impossible” (Lee, 1987: 393).

At the Launching Ceremony of Youth Business Hong Kong in July 2005, the FS welcomed the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups joining hands with the business sector and the international community to help young people develop their entrepreneurial skills.

Extract

But, compared with other developed economies, we are actually not doing too badly. The latest unemployment rate for the 15-24 age groups stood at 9.7%, which was *just* four percentage points higher than the overall unemployment rate.

Just may be used to illustrate the speaker attitude by minimising the significance of some particular events by comparing with some previous similar situations (Lee, 1987). In the extract, the speech was presented in 2005 which was about two years after the outbreak of SARS. In that year the overall unemployment rate still stood at around 6-7% (www.censtatd.gov.hk). One explanation is that *just* is used to downplay the significance of the unemployment rate (9.7%) for the 15-24 age groups. It implies that the unemployment rate is something not so serious when compared with the overall unemployment rate at 6.5% (mid-rate between 6-7%). An alternative explanation is that *just* has the “conglomeration or fusion of different meanings or components (e.g. ‘nothing else’= not something other than this); ‘this is not much’” (Aijmer, 2002: 158; Wierzbicka, 1991: 350-351).

Just is also an intensifying discourse particle modifying a proposition (Aijmer, 2002). In this sense, the extract can be interpreted as the FS uses *just* to express his emphatic attitude that the unemployment rate for the 15-24 age groups is not much when compared with the overall unemployment rate. Whether the use of *just* downplays or uptones the unemployment rate may depend on the pitch⁴⁹ used by the FS. Low pitch indicates tentativeness whereas high pitch indicate

⁴⁹ Since the scope of this study does not cover the pitches of a speaker, this example is therefore regarded as indeterminate case.

emphasis (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In view of the indeterminate nature of this case between down toning and up toning, it is grouped into intensifiers category as it may have an intensification meaning.

CBUDS

In the 2005-2006 Budget Speech, the FS discussed the timeline of deducting the public expenditure.

Extract

And the share of public expenditure in GDP will decrease to 20.2 per cent in 2005-06 and is expected to fall below 20 per cent in 2006-07. Although our financial position has improved, we must not relax fiscal discipline or substantially increase expenditure and reduce taxes *just* because of good results in a single year.

Just can be an emphasizer (Mauranen, 2004b) and has the meaning of *only*. The FS uses *just* which has “for sure” reading (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 150) to indicate that a good result of a single year is definitely not enough. The use of *just* represents particularly salient manifestation of the FS that a single year good result will not change his mind to relax fiscal discipline. Another explanation is that *just* has a restrictive meaning of “not much” and easily gives itself ‘reassuring’ or ‘defensive’ interpretations (Wierzbicka, 2003: 351). *Just* will have an emphatic reading when the notion of restriction interacts with elements which carry strong affect (Lee, 1991: 54). Lee (ibid.: 54) states that the “combination of notion of restriction with strong affect produces” a meaning which “involves focus on the latter, so that the meanings involving intensification and highlighting are produced”. In the extract, the relaxation of fiscal discipline or the substantially expenditure increase may have a strong impact in the government in maintaining a balanced account. The strong impact may lead to the FS uses an emphatic intonation on *just* to highlight the substantial impact on the budget if the government agrees with the proposal merely based on a good result of a single year.

8.3.3 Phrasal intensifiers

Some multi-word units can fulfil an adverbial intensification function (Lorenz, 1999: 73). These units may contain two, three, or four-word phrases in the form of noun phrases, prepositional phrases that denote intensifying function (e.g. *to a large extent*). Below are examples.

CORDS

At the opening ceremony of the "HONG KONG 2004 Stamp Expo" in January 2004, the FS said that Hong Kong Post had set an excellent example in promoting the attraction, diversity and sophistication of our city.

Extract

In 2003, Hong Kong welcomed *more than* 15.5 million visitors. And last month alone, 1.79 million visitors' arrivals were registered.

The pseudo-comparative construction *more than* has an increasing, developmental aspect (Lorenz, 1999: 74). In the extract, the phrase is used to intensify more people have come to Hong Kong when compared with the year before and the trend is increasing well above 1.5 million visitors.

CBUSS

In the Sustainable Business in East Asia Conference co-hosted by the Financial Times and the International Finance Corporation in October 2003, the FS said that Hong Kong's growing role as a financial services centre should raise better standard of corporate governance.

Extract

Hong Kong's growing role as a financial services centre raises a third challenge: the need to improve our corporate governance. This is, *of course*, a global issue, particularly in the wake of recent corporate scandals in markets with well-established regulatory regimes and traditions in corporate governance.

Of course usually has two effects. Firstly, it indicates that the speaker is confident and sure of the proposition. Secondly it implies that the audience have already known or will accept the information receiving (Biber et al., 1999). The FS uses *of course*, on the one hand to intensify importance of the improvement of the corporate governance for obtaining the audience acceptance on the proposition, on the other hand, to emphasize that the improvement of corporate governance is a global issue and that the audience have to accept.

8.3.4 Open-class *ly*-intensifiers

Open-class *ly*-intensifiers are adverbs derived from adjectives through *ly*-suffixation (Lorenz, 1999). Although most adjective modifiers are adverbs of degree, any adverb which modifies an adjective and tends to have or develop an intensifying meaning is examined. From a semantic classification perspective, this study groups open-class intensifiers into: a) scalar intensifiers; b) modal intensifiers; c) evaluative intensifiers; d) comparative intensifiers. The four types of open-class *ly*-intensifier are exemplified and discussed below.

8.3.4.1 The semantic category of “scalar” intensifiers

Scalar *ly*-intensifiers are the most common type of adjective modifiers that have “no function other than that of selecting the degree to which the adjective is foregrounded” (Lorenz, 1999: 95). In this regard, intensifiers in this category are limited to those asserting a high degree in the scaling function.⁵⁰ Examples of scalar intensifier are shown below.

CORDS

At the "2004 L'OREAL-UNESCO for Women in Science" Award Presentation Ceremony in March 2004, the FS presented awards to scientists in Hong Kong

⁵⁰ The term scaling/scalar used here can be re-phased as “having to do with, or expressing the notion of degree” (Lorenz, 1999: 95).

and said that Hong Kong had also been able to draw eminent and world-class scientists and researchers from all over the world.

Extract

The Government is *fully* aware that human resource is our most precious asset. Over the years, we have been investing a huge amount of resources in education and manpower training, and science and technology development.

Fully is functionally equivalent to *to the full extent* (Lorenz, 1999: 96). It denotes the upper extreme of the scale and expresses an intensification meaning that the government is completely aware of the importance of human capital and the government has invested considerable resources in man-power training.

CBUDS

At the end of presenting the 2007-2008 Budget Speech, the FS concluded that he had adopted a pragmatic approach based on the principle of prudent management of public finance in preparing the budget and appealed for the approval of the budget because he believed that the budget had taken into account certain issues raised by the public.

Extract

Upon taking up office as Financial Secretary, I set myself the objective of reviving Hong Kong's economy. I am *absolutely* delighted to see that our economy has now improved so handsomely.

Absolutely has come across the process of “modal-to-intensifier shift (Partington, 1993b: 181). It used to have a modal sense of “without doubt or condition...certainly, positively” (ibid.). However, it has been delexicalized to have exclusively intensifying sense (ibid.: 181). *Absolutely* is a maximizer (Quirk et al., 1985) and Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 437) state that it has reinforcement in meaning. The use of “*I am absolutely delighted*” indicates that

the FS conveys his highest degree of delight for the truth of the Hong Kong economy has improved.

8.3.4.2 The semantic category of “modal” intensifiers

Some modal adverbs collocate with adjectives to form adjectives modifiers. Lorenz (2002: 151-152) notes that these adverbs, express “the extent to which a speaker is willing to attest to the truth of a proposition” (e.g. *a truly wonderful idea*) (Lorenz, 1999: 98). Although modal adverbs are best seen as a potential resource for adjective intensification, their modification effect may appear at clause-level⁵¹ “to form integral parts of the whole proposition” (Lorenz, 1999: 100). Some modal items once had the function of assessing the truth value of speaker’s comments but also have been delexicalized and now only have an intensification effect such as *very* (Lorenz, 1999).

CORDS

At the opening ceremony of the "3rd Hong Kong Tourism Symposium: Quality and Diversity" in March 2004, the FS said that the symposium was a timely occasion for members of the trade, academics, journalists and all those who played a role in our tourism industry to work together and identify the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead.

Extract

Hong Kong offers our visitors a remarkable range of experiences for such a small place: from a modern cosmopolitan city to the striking natural beauty of our country parks; from beaches and outlying islands to the world class shopping and dining. And the *truly* amazing thing is that all of these are within an hour's traveling time from any hotel in Hong Kong.

⁵¹ The modification effect of an adverb may act globally in the utterance, not just on the adjacent adjective but as integral parts of the whole proposition. For example, Tourism *definitely* is an important means of preventing prejudices (Lorenz, 1999: 100).

Truly is a stance adverbial which usually conveys actuality and reality of the proposition (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002: 768). The use of *truly* has the highest degree of emphatic effect in which the FS attests his sincere view on the current situation that visitors can indeed travel to/from any hotel in Hong Kong with an hour.

CBUDS

In the 2004-2005 Budget Speech, the FS said that in recent years, economies in all parts of the world had successively introduced a goods and services tax (GST). He wanted to propose the same to broaden the tax base and increase tax revenue.

Extract

I appreciate the community's concerns that the introduction of GST might add to the burden of low-income families. In our study on whether to introduce GST, we will *definitely* take into full account the possible impact on low-income families.

Definitely expresses the conviction of the speaker (Quirk et al., 1985: 620). The use of *definitely* indicates that the FS attests a high degree of commitment that the Government will look at the concerns of low-income families regarding the introduction GTS.

8.3.4.3 The semantic category of “evaluative” intensifiers

Lorenz (1999: 110) states that “speaker-stance evaluation is probably the most common form of creating forceful intensification”. Apart from scaling up their focus, evaluative intensifiers can express “a judgmental notion” of the speaker (Lorenz, 2002: 149). Adverbs in the adjective – intensification position can be paraphrased as “to a degree that I find ADJ⁵²”. For example *incredibly rich* can be paraphrased as “rich to a

⁵² “ADJ stands for the adjectival base of the intensifying adverb” (Lorenz, 1999: 110).

degree that the speaker finds incredible” (Lorenz, 1999: 110). This kind of evaluation pattern creates a class of strong and forceful intensifiers. The combination of the speaker’s evaluation with an adjective-intensification function generates the “excessive” and “mostly emotive” judgments of the speakers (Lorenz, 1999: 114). Examples from the corpora are shown below.

CBUSS

At the opening session of the Penta Forum in February 2004, the FS said that the Government had been running operating deficits for six consecutive years since 1998-99. He further emphasized that restoring fiscal balance was not only a constitutional responsibility, but also a view shared by most of Hong Kong people.

Extract

I have been consulting our community widely. One of the comments, which I constantly hear, is that the Government should *seriously* control our expenditures and improve our efficiency, before considering raising revenues.

The FS uses *seriously* to express his highest degree of concern that the public has made an emotive emphasis by requesting the Government should control public expenditures and improve efficiency.

CBUDS

In the 2004-2005 Budget Speech, the FS reported the recent economic performance and prospects after SARS.

Extract

Our external trade in 2003 remained robust: total exports of goods and offshore trade surged by 14.2 per cent and 16.5 per cent respectively in real terms. The tourism industry recovered *remarkably* well after SARS.

Remarkably is used to modify *well*. *Remarkably well* can be paraphrased as “the tourism industry recovered well to a degree the FS finds remarkable. The use of *remarkably* expresses a higher degree of appreciation by the FS on how extraordinarily well the tourism industry regained their growth unexpectedly just after SARS.

8.3.4.4 The semantic category “comparative” intensifiers

. For example,

1. “People often form views on people by the way they dress. Children and teenagers can be *particularly* cruel”

(It explicitly compares children and teenagers with people (Lorenz, 1999: 116)).

2. “The price of this *extraordinarily* cheap machine is GBP20, 000”

(The machine is extremely cheap when compared with what has been offered (Lorenz, 1999: 116)).

In the corpora, five items are found in this category. Below are examples from the corpora.

CORDS

At the opening ceremony of the Oppenheimer Funds (Asia) Limited in February 2004, the FS said that the Securities and Futures Commission registered more than 1,800 authorised unit trusts and mutual funds, which, of course, have plenty room for expansion in Hong Kong and Mainland China.

Extract

Hong Kong is expected to play a key role in fostering the development of the Mainland's fund management industry, *particularly* providing a reservoir of experience in operation and risk management skills.

The use of *particularly* is to intensify by drawing attention to the audience that the Government especially aims to make Hong Kong, when compared with other countries, as a reservoir of experience in operation and risk management skills for the development of the Mainland's fund management industry.

CBUSS

At the opening session of the Penta Forum on February 9, 2004. The FS discussed the recent performance of the financial markets. He said they were certainly starting 2004 on a strong note, with major economic indicators, local and global alike, turning for the better.

Extract

I notice that the themes for the brainstorming sessions today do not touch on the budget issues *specifically*.

A Penta Forum is an opportunity for all business sectors to discuss how to sustain the economic growth and capture new growth opportunities. The FS uses *specifically* to emphasize explicitly that the discussion on the budget is not on the top priority list of the agenda when compared with other subjects in the agenda such as new business opportunities and the sustainability of economic growth.

8.3.5 Syntactic intensifiers

Some lexical items such as *I know*, *will*, or *emphasize* can signal the speaker's high degree commitment, assurance or certainty. In addition, some phrases, which are made up by two or several individual intensifiers, can reinforce a higher degree of intensification. In this study, these phrases are called compound intensifiers. Below are examples from the corpora.

I know

Cappelli (2009: 155) describes *know* as a "factive or strong veridical verb, i.e. as a verb that entails the truth of the embedded proposition both for the speaker and for

the grammatical subject. It is usually studied in opposition to *believe* and to other weak veridical verbs of cognitive attitude”. The verb *know* stands at the extreme evidential pole at the “evidential-epistemic continuum” (ibid.: 156). The use of *I know* indicates that, after evaluating the state of affairs, the speaker assigns the highest degree of likelihood to it. The maximum degree of likelihood foregrounds the speaker’s belief that his/her proposition content is true. In other words, the speaker is confident that his/her proposition (*p*) put forward is likely to be true if there is the absence of refutations. The following are examples of *I know* from the corpora with the meaning of a high degree of likelihood or assertion.

CORDS

At the Opening Ceremony of Institute of Nanomaterials and Nanotechnology Technical Advisory Committee in December 2004, the FS said that he was pleased to see that the Institute was attracting an ever-increasing number of renowned experts and pioneers in nanotechnology and Hong Kong as a whole.

Extract

Talking about nanotechnology, I must admit that I am a true layman. Yet, *I know* that nanotechnology is widely considered to be the next big wave in the 21st century and a source of unprecedented business opportunities.

The FS acknowledges the importance of nanotechnology for business development from the evidential information that comes from various sources. In addition, he also acknowledges that many renowned experts and pioneers in nanotechnology have joined HKUST to provide support to the Institute. In view of his evaluation based on the evidential information, the use of *I know* indicates that the FS expresses his subjective emphasis that the development of nanotechnology is a source of unprecedented business opportunities.

Will

In addition to expressing future time, predictability or prediction of an event which may have an epistemic meaning, *will* also has the meaning of expressing

confidence and certainty. Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 189-193) state that “*will* has the same semantic strength as *must*” and they also state that “a strongly stressed *will*, especially with a 1st person subject, tends to convey determination”. *Will* is described as an intensifier expressing a claim or viewpoint more assertively (Carter & McCarthy, 2006: 893; Holmes, 1990: 6; Hyland, 2000a: 181). Below are examples of using *will* as an intensifier when it collocates with an emphatic word or phrase.

CBUSS

At a luncheon jointly hosted by the Hong Kong Capital Markets Association, the Hong Kong Association of Corporate Treasurers and the Hong Kong Society of Financial Analysts in January 2004, the FS reinforced the point that Hong Kong was still the main financial centre in the South East region and Hong Kong was making an effort to maintain its status.

Extract

On the market infrastructure front, the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) has continued to develop links aimed at reducing the settlement risk in bond trading, for example by exploring linking its Central MoneyMarkets Unit (CMU) with Mainland's Government Securities Book-Entry System. We are *confident* that this *will* help attract Mainland enterprises to issue bonds in Hong Kong and to invest in the Hong Kong bond market.

Confident indicates that one has a strong belief. *Will* expresses determination. The co-occurrence of *confident* and *will* indicates that the FS emphasises his strong belief that the development of links between CMU and the Mainland's Government Securities System is important for attracting Mainland enterprises to issue bonds.

The uses of *will* together with the 1st person plural pronoun or 1st person subject indicates that FS emphasises his strong belief that some events will definitely be carried out by him or the government. Below is an example.

CBUDS

In the 2007 Budget Speech, the FS discussed how he would like to allocate the revenue of the government following the strong recovery of economy.

Extract

I have pledged to leave wealth with the people where affordable. As the Government's financial position has improved following the strong recovery of our economy, I *will* propose a series of tax relief measures to share the fruits of economic prosperity with the community.

Compound intensifiers

CORDS

The speech was given at the Australian Business Awards 2004 Gala Dinner on October 15, 2004. Apart from presenting the business awards to the winners, the FS praised to those Australian Entrepreneurs who have contributed to the business community in Hong Kong.

Extract

The people of Hong Kong have *always* taken pride in the fact that we have *such a strong* and *committed* international business presence here.

The use of *always*, *such a strong* and *committed* indicates that the FS wants to emphasize the importance of the participation of the Australian business in Hong Kong.

CBUSS

At the luncheon organized by the Federation of Hong Kong Industries on 22nd August 2003, the FS promised to run his Financial Secretary's Office with greater transparency and responsiveness.

Extract

I pledge to you, I will do my *utmost* to serve the best interests of the people in Hong Kong.

The use of *pledge to you, will* and *utmost* intensifies his promise to serve the people of Hong Kong.

8.4 Summary of the findings on intensification categories

The findings of this chapter have answered research question 1 that there are differences in the frequency of intensifiers in the corpora. CORDS has the highest frequency. The frequency is lower in CBUSS and CBUDS has the lowest frequency among the three corpora. The findings also have answered research question 3 that the closed-class intensifiers have the highest frequency whereas syntactic intensifiers are the least frequent items among the five types of intensifier. CORDS, CBUSS and CBUDS have different devices of 104, 119 and 99 respectively. Totally 145 different devices are used.

CORDS has the highest frequencies of four types of intensifier except *ly*-intensifiers, where CBUSS has the highest frequency of *ly*-intensifiers. CBUDS has the lowest frequencies in all five types of intensifier. As discussed, there may be various reasons for the use of intensifiers such as high degrees of sincerity or appreciation of the events in which the FS is participating. Some other observations arising from the above findings are further discussed in the Chapter 10.

The previous chapters have described how the FS uses hedges to weaken and intensifiers to strengthen the meanings. The following chapter is an analysis of the two constituents (collocation and semantic preference) of the extended lexical units of meaning and clusters of the most frequent hedges and intensifiers. Through these analyses, the linguistic patterning of hedges and intensifiers used by the FS is further explored. The other constituents, colligation and semantic prosody are not covered in this study.

Chapter 9 Findings and discussion of the collocates, clusters and semantic preferences of the frequent hedges and intensifiers

9.1 Introduction

In this chapter, research question 4 that what major collocations, clusters and semantic preferences are co-selected with the hedges and intensifiers is addressed.

In order to shed more light on the co-selections and clusters of the hedges and intensifiers, the collocations, clusters, and semantic preferences of the most frequent three lexical items of each category of hedges and intensifiers from each of the three corpora are studied. An analysis of the most frequent three items can identify some of the most common patterns of the linguistic realizations used by the FS. These items were selected in accordance with their total frequency in the three corpora and not from a particular corpus. The analysis of the associated co-text and semantic preferences can identify the discussion topics or situations in the speeches when the FS uses hedges or intensifiers. In doing so, it is believed that the text organising, stance and interactional strategies of the FS can be identified. Phrasal items (both hedges and intensifiers and syntactic items (both hedges and intensifiers) are not included in the analysis as WordSmith cannot generate MI values for them because they are items with a combination of more than one unit⁵³. In this analysis, within a span of 4:4, the top five most statistically significant (with MI value ≥ 3) collocates of the most frequent three items in each category of the hedges and intensifiers were selected for analysis. Using the Collocates Facility in the Concord Function of WordSmith Tools version 5 (Scott, 2008), collocation statistics were generated for the targeted hedges and intensifiers. The three-word clusters, which refer to the “recurrent contiguous words” in the corpora that form “a phrase or pattern of use” (Cheng et al., 2009: 240), with a frequency of three or above were also generated. Manual checking was done on the concordance entries to find out the associated co-text and semantic

⁵³ It is understood that some software applications can cope with phrasal items in generating the MI value, e.g. Concgram.

preferences of the lexical items. A random sample of 30 concordance entries was checked if the number of entries of the lexical item exceeded thirty.

As stated earlier, in this study semantic preference is defined as a shared semantic field determined by patterns of co-selection including colligation, collocation, clusters and the wider co-text.

Each Table from 33 to 40 below is a summary of the most frequent lexical hedges and intensifiers in each corpora with their frequencies, collocates, clusters, associated co-text, and semantic preferences. The analysis of both collocates and clusters can help to better understand what lexical-grammatical choices are frequently used with the hedges and intensifiers in the public speech settings. The examples of the associated co-text were identified through the analysis of the most frequent hedges and intensifiers, along with the syntagmatic dimension in the concordance entries. Those co-texts which share a semantic feature are labelled as a semantic preference. For example, in Table 33, the verb *wish* in CORDS collocates with *every*, *success*, *I*, *you* and *all* with the MI value ≥ 3 . *I wish you* is the most frequent cluster with a frequency of eight. The verb *wish* is also associated with co-texts such as *centre will continue with it excellent work*, *federation will continue its marvellous work*, *all the best for the future*, and *every success in your endeavours*. These co-texts share the same semantic field of “expression of gratitude” and are included in the semantic preference column. The semantic preferences provide observable evidence of the common characteristics and nature of the discussion topics. As a result of cross-checking to the corpora, the semantic preferences are the same as the discussion topics in the texts. Below is the analysis of each category in the corpora.

9.2 Collocates, clusters, and semantic preferences of the most frequent verbal hedges

Table 33 below is a summary of the most frequent verbal hedges in the corpora with their frequencies, collocates with MI values ≥ 3 , number of instances, associated co-text, semantic preferences, and 3-word clusters with a frequency at 3 or above.

Table 33: Summary of the collocates, clusters, associated co-text, and semantic preferences of the most frequent verbal hedges

Corpus	Verbal hedges	Frequency per 10,000 words	Collocates		Examples of the associated co-text before and after the hedges	Semantic preference (s)	Clusters (frequency)
			Most frequent collocates with MI value ≥ 3	No. of instances			
CORDS	wish	8.69	<i>every</i> ≥ 8.81 <i>success</i> ≥ 7.6 <i>I</i> ≥ 5.99 <i>you</i> ≥ 5.95 <i>all</i> ≥ 5.8	9 9 20 13 7	Pre: <i>-Centre will continue with its excellent work;</i> <i>-Federation will continue its marvellous work;</i> <i>-Council for staging another very successful Fair;</i> <i>-will continue the good work in your wake;</i> Post: <i>-all the best for the future;</i> <i>-every success in your endeavours;</i> <i>-everyone an enjoyable and fruitful fair;</i> <i>-all participants a fruitful Forum;</i>	“Expression of gratitude” to the audience, organizers or events at the end of the speeches such as <i>I wish you even bigger success in the year</i> . The use of <i>wish</i> and the associated co-text indicates the courtesy of the FS when he believes that the success will be a truth state of the events.	<i>-I wish you (8);</i> <i>-wish you all (6);</i> <i>-wish you very (3);</i> <i>-I wish the (3);</i>
	hope	5.35	<i>I</i> ≥ 6.42 <i>will</i> ≥ 5.88 <i>you</i> ≥ 5.62 <i>that</i> ≥ 5.56 <i>we</i> ≥ 4.71	13 5 5 5 3	Pre: <i>-successful and rewarding year;</i> <i>-enjoy the dim sum;</i> Post: <i>-successful this evening;</i> <i>-will be a year of growth;</i> <i>-will enjoy the Expo;</i> <i>-next two days fruitful and rewarding;</i> <i>-enjoy the evening;</i>	1) “Expression of gratitude” to the audience or events at the end of the speeches such as <i>I hope you will enjoy the Expo</i> . The use of <i>hope</i> and the associated co-text expresses the courtesy of the FS, wishing the audience could enjoy the Expo.	<i>-I hope you (4);</i>

					<p>Pre: <i>-fund managers are able to smell what lies ahead;</i> <i>-caring community through creativity and partnership;</i> <i>-ICL development, is under public consultation;</i> <i>-will become the new international standard;</i></p> <p>Post: <i>-will be a year of growth;</i> <i>-private companies would follow your lead;</i> <i>-this transaction will serve as a stimulus;</i> <i>-stakeholders will take an active part;</i></p>	2) “Expectation for the materialization of the activities” which the FS has no control. For example, at the presentation ceremony of Hong Kong Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Awards dated 22 nd Nov 2006 when discussing the Government’s measures to foster a favourable technological environment of Hong Kong, the FS said, “... <i>hope</i> that all stakeholders will take an active role in the consultation”. The use of <i>hope</i> and the associated co-text indicates the tentative expectation of the FS because whether or not the stakeholders would take an active role is out of the control of the FS.	
	<i>believe</i>	3.68	$I \geq 6.49$ $Hong \geq 4.27$ $will \geq 5.59$ $that \geq 5.27$	10 4 3 3	<p>Pre: <i>-companies trying to expand across the boundary;</i> <i>-increasing liberalization of exchange control;</i> <i>-Hong Kong 2004 a good start;</i></p> <p>Post: <i>-CEPA will enhance Hong Kong’s attractiveness;</i> <i>-will give you an equally vibrant business environment;</i> <i>-the market potential is enormous;</i> <i>-LSE’s presence in Hong Kong will reaffirm our leading position;</i></p>	“Tentative prediction” of the development of the activities, which the FS has no control. For example, at the welcome luncheon hosted by BASELWORLD dated 15 th April 2004 when discussing the development of CEPA, the FS said, “I <i>believe</i> CEPA will enhance Hong Kong’s attractiveness”. The use of <i>believe</i> and the associated co-text expresses the tentative prediction of the FS.	nil
CBUSS	<i>believe</i>	8.21	$Strongly \geq 9.7$ $I \geq 6.51$	5 35	<p>Pre: <i>-continuing growth of Hong Kong’s financial market;</i> <i>-the services sector, where Hong</i></p>	1) “Expression of optimistic confidence” towards the activities mentioned, which the FS has or no direct control. For example, at the	<i>-I believe that (13);</i> <i>I also believe (4);</i>

			<i>that</i> ≥ 5.85 <i>should</i> ≥ 5.55 <i>it</i> ≥ 5.24	25 3 8	<i>Kong is particularly strong;</i> <i>- our tax regime is still highly competitive;</i> <i>-new opportunities that are coming;</i> Pro: <i>budget has struck the right balance; more companies worldwide raise funds and be trade here; seeing the beginning of recovery; CEPA will reinforce and expand Hong Kong's advantages; bring a multi-fold return;</i>	luncheon of the Second Pearl River Delta Conference dated 17 th Oct 2003 when discussing the development of CEPA, the FS said, "I believe that Hong Kong and the PRD is on the verge of a new cycle of growth". The use of <i>believe</i> and the associated co-text indicates that the FS expresses his optimistic confidence on the development of CEPA which is under the control of the Mainland Authority and various external parties such as the importers and exporters.	<i>-believe that the (4);</i> <i>-believe it is (4),</i> <i>-I strongly believe (3);</i> <i>-we believe in (3);</i> <i>-believe that Hong Kong (3);</i> <i>-believe that it (3)</i>
					Pre: <i>-more room for the private sector and lessen the burden on taxpayers;</i> <i>-no changes to corporate profits tax;</i> <i>-a staunch supporter of competition;</i> Post: <i>-greater transparency and greater responsiveness;</i> <i>-consistent and predictable;</i> <i>-asset building instead of income;</i> <i>-market leads, government facilitates;</i> <i>-big market, small government;</i>	2) "Governing principles" of the FS, which he has full control. For example, at the Business Community Luncheon dated 23 rd March 2005, the FS said "I believe the principle of "market leads; government facilitates". The use of <i>believe</i> and the associated co-text helps to mitigate the reproach of too assertive when mentioning the governing principles of public finances which the FS has direct control.	
	<i>hope</i>	6.25	<i>sincerely</i> ≥ 10.66 <i>I</i> ≥ 6.59 <i>that</i> ≥ 5.78 <i>will</i> ≥ 5.46 <i>you</i> ≥ 5.23	3 28 18 10 6	Pre: <i>-the terms of the vibrancy that you will experience here;</i> <i>-noticed increased activity;</i> <i>-big projects under planning</i> Post: <i>-take some satisfaction from the three-pronged policy strategy adopted;</i> <i>-budget has struck the right balance;</i>	1) "Expression of optimistic confidence" about matters discussed in the speeches. For example, at the luncheon jointly hosted by the Capital Markets Association and Hong Kong Association of Corporate Treasurers on the 8 th January 2004 when discussing the development of the bond market which the FS has no control, he said, "I hope you will also take some satisfaction	<i>-we hope that (6);</i> <i>-I hope that (6);</i> <i>-I hope you (4);</i> <i>-sincerely hope (3);</i> <i>-I hope this (3)</i>

					<p>-is a good omen; -will materialise very soon; -the recovery we are seeing;</p>	from the three-pronged policy". The use of <i>hope</i> and the associated co-text indicates that the FS expresses his confidence that the audience would be satisfied from the three-pronged policy.	
					<p>Pre: -with your active participation; -to hold talks with various groups; -by bringing hedge funds under a proper regulatory and disclosure framework;</p> <p>Post: -law enforcement agencies... join hands to protect information goods; -better communication; -will materialise very soon; -certain progress on this front; -contributions from the business sector; -build consensus on the best way forward;</p>	2) "Expectation for materialization" of the activities that the FS has no control. For example, at the Joint Business Community Luncheon dated March 2, 2006 when discussing the investment in infrastructure, the FS said, "I <i>hope</i> that an early consensus can be reached...". The use of <i>hope</i> and the associated co-text indicates that the FS expresses only his wish that a consensus can be reached.	
					<p>Pre: -I wish you all a very fruitful;</p> <p>Pro: -have a chance to enjoy; -have a chance to visit; -all the best at this festive season;</p>	3) "Expression of gratitude" to the audience at the end of the speeches such as <i>I hope you have a chance to enjoy one of the bargain tourist attractions</i> . The use of <i>hope</i> and the associated co-text expresses his joyful feeling to the audience.	
	consider	4.64	<p>should\geq7.05 government\geq5.93 that\geq5.28 will\geq5.22 we\geq5.02</p>	<p>3 3 6 4 6</p>	<p>Pre: -redeveloping existing and opening new facilities; -implement long-term reform; -will generate large investment demands;</p> <p>Post:</p>	"A desire" for the introduction of policies and measures which the FS has control because of the demand of the society or the financial markets. For example, at the demand of the gold trading industry to set up a gold depository in Hong Kong, the FS	nil

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the regulation of hedge fund from the angle of investor protection; - policies positioning of social enterprise; - setting up this child development fund; - provision of a concession in trade declaration charges; - setting up an integrated, holistic and high-level Family Commission; - issuing bonds; 	expressed a desire to provide a concession in trade declaration charges for gold when he discussed the future development of tourism industry at his speech given on 2 nd March 2006 at the Joint Business Community Luncheon.	
CBUDS	Expect(ed)	14.05	<i>solid</i> ≥ 12.75 <i>higher</i> ≥ 11.51 <i>lower</i> ≥ 10.94 <i>than</i> ≥ 9.73 <i>economy</i> ≥ 8.14	3 7 3 15 8 17 6 12 7	Pre: - expenditure of \$25.2 billion, \$12.5 billion and \$9.8 billion respectively; - decrease to 20.2 per cent next year; - unchanged at 5 per cent in 2005-06; - reduce to \$201.2 billion; Post: - stand at \$300.8 billion; - stand at \$287.3 billion; - about 65%;	1) “Quantity and size” of the government revenue and expenditure, fiscal reserves, and percentage of ratepayers or GDP that the FS has or no control. For example, at the 2006 budget speech, the FS said, “we expect that by... the fiscal reserves... be at \$300.8 billion”. The use of <i>expect</i> and the associated co-text expresses the FS’s tentative anticipation of the amount of fiscal reserves.	<i>-is expected to (13);</i> <i>-is expected that (5);</i> <i>-higher than expected (5);</i> <i>-economy is expected (5);</i> <i>-expected to be (4);</i> <i>-lower than expected (3);</i> <i>-are expected to (3)</i> <i>-we expect to (6);</i> <i>-we expect that (6);</i>
					Pre: - lower than; - higher than; - decrease to 20.2 per cent; - forecast at 3.8 per cent; - will be larger than; Post: - expenditure and higher than; - to reach USD4,000 billion; - a mere 1.5%	2) “Comparison” of interest rate, GDP, inflation rate, and expenditure and revenue between two intervals that the FS has or no control. For example, at the 2007 budget speech, the FS said his tentative anticipation of the inflation rate for 2007 was 1.5 per cent when compared with 2006.	
					Pre: - the one-stop centre will be located; - plan to invite tenders for a new	3) “Anticipation” for the completion of the activities, which the FS has control, mentioned at the events. For example, at	

					<p><i>-reviewing our existing policy;</i></p> <p>Post:</p> <p><i>-filling existing vacancies or creating new posts;</i></p> <p><i>-related tax arrangements;</i></p> <p><i>-issue additional bonds;</i></p> <p><i>-introducing a tax refund scheme</i></p>	<p>providing a concession in trade declaration charges for gold.</p>	
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As shown in Table 33, in CORDS, the lemmas *wish*, *hope*, and *believe* are the most frequent verbal hedges. The five collocates of *wish* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *every*, *success*, *I*, *you*, and *all*. The co-occurrences of *wish* with *I* have the highest frequency at 20. All instances of *I* appear to the left of *wish*. *I wish you* is the most frequent cluster. The five collocates of *hope* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *I*, *will*, *you*, *that*, and *we*. The co-selections of *hope* with *I* have the highest frequency at 13. 12 instances of *I* appear to the left and one instance appears to the right of *hope*. *I hope you* is the only cluster found. The four collocates of *believe* with MI values ≥ 3 are *I*, *Hong*, *will*, and *that*. The associations of *believe* with *I* have the highest frequency at 10. No cluster with *believe* is found.

In CBUSS, the lemmas *believe*, *hope*, and *consider* are the most frequent verbal hedges. The five collocates of *believe* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *strongly*, *I*, *that*, *should* and *it*. The co-occurrences of *believe* with *I* have the highest frequency at 35 and all instances appear to the left of *believe*. *I believe that* is the most frequent cluster. The five collocates of *hope* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *sincerely*, *I*, *that*, *will* and *you*. The co-selections of *hope* with *I* have the highest frequency at 28 and 26 instances of appear to the left and two instances appear to the right of *hope*. *We hope that* and *I hope that* are two of the most frequent clusters. The five collocates of *consider* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *should*, *government*, *that*, *will* and *we*. The associations of *consider* with *we* and *that* have the highest frequency at 6 and all instances of *we* appear to the left of *consider*. Four instances of *that* appear to the left and two instances appear to the right of *consider*. No cluster of *consider* is found.

In CBUDS, the lemmas *expect*, *propose*, and *consider* are the most frequent verbal hedges. The five collocates of *expected* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *solid*, *higher*, *lower*, *than* and *economy*. The co-occurrences of *expected* with *than* have the highest frequency at 15 and 13 instances appear to the left and two instances appear to the right of *expected*. The four collocates of *expect* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *we*, *that*, *to*, and *the*. The associations of *expect* with *we* have the frequency at 17 and all instances appear to the left of *expect*. *Is expected to* is the most frequent cluster. The five collocates of *propose* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *therefore*, *introduce*, *I*, *reduce*, and *increase*. The co-selections of *propose* with *I* have the frequency at 30 instances and all instances appear to the left of *propose*. The five collocates of

proposed with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *number*, *budget*, *last*, *tax* and *have*. The co-occurrences of *proposed* with *have* have the frequency at 6 and all instances of *have* appear to the left of *proposed*. *I propose to* is the most frequent cluster found. The five collocates of *consider* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *will*, *I*, *we*, *that* and *this*. The co-occurrences of *consider* with *will* have the frequency at 10 and all instances of *will* appear to the left of *consider*. *We will consider* is the only cluster found.

Wish, *hope*, *believe*, *expect*, and *consider* are tentative cognition verbs, referring to mental evaluation rather than the linguistic activities of the speaker (Varttala, 2001). *I* and *we* are defined as personal markers which can contribute to the speaker-hearer relationship (Hyland, 2000b: 123). As shown in Table 33, the corpora indicate a frequent collocation of personal markers with tentative cognition verbs (e.g. *I hope*, *I believe* and *I expect*). The results reveal that the FS prefers to signal a tentative stance when presenting the information in his speeches, indicating the information is tentative in nature and may not be necessarily true or accurate. The frequent use of the collocates *I wish you* and *I hope you*, which are formulaic sequences signaling the closing of the speeches, is to express a polite posture in complimenting or thanking the audience. The plural first person pronouns *we* are also frequently used in the three corpora. *We* can have either inclusive or exclusive semantic reference in different texts. One possible reason for use of the inclusive *we* is that, as a form of positive politeness strategy, the FS wants to interact with the audience to stress solidarity. Another possible reason of the alternative use of the exclusive *we* is that, as a form of negative politeness strategy, the FS may reinforce the claim that it includes the government as well but not only himself. In this sense, the use of exclusive *we* can limit the FS's own commitment on the propositions given in his speeches. For example, at the 2004-05 budget speech when discussing capital expenditure and investment, the FS said "*we* will actively consider channelling capital and talent in private sector". *Channelling capital and talent in private sector* is not totally under the control of the FS, but also other departments of the government. The use of exclusive *we* can help to limit the FS's commitment.

In CORDS, *wish* collocates frequently with *every* + *success*. The use of *wish* + *every* + *success* is a courtesy strategy, intensifying the convivial posture of the FS. For the frequent use of *wish* + *every* + *success* is that the FS expresses his maximum sincerity in wishing the success of the activity that he participates in for claiming

common ground interest with the audience (e.g. *I wish the conference every success*). In CBUSS, *believe* and *consider* are frequently collocated with *strongly* and *should* respectively. One possible reason for the frequent use of *strongly* + *believe* and *should* + *consider* is that the FS may want to modify the force of his messages to medium strength to increase the attention of the audience. However, these co-occurrences still maintain their tentativeness. The nonfactive verb *propose* only appears in CBUDS. The frequent use of the collocate *I* + *propose* indicates the FS is only tentatively outlining the proposed policies and measures because what he suggests in the budget proposals has to be endorsed by the councillors.

In CORDS, the most frequent verbal hedges are associated with the semantic preferences of “expression of gratitude to the audience or events”, “expectation for the materialization of the activities mentioned at the events”, and “tentative prediction for the development of the activities mentioned at the events”.

In CBUSS, the frequent verbal hedges are co-selected with the semantic preferences of “expression of optimistic confidence in the activities mentioned at the events”, “governing principles of the FS”, “expectation for materialization of the activities mentioned at the events”, “expression of gratitude to the audience or events” and “a desire for the introductions of policies and measures”.

In CBUDS, the frequent verbal hedges are associated with the semantic preferences of “quantity and size of the government revenue and expenditure, fiscal reserves, and percentage of the ratepayers or GDP”, “comparison of interest rate, GDP, inflation rate, and expenditure and revenue”, “anticipation for the completion of the activities”, “suggestions for the introductions of business plans” and “a desire for the introductions of policies and measures”. This indicates that *wish* and *hope* in both CORDS and CBUSS have the same semantic preferences of “expression of gratitude”. One possible reason is that the FS is the honourable guest in CORDS and CBUSS. Expressing gratitude is regarded as a formulaic sequence which can help the FS to convey his sense of appreciation to the audience for participation and to the organizers for their contributions to the success of the events. *Hope* in both CORDS and CBUSS has the same semantic preference of “expectation for the materialization of the activities”. One possible reason is that other than speaking for the specific purpose of the events, the FS may take the opportunity to inform the audience of the progress of some major projects over which the government has or has no control. It is natural for

the FS to mention the positive aspects of the projects such as the expectation for the completion of the projects.

In CBUSS, the semantic preference of “expression of optimistic confidence towards the activities mentioned” is associated with the tentative verbs *hope* and *believe*. The nature of CBUSS is to update investors about the business aspects of Hong Kong or inform the audience what the upcoming policies and measures the Government will introduce. It is natural for the FS to try to make the audience think favourably about Hong Kong. Therefore CBUSS has the semantic preference associated with the optimistic views or predictions of the FS when he describes economic developments in Hong Kong in his speeches. Another semantic preference of *believe* in CBUSS is “governing principle” of the FS. *Believe* has the meaning of holding a tentative opinion. The co-occurrences of *believe* and the semantic preference of “governing principles” indicate that what is said is not assertive and the information presented in the speeches is only the epistemic judgment of the FS. One of the semantic preferences associated with *expected* in CBUDS is “anticipation for the completion of the activities”. *Expected* means a mental process which does not involve physical activities (Varttala, 2001). One possible reason is that at the beginning of a budget speech, the FS may start off with a soft introduction which describes the business scenario for the past year and what activities will be completed in the coming year. The co-occurrences of *expected* and the semantic preference of “anticipation for the completion of the activities” indicate that, based on the subjective estimation and evaluation, some activities will be completed in the coming year. Since it is based on the FS’s subjective perception, the completion of the activities might not be altogether certain. The use of the co-occurrences can be viewed as expressing tentativeness. *Expect(ed)* has two other semantic preferences of “quantity and size” and “comparison” in CBUDS. Predictions of quantity and size of the current and next year’s financial data and comparisons of financial data of the two periods are generally considered as conventional in budget speeches. Prediction for financial data has the meaning of number approximations and only some of which are under FS’s control (e.g. *budget figures*) while some are outside his control (e.g. *trend of interest rates*). The use of *expect/(ed)* is a possible way for the FS to indicate that the financial data provided are based on his estimation. The semantic preferences of “suggestions for the introduction of business plans”, and “a desire” imply a non-committal and speculative

stance. When these two semantic preferences are associated with *propose* and *consider*, the propositions appear to be more conjectural in meaning. The semantic preference of “a desire” is associated with *consider* in both CBUSS and CBUDS. One possible reason is that the audience, by commercial interests, expect to obtain some information about the government’s future policies and projects. The FS may take these opportunities to release some information of future policies and projects for testing the responses of the public. The use of *consider* may help to make his propositions rather tentative. It is noted that the most frequent three-word unit clusters such as *I believe that* are in combination of a personal marker, a mental verb and a *that*-complement or *you*. These clusters indicate the tentative thoughts, stance, and assessments of the FS towards the propositions.

In sum, the FS uses verbal hedges when expressing gratitude to the audience and the success of the activities. Verbal hedges are also used when the discussion topics are related to expectation for the materialization of some activities, prediction for development of the activities, optimistic confidence on the progress of activities, governing principles, desire for the introduction of policies and measures, quantity and size and comparisons of the financial data, anticipation for the completion of activities and suggestion for the introduction of business plans. *I wish you, I believe that, I hope that, we expect that, and is expected that* are the frequent open-choice clusters frequently used by the FS. The use of these clusters can soften his claims for the purpose of conforming to politeness and mitigating the degree of commitment to the propositions.

9.3 Collocates, clusters and semantic preferences of the most frequent adjective hedges

Table 34 below is a summary of the three most frequent adjective hedges in the corpora with their frequencies, collocates with the MI values ≥ 3 , number of instances, associated phrases, semantic preferences, and 3-word clusters with a frequency at 3 or above.

Table 34: Summary of the collocates, clusters, associated co-text, and semantic preferences of the most frequent adjective hedges

Corpus	adjective hedges	Frequency per 10,000 words	Collocates		Examples of the associated co-text before and after the hedges	Semantic preference	Clusters (frequency)
			Most frequent collocates with MI value ≥ 3	No. of instances			
CORDS	<i>fair</i>	1.67	$a \geq 3.46$	5	Pre: <i>-products of creativity are well protected;</i> <i>-highest international standard;</i> <i>-has faithfully served the important public function, to preserve Hong Kong Exchanges' reputation;</i> Post: <i>-free environment;</i> <i>-efficient and quality financial market, orderly market;</i> <i>-transparent and quality marketplace;</i>	“Reasonable and justice business environment” of Hong Kong. For example, at the Hong Kong Design Centre 2004 Award Presentation Gala Dinner November 18, 2004, the FS said the Hong Kong’s current Intellectual Property Rights regime has made Hong Kong becoming a <i>safe, fair business environment</i> . <i>Fair</i> has indefinite degree in meaning. The use of <i>fair</i> and the associated co-text leaves open to the audience to interpret the degree of justice.	nil
	<i>considerable</i>	1.34	nil	nil	Pre: <i>-nil</i> Post: <i>-portions of toys;</i> <i>-resources to our education;</i> <i>-business opportunities;</i>	“Quantity and size” of the activities mentioned in the speeches such as <i>devoted considerable resources to our education system</i> . <i>Considerable</i> has the meaning of indefinite degree. The use of <i>considerable</i> and the associated co-text allows the FS to reduce the definiteness of what is said or not to mention the precise quantity or amount.	nil
	<i>close</i>	1.00	$to \geq 3.36$	3	Pre: <i>-CEPA on goods produced in Hong Kong valued;</i> Post:	“Approximate amount” of money such as <i>with close to USD400 billion</i> .	nil

					-USD400 billion; -saving deposits of US\$1.2 trillion; -to \$1 billion; -to one-quarter of our overall budget;		
CBUSS	<i>possible</i>	2.14	<i>the</i> ≥ 3.03 <i>and</i> ≥ 3.47 <i>to</i> ≥ 3.09	9 7 5	Pre: -Reduce its operating expenditure; -introduced a GST; -the government as that of facilitator; -adopting a new approach to assisting the poor; -proceeding with the rail merger; -has devised a comprehensive contingency plan; Post: expenditure cuts must be measured; -minimise the impact of the tax on low-income households; -provide regulatory framework consistent with prudence and equity; -facilitate the market's operation; -my proposed tax concessions;	"The likelihood of the introduction of government measures" which the FS has control. For example, at the luncheon hosted by the Hong Kong Capital Markets Association dated 8 th January 2004 when discussing the open-economy virtues of Hong Kong, the FS said, "we will provide the lightest <i>possible</i> regulatory framework". <i>Possible</i> has the meaning of epistemic possibility. The use of <i>possible</i> and the associated co-text leaves it to the audience to interpret the chances for the introduction of measures.	nil
	<i>proposed</i>	1.61	nil	nil	Pre: -abolish estate duty; -provision of a concession in trade declaration charges; Post: -Legislation to LegCo; -amendments to the Inland; -privatisation of the Airport; tax concessions; -gold depository at Hong Kong tax concessions;	"Intention to introduce policies and measures" which the FS has control such as <i>proposed abolition will encourage investors</i> . The use of <i>proposed</i> and the associated co-text indicates that the suggestion for the abolition of estate duty is still a tentative thought of the FS.	nil
	<i>fair</i>	1.43	<i>efficient</i> ≥ 10.35 <i>competition</i>	4 4	Pre: - put in place a framework; -review the public offering regime;	"Enhancement suggestions for the business directions" of Hong Kong's justice environment. For example, at	nil

			≥ 9.29 and ≥ 4.83	8	<p><i>-press ahead with the work of removing barriers;</i></p> <p><i>-cutting the red tape;</i></p> <p><i>-study their recommendation;</i></p> <p>Post:</p> <p><i>-conducting a comprehensive review of all local laws;</i></p> <p><i>-to deepen the retail bond market development;</i></p> <p><i>-the retail Exchange Fund Note programme would be re-launched;</i></p> <p><i>-enhance our attractiveness as a place;</i></p> <p><i>-to enhance our already world-class infrastructure;</i></p>	the 2 nd Citigroup Asia Pacific Fixed Income Investor Conference dated 26 th January, 2005 when discussing the promotion of the bond market in Hong Kong, the FS said, "... provides the most efficient, competitive and <i>fair</i> environment...". The use of <i>fair</i> and the associated co-text leaves the audience to interpret the degree of justice. In view of the purpose of the speech is to update the audience the latest business development, the FS may think that the use <i>fair</i> is sufficient for the purpose of information sharing rather than providing the details of a justice environment, which may not be appropriate in this context.	
CBUDS	<i>fair</i>	3.23	<i>competition</i> ≥ 10.61 <i>is</i> ≥ 4.91 <i>to</i> ≥ 4.52	10 3 6	<p>Pre:</p> <p><i>-promoting the wider use of electronic services;</i></p> <p><i>-maintaining free trade and free flow of information;</i></p> <p><i>-reviewing our existing policy and its effectiveness;</i></p> <p><i>-increase the transparency of our existing regulatory regime;</i></p> <p>Post:</p> <p><i>-enhancing the quality of the market and upgrading human resources;</i></p> <p><i>-commissioned an independent and comprehensive study on the competitive situation;</i></p> <p><i>-is now discussing with staff representative how best to apply to the civil services;</i></p>	<p>"Enhancement suggestions for the business directions" of Hong Kong's justice environment. For example, at the 2004 budget speech when discussing free market economy, the FS said, "... maintaining free trade and the free flow of information, promoting <i>fair</i> competition, enhancing the quality of the market...". The use of <i>fair</i> and the associated co-text leaves open to the councillors to interpret the degree justice and the FS only provides a general phenomenon of the business environment.</p>	nil

	<i>possible</i>	1.61	<i>impact</i> \geq 8.91 <i>on</i> \geq 4.89	3 4	Pre: -introduce GST; Post: -implementing GST ; -reforms to the prospectus regime; -merger; -sale and securitisation of assets;	“The likelihood of the introduction of government measures” which the FS has control. For example, in the 2005 budget speech when discussing the ways to improve the fiscal reserves of the Government, the FS said, “ ...our discussion with the two railway corporations over a <i>possible</i> merger” . The use of <i>possible</i> and the associated co-text indicates the likelihood of the introduction of merger. However, the merger is still tentative and uncertain when the information is giving at the speech.	-the possible impact (3);
	<i>proposed</i>	1.61	<i>GST</i> \geq 8.25	3	Pre: -a GST in Hong Kong; -Personalised Vehicle Registration Marks Scheme; -abolished estate duty; Post: -introduction of GST; -establishment of a gold depository; -exemption of offshore funds;	“Intention to introduce policies and measures” by the Government to which the FS has control such as <i>the establishment of a gold depository at Hong Kong International Airport</i> . The use of <i>proposed</i> and the associated co-text indicates that the establishment gold depository is still a tentative thought.	nil

As shown in Table 34, in CORDS, *fair*, *considerable*, and *close* are the most frequent adjective hedges. The only collocate of *fair* with MI value ≥ 3 is *a*. The co-selections of *fair* with *a* have the frequency at 5 and all instances appear to the left of *fair*. *Considerable* has no collocate with MI value ≥ 3 . The only collocate of *close* with the MI value ≥ 3 is *to*. The co-occurrences of *close* with *to* have the frequency at 3 and all instances appear to the right of *close*. No clusters are found with *fair*, *considerable*, and *close* with a frequency at 3 or above.

In CBUSS, *possible*, *proposed*, and *fair* are the most frequent adjective hedges. The three collocates of *possible* with MI values ≥ 3 are *the*, *and*, and *to*. The associations of *possible* with *the* have the highest frequency at 9 and seven instances of *the* appear to the left and two instances appear to the right of *possible*. *Proposed* has no collocate with MI value ≥ 3 . The three collocates of *fair* have MI values ≥ 3 are *efficient*, *competition*, and *and*. The co-selections of *fair* and *and* have the highest frequency at 8 and four instances appear to the left and four instances appear to the right of *fair*. No clusters are found with *possible*, *proposed*, and *fair*.

In CBUDS, *fair*, *possible*, and *proposed* are the most frequent adjectival hedges. The three collocates of *fair* with MI values ≥ 3 are *competition*, *is*, and *to*. The associations of *fair* with *competition* have the highest frequency at 10 and all instances appear to the right of *fair*. Two collocates of *possible* with MI values ≥ 3 are *impact* and *on*. The co-occurrences of *possible* with *on* have the frequency at 4 and one instance appears to the left and three instances appear to the right of *possible*. *The possible impact* is the only cluster found. The only collocate of *proposed* with MI value ≥ 3 is *GST*. The associations of *proposed* with *GST* have a frequency at 3 and all instances of *GST* appear to the right of *proposed*.

In CORDS, *fair*, *considerable*, and *close* have no frequent collocations except with grammatical items such as *a* and *to*. *Fair* and *considerable* have the meaning of indefinite degree (Varttala, 2001) and *close + to* has the meaning of approximation. The use of these adjectival hedges allows the FS to hedge what he says but without committing to the exact degree of certainty or numerical exactitude. No cluster is found with the three frequent adjectives in CORDS.

Possible, *proposed*, and *fair* are the most frequent adjectives in both CBUSS and CBUDS. In CBUSS, *possible*, and *proposed* have no strong pattern of collocations except with grammatical items such as *the*, *and*, *to* and so on. *Fair* collocates four times each with *efficient* and *competition*. The collocate of *fair* + *efficient* only indicates that both are adjectives used to modify the nouns following them. The use of *fair* to modify a noun still consists of the speaker's epistemic interpretation of what is said (Hyland, 1998a: 133), leaving it open for the audience to interpret the "exact degree" of the given information. No cluster is found with the three frequent adjectives in CBUSS. In CBUDS, *fair* collocates ten times with *competition*. *Fair* + *competition* indicates a general phenomenon without mentioning the definite degree. *Possible* and *proposed* have no strong patterns of collocation.

In CORDS, the first semantic preference associated with *fair* is "reasonable and justice business environment of Hong Kong". One possible explanation for this association is that when praising the achievements of the events or awardees, or honourable guests, the FS may simultaneously mention some accomplishments of Hong Kong which may arouse the interest of the audience. In this situation, a general description of the accomplishments (e.g. *fair environment*) is sufficient because it is impossible to describe the details of a justice environment in the context of a public speech setting. The second semantic preference in CORDS associated with *considerable* is "quantity and size of the activities mentioned in the speeches". One reason would be that when praising some accomplishments or when toasting the events, the FS may have to mention quantity and size of the accomplishment (e.g. *the amount of resources for education system*). The FS uses *considerable* either to cover the lack of information in terms of specific quantity or size of resources or to deliberately not give the definite quantity or size of the resources because the precise information may not be required in this specific context. The third semantic preference in CORDS is "approximate amount of money". The possible reason may be similar to the second semantic preference mentioned above.

Both CBUSS and CBUDS have the same semantic preferences. The frequent hedges of *possible*, *and* *proposed* have the semantic preferences of "the likelihood of the introduction of government measures" and "intention to introduce policies and measures" respectively. One plausible reason is that one of the purposes of CBUSS is to invite overseas investors to invest in Hong Kong. In order to support his claims, the

FS may need to provide factual evidence to arouse the interest of the investors. It may be necessary for the FS to provide a list of possible policy measures that will be introduced or are intended to be introduced, which constitute the evidence in the support of his invitation to the overseas investors. The use of the *possible* and *proposed* indicates that the information provided is still tentative in nature. *Fair* is associated with the semantic preference of “enhancement suggestions for the business directions of Hong Kong’s justice environment” in both CBUSS and CBUDS. One possible reason for this semantic preference is that in order to be more persuasive, the FS may need to suggest some possible enhancements of the business environment in Hong Kong (e.g. *review the public offering regime*) so as to reinforce the confidence of the investors. Likewise in CBUDS, in order to obtain the approval from the councillors, the FS may suggest some possible enhancements to support his budget proposals. This semantic preference may also contribute to the support of his claims, but it also indicates epistemic possibility only. No cluster is found in CORDS and CBUSS. *The + possible + impact* is the only cluster found in CBUDS. This cluster is an open choice cluster which indicates the tentative assessments of the FS towards the propositions.

In summing up, the FS uses the above mentioned adjectives to hedge when the discussions relate to the reasonable and justice business environment of Hong Kong, quantity and size of the activities, the approximate amount of money, the likelihood of the introduction of measures, the intention to introduce policies and measures, enhancement suggestions for the business directions of Hong Kong. Even though some of the activities are under his control, such as the introduction of financial policies and measures, the introduction may need to go through many procedures and approvals from various parties over which the FS has no control. The use of *the possible impact*, the only cluster found in the adjective hedges, helps the FS to reduce the degree of certainty of the propositions or to indicate what is said is not assertive.

9.4 Collocates, clusters, and semantic preferences of the most frequent adverbial hedges

Table 35 below is a summary of the most frequent adverbial hedges in the corpora with their frequencies, collocates with the MI values ≥ 3 , number of instances,

associated phrases, semantic preferences, and 3-word clusters with a frequency at 3 or above.

Table 35: Summary of the collocates, clusters, associated co-text, and semantic preferences of the most frequent adverbial hedges

Corpus	Adverbial hedges	Frequency per 10,000 words	Collocates		Examples of the associated co-text before and after the hedges	Semantic preference	Clusters (frequency)
			Most frequent collocates with MI value ≥ 3	No. of instances			
CORDS	<i>some</i>	8.02	<i>that</i> ≥ 4.50	4	Pre: <i>-Hang Seng Index;</i> <i>-23% of the Hong Kong Government's total expenditure;</i> Post: <i>-40 economies worldwide;</i> <i>-of our guests;</i> <i>-of the mainland companies might not have offices;</i> <i>-35% compared with;</i> <i>-HK\$11 billion;</i> <i>-22,000 trainees;</i> <i>-1.7 million people;</i>	1) "Quantity, amount or numbers" of money, persons, countries, companies, index, and per cent such <i>the Hang Seng Index is up some 35%</i> . The use of <i>some</i> and the associated co-text indicates the FS just provides an approximate per cent. It implies that the "quantity or numbers" provided are not absolute accurate.	<i>-some of the (4);</i>
			<i>have</i> ≥ 4.32 <i>are</i> ≥ 4.27 <i>of</i> ≥ 3.27	3 3 8		2) "Positive aspects" of economic or business developments in Hong Kong. For example, at the Hong Kong Retail Bond Launch Ceremony on the 7 th July 2004 when discussing the capabilities of the local capital market, the FS used <i>some</i> and the associated co-text to indicate that Hong Kong has a number of best infrastructure and public facilities in the region.	

					-most distinguished scientists and researchers; -set a new record this year		
	about	2.34	nil	nil	Pre: -10 million people; -1.1billion US dollars; -US\$22 billion; Post: -Euro 28 million; -US\$28 billion; -8%; -100,000 overseas visitors;	“Quantity, amount or numbers” of money, people such as <i>about US\$28 billion worth of trade</i> . The use of <i>about</i> and the associated co-text gives a tentative approximation, implying that the “quantity or numbers” provided are not absolute accurate.	nil
	nearly	2.34	of \geq 4.11	4	Pre: -130 companies; -23% of total government expenditure; 4%; Post: -HK\$100 million; -40% of the companies; -300 legal firms; -50% increase	“Quantity, amount or numbers” of money, companies, and percent such as <i>total donation of nearly HK\$100 million</i> . The use of <i>nearly</i> and the associated co-text gives a tentative approximation, implying that the “quantity or numbers” provided are not absolute accurate.	nil
CBUSS	some	16.78	times \geq 6.78 give \geq 6.38 know \geq 6.24 might \geq 6.19 after \geq 6.08	3 3 4 3 3	Pre: -remained unemployed; -social enterprises; Post: -of you; -financial houses; -remain unemployed	1) “Numbers” of people and enterprises such as <i>some financial houses</i> have estimated. The use of <i>some</i> and the associated co-text provides an approximation of the number of financial houses.	-some of the (14); -some of you (6);
					Pre: - a major logistic node and a trading hub; -our companies a good head start on our competitors; -consolidating our recovery;	2) “Positive aspects” of the economic or business development in Hong Kong. For example, at the 13 th Annual Hong Kong Business Summit on the 14 th December 2007 when discussing the challenges and opportunities that Hong	

					<p><i>-adjustments</i> Post: <i>-Hong Kong's economy has now picked up;</i> <i>-positive signs;</i> <i>-the premier capital formation centre for Mainland;</i> <i>-3,800 companies that ran their regional operations from Hong Kong</i></p>	<p>Kong was facing, the FS said, “<i>following some adjustments, Hong Kong's economy has now picked up</i>”. The use of <i>some</i> and the associated co-text indicates that what is said lacks concrete details but still shows positive indications of economic development.</p>	
					<p>Pre: <i>-overcome these;</i> <i>-environmental protection;</i> <i>-some remained unemployed;</i> <i>-rise of regionalism;</i> Post: <i>-no changes to corporate profit tax;</i> <i>-no change to the wine duty;</i> <i>-hard it of SARS;</i> <i>-the Asian financial turmoil;</i> <i>-hedge funds are not based in Hong Kong;</i></p>	<p>3) “Challenges” of economic and business matters in Hong Kong. For example, at the 13th Annual Hong Kong Business Summit on the 14th December 2007, the FS mentioned that “<i>Hong Kong has gone through some difficult times, including the Asian flu, the Asian financial turmoil, and so on</i>”. The use of <i>some</i> and the associated co-text indicates a certain challenges Hong Kong is facing..</p>	
	<i>about</i>	4.46	<i>million</i> ≥ 6.0	3	<p>Pre: <i>-40% of the total funds;</i> <i>-\$29 billion in the next five years;</i> <i>-460 million people;</i> <i>-30% of the total number of listed companies;</i> Post: <i>-half of the current world trade;</i> <i>-14000 new construction jobs;</i> <i>-40% of our market capitalisation;</i> <i>-USD250 million per month;</i></p>	<p>“Quantity, amount or numbers” of money, people, enterprises, trading turnover, market capitalisation, and jobs such as <i>about 70% of the trading</i>. The use of <i>about</i> and the associated co-text provides a tentative approximation of the amount of trading done in Hong Kong.</p>	nil
	<i>nearly</i>	3.21	<i>Billion</i> ≥ 7.58 <i>US</i> ≥ 6.04	6 3	<p>Pre: <i>-USD790 billion;</i> <i>-\$2.7 billion next year;</i></p>	<p>“Quantity, amount or numbers” of money, companies, percent of the people, GDP, and stock turnover such as</p>	nil

			<i>of</i> ≥ 4.17 <i>Hong</i> ≥ 3.49 <i>in</i> ≥ 3.21	10 3 4	-over 23% in 2003 Post: -US\$2,450 billion in 2004; -\$13 billion of the \$14 billion; -nearly half of the operating surplus; -90% of GDP; -48,000 SMEs;	<i>accounting for 90% of GDP</i> . The use of <i>nearly</i> and the associated co-text indicates an approximation.	
CBUDS	<i>about</i>	14.52	<i>cent</i> ≥ 8.56 <i>jobs</i> ≥ 8.52 <i>cost</i> ≥ 8.37 <i>million</i> ≥ 8.32 <i>per</i> ≥ 8.20	12 5 8 15 12	Pre: -a million people; -30,000 home buyers; -1.1 million taxpayers; -\$12.5 billion and \$9.8 billion respectively; -civil service establishment from some 198,000; Post: - \$1.5 billion; -\$250 million a year; -30,000 home buyers; -23,000 jobs; -nine months	“Quantity, amount or numbers” of money, people, taxpayers, enterprises, trading turnover, market capitalisation, jobs, time, and percent, such as <i>about 12 months of government expenditure</i> . The use of <i>about</i> and the associated co-text provides an approximation of the time for setting the level fiscal reserves.	-the government <i>about</i> (7); -about 14,000 (3);
	<i>some</i>	11.75	<i>even</i> ≥ 8.63 <i>suggest</i> <i>d</i> ≥ 8.17 <i>charges</i> ≥ 7.51 <i>fees</i> ≥ 7.21 <i>members</i> ≥ 7.04	6 4 4 3 3 3	Pre: -\$350 million a year; -23,000 jobs; -annual deduction of \$100,000; -nearly \$1,100 billion -allowance from \$30,000 per child to \$40,000; Post: -15 million three years ago to more than 25 million in 2006; -\$1.2 billion in 2006/07; -30 per cent of the total number of our listed companies; -Members have suggested;	1) “Quantity, amount or numbers” of money, people, jobs, enterprises, and percentage such as <i>some political parties and members of this Council</i> . The use of <i>some</i> and the associated co-text acts as a pronoun, representing a number of unspecified parties or members.	nil

					<p><i>-Political parties and members of this Council;</i></p>		
					<p>Pre: <i>-proposing to implement;</i> <i>-discussion on GST;</i> <i>-proposed a number of tax concessions;</i> <i>-in increase child allowance;</i> Post: <i>-abolition of estate duty;</i> <i>-duty of alcoholic beverages;</i> <i>-introduce legislation to give effect;</i> <i>-working out the details of GST;</i> <i>-to abolish estate duty;</i> <i>-provide a tax deduction for contribution to private medical insurance scheme</i> <i>-offer tax concessions for children</i></p>	<p>2) “Proposals for the introduction of policies and measures” by the government. For example, when concluding the 2007 budget proposal, the FS said he has raised <i>some</i> controversial policies and measures. The use of <i>some</i> and the associated co-text is an approximator for manipulation of precise number or concealing exactly how many policies and measures he has raised.</p>	
					<p>Pre: <i>-reduce the civil service establishment;</i> <i>-to adjust some free and charges;</i> Post: <i>-major projects, including the Central-Wan Chai Bypass;</i> <i>-working out the details of GST;</i></p>	<p>3) “Projects” of the government such as <i>some</i> major projects. The use of <i>some</i> and the associated co-text provides a tentative approximation that should be not taken as a precise number.</p>	
	nearly	5.76	<p>cent\geq9.77 per\geq9.41 million \geq8.62 billion\geq7.99 year\geq6.05</p>	<p>6 6 4 8 3</p>	<p>Pre: <i>-increase of \$2.2 billion;</i> <i>-unchanged at 5 per cent;</i> <i>-the number of full-time employees has risen from 470,000 to 790,000;</i> <i>-will reduce to \$201.2 billion;</i> <i>-a new high of about \$6,650 billion;</i></p>	<p>“Quantity, amount or numbers” of money, companies, people, percent of people, stock turnover, and tax such as <i>nearly</i> 80 per cent of ratepayers. The use of <i>nearly</i> and the associated co-text provides an approximation in quantity rather than an exact number which the</p>	nil

					Post: <i>-a quarter of our total re-current expenditure;</i> <i>-80 per cent of ratepayers;</i> <i>-a million people;</i> <i>-40 per cent of the total market;</i> <i>-100,000 taxpayer to fall out;</i> <i>-7,000 applications;</i>	FS may not have at the time of giving the speeches or to distance himself from the commitment to the exactitude of the figures.	
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As shown in Table 35, in CORDS, *some*, *about*, and *nearly* are the most frequent adverbial hedges. The four collocates of *some* with MI values ≥ 3 are *that*, *have*, *are* and *of*. The co-occurrences of *some* with *of* have the highest frequency at 8 and one instance appears to the left and seven instances appear to the right of *some*. *Some of the* is the only cluster found. *About* has no collocate with a MI value ≥ 3 . The only collocate of *nearly* with MI value ≥ 3 is *of*. Three instances of *of* appear to the left and one instance appears to the right of *nearly*. Both *about* and *nearly* have no cluster found.

In CBUSS, *some*, *about*, and *nearly* are also the most frequent adverbial hedges. The five collocates of *some* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *times*, *give*, *know*, *might*, and *after*. The co-occurrences of *some* with *know* have the highest frequency at 4. All instances of *of know* appear to the left of *some*. The cluster *some of the* has the highest frequency at 14. The only collocate of *about* with a MI value ≥ 3 is *million*. The three instances of *million* appear to the left of *about*. The five collocates of *nearly* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *billion*, *US*, *of*, *Hong*, and *in*. The co-selections of *nearly* with *of* have the highest frequency at 10. One instance of *of* appears to left and nine instances appear to the right of *nearly*.

In CBUDS, *about*, *some*, and *nearly* are the most frequent adverbial hedges. The five collocates of *about* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *cent*, *jobs*, *cost*, *million*, and *per*. The associations of *about* with *million* have the highest frequency at 15 and one instance appears to the left and 14 instances appear to the right of *about*. The cluster *the government about* has the highest frequency at 7. The five collocates of *some* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *even*, *suggested*, *charges*, *fees*, and *members*. The co-occurrences of *some* with *even* have the highest frequency at 6. Three instances of *even* appear to the left and three instances appear to the right of *some*. The five collocates of *nearly* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *cent*, *per*, *million*, *billion*, and *year*. The co-selections of *nearly* with *billion* have the highest frequency at 8. Two instances of *billion* appear to the left and six instances appear to the right of *nearly*. No cluster is found with *nearly*.

As shown in Table 35, *some*, *about*, and *nearly* are the most frequent adverbial hedges found in the three corpora. These hedges have the meaning of approximation. All these hedges in CORDS have no strong patterns of collocation except with some grammatical words. In CBUSS, the collocation of *I + know + some* has a frequency of four. This indicates that the FS uses *some* as a pronoun, which represents a number of unspecified persons. The collocates of *about + million/percent/jobs* and *nearly + billion/million/percent/year* in both CBUSS and CBUDS indicate that what is said is an approximation of the amount of money, percent, number of jobs or number of years.

Some, *about*, and *nearly* in the three corpora are associated with the semantic preference of “quantity, amount or numbers”. This indicates that the FS uses these hedges to describe an approximate amount or number on the matters discussed. One possible explanation for the use of these hedges in both CORDS and CBUSS is that CORDS is ceremonial in nature and one of the purposes of giving speeches in CBUSS is to provide information on Hong Kong’s financial situations to the audience. The use of exact quantity, amount or numbers may not be much interested to the audience because the audience in CORDS are only interested in the specific purposes of the events. The audience in CBUSS may only be interested in a high-level description in the economic or business environment of Hong Kong or the policies and measures that the government is likely to introduce. One possible reason for using these hedges in CBUDS is that when the FS gives the budget speech, he may not have or is uncertain about the exact numbers or figures. The use of these hedges is to avoid mentioning incorrect figures.

Some in CORDS and CBUSS is also associated with the semantic preference of “positive aspects of the economic or business developments in Hong Kong”. One possible reason for this semantic preference in CORDS is that in addition to mentioning the accomplishments and contributions of the awardees, honourees or organizers, it may give a chance to the FS to update the positive aspects of Hong Kong to the audience. Likewise, in CBUSS, in addition to updating the potential investors about the current business developments in Hong Kong, the FS may take the opportunity to mention certain positive aspects of Hong Kong in his speeches to encourage potential investors to think favourably about Hong Kong. *Some* is also associated with the semantic preference of “challenges” in Hong Kong in CBUSS.

One possible reason for this semantic preference would be that before introducing the policies and measures that the government wants to launch, the FS might qualify his prediction. He may indicate the challenges that Hong Kong faces or will face in the future in order to appeal for support for implementation of the policies and measures and projects. In CBUDS, *some* also have the semantic preference of “proposals for the introduction of policies and measures” and “projects of the government”. One of the aims of the budget speech is to obtain approval of the next year’s government operating expenditures from the councillors. The FS may need to cite the policies, measures and projects that the government intends to implement for supporting his claims on the expenditures.

The use of the cluster *some of you* in both CORDS and CBUSS is for relationship maintenance. For example, at the Joint Business Community Luncheon on 8th March 2007, the FS said that even though some had suggested changing the corporate profits tax rates; he had no intention to propose any changes in the budget. The use of *some of you* is a way to mitigate FTAs because it does not mention the names of the persons who proposed the change. In addition, the use of *some of you* is a vague approximator without mentioning the exact numbers. This implicit reference can convey sufficient information because the FS may not know how many persons suggested.

To conclude, the FS uses these adverbs to hedge when discussion topics related to quantity, amount or numbers of money, persons, countries, companies, index, per cent, and stock turnover. These hedges are also associated with the discussion topics such as positive aspects of the economic or business developments and challenges that Hong Kong faces. The frequent use of the cluster *some of the* helps the FS to manipulate the precision of the quantities and numbers he mentions.

9.5 Collocates, clusters, and semantic preferences of the most frequent noun hedges

Table 36 below is a summary of the most frequent noun hedges in the corpora with their frequencies, collocates with the MI values ≥ 3 , number of instances, associated phrases, semantic preferences, and 3-word clusters with a frequency at 3 or above.

Table 36: Summary of the collocates, clusters, associated co-text, and semantic preferences of the most frequent noun hedges

Corpus	Noun hedges	Frequency per 10,000 words	Collocates		Examples of the associated co-text before and after the hedges	Semantic preference	Clusters (frequency)
			Most frequent collocates with MI value ≥ 3	No. of instances			
CORDS	<i>potential</i>	3.34	<i>full</i> ≥ 9.78 <i>of</i> ≥ 4.40 <i>the</i> ≥ 3.80 <i>and</i> ≥ 3.40	3 7 9 3	Pre: <i>-establish a badge of quality;</i> <i>-increasing liberalisation of exchange control;</i> <i>-institutional side are more than two times oversubscribed;</i> <i>-excellent designs and their designers;</i> <i>-developed the Science Park and Cyberport;</i> <i>-bigger platform for our industrialists;</i> Post: <i>-tapping funds from the international market;</i> <i>-high quality Hong Kong dollar debt instruments;</i> <i>-testify our triumph;</i> <i>-to upgrade our industries;</i> <i>-helped release the precious human capital;</i> <i>-CEPA has much inducement to Hong Kong;</i>	“The likelihood of the growth and developments” of the financial, design, and nanotechnology industries in Hong Kong such as <i>to realize their full growth potential by tapping funds</i> . <i>Potential</i> has the meaning of the matter discussed is likely to happen but not absolutely certain. For example, at the Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Limited Cocktail Reception on the 17 th June 2004 when discussing the amount of market capitalisation of the stocks in Hong Kong, the FS said companies from Mainland could use the Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Limited to tap funds from international market for their future <i>potential</i> development. The use of <i>potential</i> and the associated co-text can help the FS to indicate that the growth and developments of the Mainland companies are likely but not invariably or necessarily so when Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Limited manages to tap funds for them.	nil
	<i>expectations</i>	1.00	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil

	<i>thoughts</i>	1.00	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil
CBUSS	and the associated co-text	4.11	<i>FDI</i> ≥ 8.80 <i>growth</i> ≥ 6.62 <i>investment</i> ≥ 5.71 <i>Market</i> ≥ 5.06 <i>for</i> ≥ 3.80 <i>and</i> ≥ 4.83 <i>the</i> ≥ 4.03	4 4 3 4 4 3 3	Pre: <i>-fund management in Hong Kong is expanding;</i> <i>-cooperation between Hong Kong and the Mainland in the financial field;</i> <i>-city with best foreign direct investment;</i> <i>-the world's fastest growing economy;</i> <i>-we have huge development;</i> Post: <i>-as a centre for value-added manufacturing and high quality services;</i> <i>-Hong Kong is Asia's most popular tourist destination;</i> <i>-bond market is huge;</i> <i>-future growth is still enormous;</i> <i>-fund management industry to grow much further;</i>	“The likelihood of the growth and developments” of the financial market of Hong Kong, and economic corporation between Hong Kong and Mainland China such as <i>the long-term growth potential of our bond market is huge</i> . The use of <i>potential</i> and the associated co-text indicates that what is said is generally supposed to be but may not necessarily so or has not empirically proven.	<i>-potential of our (3);</i>
	<i>Forecast(s)</i>	1.96	<i>our</i> ≥ 5.59 <i>for</i> ≥ 5.04 <i>a</i> ≥ 4.25 <i>of</i> ≥ 3.14	6 4 4 3	Pre: <i>-2% real GDP growth;</i> <i>-our GDP figures;</i> <i>-facing a large budget deficit;</i> <i>-give you a revised GDP;</i> Post: <i>-2% real GDP growth;</i> <i>-the economy to grow by around 3%;</i> <i>-deficit of \$68 billion;</i> <i>-additional \$12.6 billion;</i> <i>-the economy to grow by around 3% in 2003;</i>	“Estimation” of the amount of deficit or amount of GDP growth such as <i>in our earlier forecast of a 2% growth</i> . The use of <i>forecast</i> and the associated co-text provides some useful information but the information is predictive in nature and not yet empirically validated.	nil
	<i>consideration</i>	0.89	<i>of</i> ≥ 4.28 <i>the</i> ≥ 3.29	3 3	Pre: <i>-goods and service tax (GST);</i>	“Assessment” of proposed taxes such as <i>the proposed legislation to</i>	nil

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -abolish estate duty; -public consultation; -revisions to the current profit tax arrangements; Post: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> GST; -more taxes; -introduction of group loss relief 	LegCo for consideration.	
CBUDS	Forecast(s)	5.07	<p>Medium ≥ 12.39 Range ≥ 12.29 Reserves ≥ 11.17 fiscal ≥ 9.48 growth ≥ 7.45</p>	14 11 6 6 3	Pre: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -2 per cent rate of increase in the GDP deflator; -to restoring fiscal balance; -expenditure and revenue; -if our economy grows as forecast; -GDP deflator is forecast at 1.5 per cent; Post: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -trend growth rate of nominal GDP; -increase by 4 to 5 per cent; -GDP over the period from 2008 to 2011 is 6 per cent; -shows that the operating deficit will be lower than expected; -operating expenditure for 2004-05 will reduce to \$201.2 billion; -an operating deficit of \$15.4 billion; 	“Estimation” of the amount of fiscal reserves, or amount of the GDP such as the forecast trend growth rate of nominal GDP over the period from 2007 to 2010 is therefore 6 per cent. The use of forecast and the associated co-text indicates that what is said cannot be taken categorically, but it is only based on the reasonable assumptions and subjective views of the FS where he has no direct control.	- <i>medium range forecasts (11);</i> - <i>range forecast for (4);</i>
	Estimate(s)	3.23	<p>Expenditure ≥ 7.40 of ≥ 4.37 the ≥ 3.21</p>	6 7 6	Pre: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - profit tax and salary tax alone are about \$31 billion; -\$55.1 billion in the Consolidated Account; -an operating deficit of \$15.4 billion; a fiscal balance; -fiscal reserves will have dropped to \$266.4 billion; 	“A rough calculation” of the amount of the operating revenue and expenditure, land premiums, and taxes such as some variances between the estimates and the actual.	nil

					<p>-land premium amount to \$31.3 billion;</p> <p>Post:</p> <p>-total government expenditure for 2007/2008 is estimated to be 248.4 billion;</p> <p>-the government revenue and expenditure total about \$520 billion;</p> <p>-salaries tax,</p> <p>-profit tax and stamp duty are higher;</p> <p>-GST will yield revenue of about \$6 billion;</p>		
	<i>potential</i>	2.07	<p><i>realise</i> \geq 10.16</p> <p><i>their</i> \geq 6.56</p> <p><i>our</i> \geq 4.30</p> <p><i>to</i> \geq 3.31</p> <p><i>and</i> \geq 3.30</p>	<p>3</p> <p>3</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p> <p>4</p>	<p>Pre:</p> <p>-boosting the economy;</p> <p>-economic restructuring;</p> <p>-Lantau has great development;</p> <p>-tourism industry;</p> <p>-strategy for future tourism development;</p> <p>-overseas investors and accounted for 63 per cent;</p> <p>Post:</p> <p>- family and business travellers;</p> <p>-a wine exhibition and trading centre;</p> <p>-a key role as a business platform;</p> <p>-developing projects such as spa resort facilities;</p> <p>-expand our asset management business remains considerable;</p>	<p>“The likelihood of the growth and development” of the tourism industry and business in Hong Kong such as <i>Hong Kong has the potential to become a wine exhibition and trading centre</i>. The use of <i>potential</i> and the associated co-text indicates that Hong Kong is likely, but not absolutely certain, to become a wine exhibition and trading centre.</p>	nil

As shown in Table 36, in CORDS, *potential(s)*, *expectation(s)*, and *thought(s)* are the most frequent noun hedges. The four collocates of *potential* with the MI values ≥ 3 are *full*, *of*, *the*, and *and*. The co-selections of *potential(s)* with *the* have the highest frequency at 9. Seven instances of *the* appear to the left and two instances appear to the right of *potential(s)*. Both *expectation(s)* and *thought(s)* have no collocate with MI value ≥ 3 and no cluster with frequency at 3 or above.

In CBUSS, *potential(s)*, *forecast(s)*, and *consideration* are the most frequent noun hedges. The five collocates of *potential(s)* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *FDI*, *growth*, *investment*, *market*, and *for*. The co-selections of *potential* with *FDI*, *growth*, *market*, and *for* have the same the frequency at 4. Two instances of *FDI* and *growth* appear to the left and two instances appear to the right of *potential*. All instances of *market* and *for* appear to the right of *potential*. The two collocates of *potentials* with the MI values ≥ 3 are *and* and *the*. The co-occurrences of *potentials* with *and* or *the* have the same frequency at 3. All instances of *and* appear to the left of *potentials*. One instance of *the* appears to the left and two instances appear to the right of *potential(s)*. *Potential of our* is the only cluster found. The four collocates of *forecast* with MI values ≥ 3 are *our*, *for*, *a*, and *of*. The associations of *forecast* with *our* have the highest frequency at 6. Five instances of *our* appear to the left and one instance appears to the right of *forecast*. *Forecasts* has no significant collocate. The two collocates of *consideration* with MI values ≥ 3 are *of* and *the*. The co-selections of *consideration* with *of* and *the* have the same frequency at 3. One instance of *of* appears to the left and two instances appear to the right of *consideration*. Two instances of *the* appear to the left and one instance appears to the right of *consideration*.

In CBUDS, *forecast(s)*, *estimate(s)*, and *potential(s)* are the most frequent noun hedges. The five collocates of *forecast* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *medium*, *range*, *reserves*, *fiscal*, and *growth*. The co-occurrences of *forecast* with *medium* have the highest frequency at 14 of which 11 instances of *medium* appear to the left and three instances appear to right of *forecast*. *Forecasts* has no collocate with MI value ≥ 3 . The three collocates of *estimates* with MI values ≥ 3 are *expenditure*, *of* and *the*. The co-occurrences of *estimates* with *of* have the highest frequency at 7. One instance

of *of* appears to the left and six instances appear to the right of *estimates*. The five collocates of *potential* with MI values ≥ 3 are *realize*, *their*, *our*, *to*, and *and*. The co-occurrences of *potential* with *to* and *and* have the same frequency at 4. Two instances of *to* appear to the left and two instances appear to the right of *potential*. All four instances of *and* appear to the right of *potential*. *Medium range forecasts* is one of the clusters found in CBUDS and it has a frequency at 11.

As shown in Table 36, *potential(s)* are the most frequent noun hedges found in the three corpora. *Potential* has the meaning of tentative likelihood (Varttala, 2001: 142). *Forecast(s)*, *expectation(s)*, *thought(s)*, *estimate(s)*, and *consideration are* tentative cognition nouns (Varttala, 2001: 175). *Forecast(s)* is found in CBUSS and CBUDS. *Expectation(s)* and *thought(s)* are only found in CORDS. *Consideration* is only found in CBUSS, and *estimate(s)* is only found in CBUDS.

Potential(s) is associated with the semantic preference of “the likelihood of the growth and developments” of the financial markets, design, tourism and nanotechnology industries, and the cooperation between Hong Kong and Mainland China. The use of *potential(s)* indicates that, according to the existing trend or tendency, there is a possibility of the growth and developments in the mentioned areas. However, it may not be necessarily so because uncertainty still exists. *Forecast(s)* is associated with the semantic preference of “estimation” of the amount of fiscal deficit or reserves and the amount of GDP growth. The use of *forecast(s)* indicates that the amounts of deficit, reserves, or GDP are estimate and predictive in nature. It also indicates that what is said is only putative and may not be absolute accurate. *Consideration* is associated with the semantic preference of “assessment” of the new GST taxes. The use of *consideration* indicates that the GST tax suggested is only at the assessment stage. *Estimate(s)* is associated with the semantic preference of “a rough calculation” of the government revenue and expenditure and land premiums. The use of *estimate(s)* indicates that the stated amounts are only putative in nature and may change.

In sum, the noun hedges are used when the discussions are related to the likely future events or trends of the business growth and developments which the FS has no control because of external factors such as the volatility of the financial markets are out of his control. The noun hedges are also used when the topics relate to prediction or estimation of the government’s fiscal reserves, revenue, expenditure, land

premiums and taxes. Since prediction has an element of uncertainty as it describes the results of the activities in advance, the prediction may not be accurate as the outcomes are affected by various forces. The noun hedges can help the FS to indicate that what is said is only possibly true or an approximation based on his preliminary calculations. *Medium range forecasts* is the only cluster frequently used by the FS. It also indicates what is said is a projection only.

9.6 Collocates, clusters, and semantic preferences of the most frequent modal auxiliaries

Table 37 below is a summary of the most frequent modal auxiliaries in the corpora with their frequencies, collocates with the MI values ≥ 3 , number of instances, associated phrases, semantic preferences, and 3-word clusters with a frequency at 3 or above.

Table 37: Summary of the collocates, clusters, associated co-text, and semantic preferences of the most frequent modal auxiliaries

Corpus	Modal auxiliaries	Frequency per 10,000 words	Collocates		Examples of the associated co-text before and after the modal hedges	Semantic preference	Clusters (frequency)
			Most frequent collocates with MI value ≥ 3	No. of instances			
CORDS	<i>would</i>	25.41	<i>like</i> ≥ 8.22 <i>pay</i> ≥ 8.20 <i>closing</i> ≥ 8.10 <i>congratulate</i> ≥ 7.73 <i>extend</i> ≥ 7.14	56 4 3 11 5	Pre: <i>-distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen;</i> Post: <i>-warm welcome to our overseas buyers;</i> <i>-welcome to all of you;</i> <i>-enjoy the evening;</i> <i>-this opportunity to thank;</i>	1) “Appreciation for the participation in the activities” of the honourable guests and audience at the beginning of the speeches. For example, at the open ceremony of the Hong Kong Watch & Clock Fair 2003 on the 3 rd of Sept, the FS said, “ <i>I would also like to extend a very, very warm welcome...</i> ”. The use of <i>I would like to</i> expresses gratitude, as a courtesy strategy, for creating good friendship with the audience.	<i>-I would like (46);</i> <i>-would like to (45);</i> <i>-would also like (9);</i> <i>-I would also (9);</i>
					Pre: <i>-your outstanding contribution to the development;</i> <i>-have also demonstrated a commitment;</i> <i>-still chose to contribute to worthy Community Chest;</i> <i>-more opportunities for our tourism industry and the talent graduates;</i> Post: <i>-congratulate the Hong Kong Trade Development Council;</i> <i>-pay tribute to the Hong Kong Watch Manufacturers Association;</i>	2) “Appreciation for the contribution of the organizers” of the activities at the beginning of the speeches. For example, at the same speech as stated above, the FS said, “ <i>I would like to pay tribute to the Hong Kong Watch Manufacturers...</i> ”. The use of <i>would</i> and the associated co-text greets the success of the activities that the FS participates.	

					-pay tribute to the Hong Kong Junior Chamber;		
	<i>will</i>	18.39	<i>hope</i> \geq 5.88 <i>believe</i> \geq 5.59 <i>help</i> \geq 5.41 <i>enhance</i> \geq 4.66 <i>continue</i> \geq 4.99	5 3 6 3 5	<p>Pre:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -enhance our co-operation with our immediate neighbourhood; -the Guangdong Province; -zero tariff to Mainland; -to enter the vast Mainland market; -co-operation in various fields; -stimulate trade between Hong Kong and the Mainland; <p>Post:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -integrate the premium logistics and trade services of Hong Kong; -greatly expand the horizons of our businesses beyond the boundary of Lo Wu; -more cross-border business opportunities; -encourage manufacturers and exporters to demand better and more stringent product quality; <p>Pre:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Hong Kong has the expertise and infrastructure to undertake such transactions; -exhibition facilities are of world-class standard; -hosting international events in Hong Kong; -government bonds offered to both retail investors and institutional investors; 	<p>1) “Possible future business development” between Hong Kong and the Mainland. For example, at the presentation ceremony of the 2003 Hong Kong Awards for Services dated January 5, 2003, the FS said, “<i>our services industry will see more cross-border business opportunities...</i>”. The use of <i>will</i> and the associated co-text indicates that more cross-border business opportunities is a possible future development between Hong Kong and PRC.</p> <p>2) “The likely development” of the business activities mentioned at the events. For example, at the Retail Bond Offering Launch Ceremony dated 7th July 2004, the FS said, “the offering will help further extend the capabilities of our local capital market”. The use of <i>will</i> and the associated co-text has an epistemic meaning because it involves a component of uncertainty when referring future developments.</p>	-will continue to (3);

					Post: <i>-help strengthen our position; anticipate the industry's need; -offer you unparalleled access to the international financial centre; -help further enhance the competitiveness of our manufacturing industries;</i>		
	<i>must</i>	6.69	<i>continue</i> ≥ 6.39 <i>not</i> ≥ 6.00 <i>we</i> ≥ 5.98 <i>be</i> ≥ 5.51 <i>our</i> ≥ 3.81	3 4 13 5 5	Pre: <i>-enhance our status as the premier tourist destination; -major driver of growth in our securities market; -strategy to both the Mainland and Hong Kong;</i> Post: <i>-ensure a continuous supply of high quality, industrious and passionate professionals; -continue to uphold our high regulatory standard; -not lose sight of the opportunities in Hong Kong;</i>	“Advice on the directions of business strategies” of Hong Kong over which the FS has no control. For example, at the spring reception hosted by the Hong Kong Polytechnic University in Feb , 2004 when praising the achievement of the university in providing tourism education to students, the FS said “... we must ensure a continuous supply of high quality, industrious and passionate professionals to our tourism industry”. The use of <i>must</i> and the associated co-text only expresses his sincere advice to the tourism industry because he has no direct control to the tourism industry.	<i>-we must not (3); -we must continue (3); -must continue to (3)</i>
CBUSS	<i>will</i>	28.74	<i>generate</i> ≥ 6.49 <i>elsewhere</i> ≥ 6.49 <i>contribute</i> ≥ 5.96 <i>find</i> ≥ 5.62 <i>expect</i> ≥ 5.49	3 3 5 3 3	Pre: <i>-increased depth and breadth of Hong Kong's equity market; -greater access of this kind; -business opportunities between Hong Kong and the Mainland; -CEPA allows for a building-block approach; -can foresee that the scope of our RMB services</i> Post:	1) “Possible future business development” between Hong Kong and the Mainland. For example, at the luncheon hosted by the US Chamber of Commerce on the 14 th Oct 2005, the FS said, “the Mainland <i>will</i> continue to be the principal growth driver of our capital market...”. The use of <i>will</i> and the associated co-text indicates that the FS only express a possibility because uncertainty exists when referring to	<i>-will continue to (17); -the Mainland will (10); -Hong Kong will (5);</i>

					<p>-principal growth driver of our capital market; -increase Hong Kong's attractiveness to foreign investors; -further trade liberalisation between the two sides; -be gradually expanded;</p>	future events.	
					<p>Pre: -other initiatives designed to help SMEs; -trend of economic globalisation and regionalisation; -proliferation of FTAs; Post: -advancement of corporate governance here in Hong Kong; -lead to a fruit outcome; -help speed up trade liberalisation;</p>	2) "The likely development" of the business activities mentioned at the events. For example, at the Senior Officials Boao Forum dated 24 th April 2004 the FS said, "the real GDP in East Asia, excluding Japan, <i>will</i> rise by a formidable 6.4%". The use of <i>will</i> and the associated co-text indicates that the rise of 6.4% is only a likely development.	
	would	20.71	like \geq 7.96 significantly \geq 7.07 talk \geq 6.69 note \geq 6.58 thank \geq 6.46	43 3 3 3 11	<p>Pre: -If we could achieve the surpluses; -which will cost revenue some \$7 billion; -a general increase in corporate profits; Post: -face more competition from other workforces; -still be a shortfall of \$100 billion; -have been a most convenient way; -be accused of buying popularity; -invite abuse and require anti-avoidance legislation;</p>	1) "Tentative predictions" for the developments of the matters discussed in the events. For example, at the Joint Business Community Luncheon on the 2006-2007 budget proposal in March 2, 2006, the FS said, "the proposal <i>would</i> shrink our already narrow tax base. The use of <i>would</i> and the associated co-text indicates that what is said is only a tentative prediction.	-I would like (30); -would like to (30); -would also like (5); -It would be (5);

					Pre: <i>-Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen;</i> <i>-remarkable and exciting developments in Guangdong Province;</i> <i>-It is wonderful to back in charming Hainan;</i> Post: <i>-thanks the US Chamber of Commerce</i> <i>- thank you for your enduring support and friendship for Hong Kong;</i> <i>-to express my appreciation;</i>	2) “Appreciation for the participation of the audience and honourable guests and the contribution of the organizers” in the event at its opening. For example, at the Luncheon hosted by the US chamber of Commerce dated 14 th October, 2005, the FS said, “I <i>would</i> like to thank the US Chamber of Commerce”. <i>Would</i> is used as part of the formulaic thanking message.	
	<i>can</i>	7.14	<i>consensus</i> ≥ 7.03 <i>be</i> ≥ 4.93 <i>these</i> ≥ 4.22 <i>which</i> ≥ 4.02 <i>all</i> ≥ 3.83	3 15 4 4 4	Pre: <i>-law enforcement agencies all over the world;</i> <i>-this recovery;</i> <i>-regional economies;</i> <i>-an early consensus</i> Post: <i>-join hands to protect information goods in the digital world;</i> <i>-be sustained;</i> <i>-be expected to continue to perform well;</i> <i>-be reached on these projects so that they can commence more quickly</i>	“Tentative expectation” for the developments of activities mentioned at the events. For example, at the TELECOM WORLD 2006 Forum, the FS said “... <i>all over the world can join hands to protect...</i> ”. The use of <i>can</i> and the associated co-text indicates that it is possible for all over the world join hands to protect information goods.	nil
CBUDS	<i>will</i>	52.07	<i>ratepayers</i> ≥ 6.22 <i>measure</i>	3 6	Pre: <i>-a surplus of \$25.4 billion;</i> <i>-a surplus of \$7.2 billion in the operating account;</i>	1) “Prediction” for the: a) amount of fiscal reserves, operating expenditure, operating revenue of the budget; b) per cent; c) number of jobs or persons; cost	<i>-will continue to (10);</i> <i>-fiscal reserves will (7);</i>

			≥ 6.22 <i>Follows</i> ≥ 5.48 <i>Benefit</i> ≥ 5.22 <i>ageing</i> ≥ 5.22	3 10 3	<i>-the rate of return on the fiscal reserves for 2007;</i> <i>-medium range forecast for 2007/08;</i> <i>-fiscal reserves will stand at \$365.8 billion;</i> <i>-the total provision for government operating expenditure of 2007/08;</i> <i>-is estimated to be \$248.4 billion;</i> Post: <i>-build up to \$58.7 billion;</i> <i>-be 7 per cent;</i> <i>-be maintained at a level between \$390 billion and \$580 billion;</i> <i>-cost the government about \$5.2 billion;</i> <i>-about 30,000 home buyers;</i> <i>-14,000 new jobs;</i>	of a specific activity. For example, in the 2007 budget speech, the FS said fiscal reserves <i>will</i> build up to \$58.7 billion. The use of <i>will</i> and the associated co-text is only a tentative prediction of the FS based on his repeated experience. Prediction about future has an element of uncertainty.	<i>-will benefit from (6);</i> <i>-The government will (5);</i> <i>-this proposal will (5);</i> <i>-HongKong will continue (5)</i>
					Pre: <i>-volatility and ageing population;</i> <i>-reducing the duty on alcoholic beverages;</i> <i>-demand for subsidised residential care places for elderly;</i> Post: <i>- bring pressure to bear on government expenditure;</i> <i>-help promote the development of our catering industry;</i>	2) “The likely development” of the activities mentioned in the budgets such as <i>revenue volatility and ageing population will bring pressure to bear on government expenditure</i> . The use of <i>will</i> and the associated co-text indicates that there is a possibility, but still uncertain whether the government expenditure is pressurized by the revenue volatility and ageing population .	
	<i>can</i>	9.45	<i>hope</i> ≥ 7.30 <i>property</i> ≥ 6.27 <i>that</i> ≥ 4.80 <i>so</i> ≥ 4.78 <i>into</i> ≥ 4.74	7 3 15 3 3	Pre: <i>-any proposal that;</i> <i>-IMF's suggestions;</i> <i>-The various sectors of the community;</i> <i>-the US property market;</i> <i>-grows as forecast;</i>	“Tentative expectation” for developments of the activities mentioned in the budget speeches which the FS has no control such as <i>so that an early start can be made on them</i> . The use of <i>can</i> and the associated co-text indicates that the FS tentatively expects to have an early	nil

					<p><i>-hope the RMB business</i> Post: <i>-contribute to the development;</i> <i>- be used as a frame of reference;</i> <i>-reach a consensus;</i> <i>-achieve a soft landing;</i> <i>-develop more rapidly</i></p>	start be made.	
	<i>must</i>	6.45	<p><i>we</i> ≥ 6.17 <i>international</i> ≥ 5.94 <i>continue</i> ≥ 5.41 <i>our</i> ≥ 4.43 <i>kong</i> ≥ 3.44</p>	<p>25 3 3 9 3</p>	<p>Pre: <i>-fostering economic development;</i> <i>-the business sector;</i> <i>-our airport;</i> <i>-to build the best foundation for business;</i> <i>-our logistics industry faces increasingly stiff competition</i> Post: <i>-address the needs of our workers;</i> <i>-develop its own designs and brands;</i> <i>-continuously enhance its efficiency;</i> <i>-take steps to maintain an orderly market;</i> <i>-further raise our competitiveness;</i></p>	<p>1) “Advice on the direction of business strategies” of Hong Kong over which the FS has no control. For example, at the 2007 budget speech when discussing the direction for future development, the FS said, “Hong Kong must keep moving towards high value-added production and a knowledge-based economy”. The use of <i>must</i> and the co-text indicates that the FS expresses his sincerity, not from his powerful Financial Secretary position, but from his role for preparing the budget, to advise the Legislative Councillors the business directions that Hong Kong should take. In this sense, the use of <i>must</i> has the meaning of “I have the obligation to advise you”. It creates a sense that the FS is only more knowledgeable on the future directions of business strategies than his peers in the Legislative Council are. They FS only portrays the specific issues and giving sense of addressing them without actually compelling them.</p>	<p><i>-we must continue (3);</i> <i>-must continue to (3);</i></p>
					<p>Pre: <i>-small government and given our limited resources;</i> <i>-our financial position has improved;</i></p>	<p>2) “Guidelines” for managing public finances, which the FS has control. For example, at the 2006 budget speech when discussing the commitment of the</p>	

					<p><i>-every dollar comes from taxpayers hard-earned money;</i></p> <p><i>-clean and efficient government;</i></p> <p>Post:</p> <p><i>-manage our finances prudently;</i></p> <p><i>-not relax fiscal discipline;</i></p> <p><i>-be very careful in our spending;</i></p> <p><i>-strive for continuous improvement;</i></p>	<p>Government, the FS said <i>Hong Kong must manage our finances prudently</i>. The use of <i>must</i> and the associated co-text indicates that the FS expresses his obligations to advise the councillors that Hong Kong should manage the finances prudently. The FS may foresee the challenges of managing the public finances and now take the chance to notify the councillors the guidelines how he manages the public finances. It seems unlikely the councillors feel compelled to follow.</p>	
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As shown in Table 37, in CORDS, *would*, *will*, and *must* are the most frequent modal hedges. The five collocates of *would* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *like*, *pay*, *closing*, *congratulate*, and *extend*. The co-occurrences of *would* with *like* have the highest frequency at 56. All instances of *like* appear to the right of *would*. The cluster *I would like* has the highest frequency at 46. The five collocates of *will* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *hope*, *believe*, *help*, *enhance*, and *continue*. The co-selections of *will* with *help* have the highest frequency at 6. All instances of *help* appear to the right of *will*. *Will continue to* is the only cluster found. The five collocates of *must* with the highest MI value ≥ 3 are *continue*, *not*, *we*, *be* and *our*. The associations of *must* with *we* have the highest frequency at 13. All thirteen instances of *we* appear to the left of *must*. *Must* has three 3-word clusters with the same frequency of 3.

In CBUSS, *will*, *would*, and *can* are the most frequent modal hedges. The five collocates of *will* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *generate*, *elsewhere*, *contribute*, *find*, and *expect*. The co-selections of *will* with *contribute* have the highest frequency at 5. All instances of *contribute* appear to the right of *will*. The cluster *will contribute to* has the highest frequency at 17. The five collocates of *would* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *like*, *significantly*, *talk*, *note*, and *thank*. The associations of *would* with *like* have the highest frequency at 43. All instances of *like* appear to the right of *would*. The clusters of both *I would like* and *would like to* have the same frequency at 30. The five collocates of *can* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *consensus*, *be*, *these*, *which*, and *all*. The co-occurrences of *can* with *be* have the highest frequency at 15. All instances of *be* appear to the right of *can*. *Can* has no 3-word cluster.

In CBUDS, *will*, *can* and *must* are the most frequent modals. The five collocates of *will* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *ratepayers*, *measure*, *follows*, *benefit*, and *ageing*. The co-occurrences of *will* with *benefit* have the highest frequency at 10. All instances of *benefit* appear to the right of *will*. The cluster *will continue to* have the highest frequency at 10. The five collocates of *can* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *hope*, *property*, *that*, *so*, and *into*. The co-occurrences of *can* with *that* have the highest frequency at 15. All instances of *that* appear to the left of *can*. *Can* has no cluster with a frequency of three or above. The five collocates of *must* with the highest MI values

≥ 3 are *we*, *international*, *continue*, *our*, and *Hong Kong*. The co-occurrences of *must* with *we* have the highest frequency at 25, 24 instances of which appear to the left and one instance appears to the right of *must*. The 3-word clusters of both *we must continue* and *must continue to* have the same frequency at 3.

Would, *will*, *must* and *can* are the frequent modal auxiliaries in the three corpora. These modals have an epistemic interpretation (Hyland, 1998a; Varttala, 2001). The most frequent cluster *I would like* in CORDS and CBUSS is a formulaic expression and it is used as a courtesy marker when complimenting or thanking the audience, awardees, and organizers for their participation in or contribution to the events. The use of *I would like* can help the FS to establish a friendly relationship and create common ground interest with the audience. The most frequent cluster *will continue to* in CBUSS and CBUDS has an epistemic meaning because it is associated with predictions about future which include an element of uncertainty (Hyland, 1998a).

Would is associated with the semantic preference of “appreciation for the participation of the audience and honourable guests, and the contribution of the organizers” in CORDS and CBUSS. This expression of appreciation is a formulaic sequence and has its value as a courtesy posture in welcoming the audience or thanking the honourable guests and organizers. The semantic preference can let the addressees feel appreciated. *Would* has another semantic preference of “tentative predictions for the developments on matters discussed” in CBUSS. *Would* has a tentative meaning (Hyland, 1998a). The use of *would* with the associated co-text indicates that what is said is tentative in meaning. It helps the FS to soften his messages so that they are not too assertive.

In CORDS and CBUSS, *will* has the semantic preference of “possible future business developments between Hong Kong and the Mainland”. The business developments between Hong Kong and the Mainland are exponentially increasing and they involve many external parties such as the Chinese authorities, Hong Kong Government, financial market players, business sectors and the public. Actions of these parties can have an impact on the developments over which the FS has no control. The use of *will* and the associated co-text indicates that what is said involves prediction about the future and an element of uncertainty exists when other parties are involved, such as Mainland authorities. *Will* also has the semantic preference of “the likely developments of the business activities mentioned in the events” in the three

corpora. As previously mentioned, various parties inside the Government or other external players may have different degrees of influence on the business developments in Hong Kong. The use of *will* and the associated co-text indicates that the FS expresses his views on future business developments and this involves uncertainty over which he has no control. *Will* has another semantic preference of “prediction for the amount of money, percentage, number of jobs or persons and the cost” in CBUDS which involves setting up of revenue and expenditure targets, allocating resources such the provision of job opportunities and formulating policies and measures for the coming year. Doubt and uncertainty exist when the prediction is about the future (Hyland, 1998a; Varttala, 2001). The use of *will* and the co-text indicates that the FS expresses tentative propositions which may not be altogether accurate.

Can has another semantic preference of “tentative expectation for the developments of the activities mentioned” in both CBUSS and CBUDS. The general purpose of CBUSS is to either update about the audience the current financial or economic situations or persuade the audience to invest in Hong Kong. In order to inspire the audience to think favourably about Hong Kong, the FS may highlight his expectations and plans for improvement in the business environment in Hong Kong. The use of *can* and the co-text helps the FS to indicate that the positive aspects of Hong Kong mentioned in the speeches are possible to materialize.

Must has a semantic preference of “advice on the directions of business strategies” of Hong Kong in both CORDS and CBUDS. One of the meanings of *must* is epistemic necessity (Quirk et al., 1985: 224) where it may be used as a hedge when the speaker just wants to highlight the ideas rather than expressing an obligation. One of the explanations for this semantic preference in CORDS is that at the same time praising the accomplishments of the awardees, honorees or the organizers, the FS takes the opportunity to advise the audience on how to improve the competitiveness of the industries which are relevant to the awardees, honorees, or the organizers. One possible explanation for this semantic preference in CBUDS is that a budget is an instrument of economic and financial management. In the proposals, the FS may suggest different short, medium and long term business strategies and directions for the government or respond to the demands from various sectors of Hong Kong society for achieving the target budget and business growth. Enhancing business strategies and directions involve various parties such as the government and listed companies in

Hong Kong over which the FS may not have control on them. The epistemic use of *must* and the co-text allows the FS to indicate that what is said is to draw the attention to the audience of the business strategies and directions that Hong Kong needs to adapt. Another semantic preference of *must* in CBUDS is “guidelines for managing public finance” over which the FS has control. The FS has held the Financial Secretary’s Office since 2003. He should have developed some guidelines for managing the economic and public finances for Hong Kong Government. The use of *must* and the co-text indicates that the FS only expresses his view on managing public finances. The guidelines may not be absolutely accurate, but reflects his true views based on his knowledge and experience. As such the FS can avoid being too assertive in expressing his guidelines and it indicates that what is suggested is not categorical.

In summary, the FS uses these modals to hedge when the discussion topics are related to express his appreciation to the participants, awardees, honourable guests, and organizers at the beginning or end of the speech. In addition, these hedges are used when the topics are related to such as the future development of business between Hong Kong and the Mainland, the likely developments of the business activities mentioned, the tentative expectations for the developments of the activities mentioned, advice on the directions of business strategies, and guidelines on managing public finance. *I would like*, *will continue to*, and *Hong Kong will continue* are the frequent clusters used by the FS. They express either formulaic or epistemic meaning for what is said.

9.7 Collocates, clusters, and semantic preferences of the most frequent adjective intensifiers

Table 38 below is a summary of the most frequent adjective intensifiers in the corpora with their frequencies, collocates with the MI values ≥ 3 , number of instances, associated phrases, semantic preferences, and 3-word clusters with a frequency at 3 or above.

Table 38: Summary of the collocates, cluster, associated co-text, and semantic preferences of the most frequent adjective intensifiers

Corpus	Adjective intensifiers	Frequency per 10,000 words	Collocates		Examples of the associated co-text before and after the intensifiers	Semantic preference	Clusters (frequency)
			Most frequent collocates with MI value ≥ 3	No. of instances			
CORDS	<i>pleased</i>	10.03	<i>note</i> ≥ 9.52 <i>see</i> ≥ 8.04 <i>particularly</i> ≥ 7.93 <i>am</i> ≥ 7.88 <i>very</i> ≥ 6.78	9 7 3 26 10	Pre: <i>-has launched various products such as Exchange Trade Funds;</i> <i>-payments are now available around the clock;</i> <i>-ready to cater for the needs;</i> <i>-services receiving the recognition;</i> Post: <i>to note that our investments are beginning to bear fruit;</i> <i>-to note that Hong Kong Exchanges is working on a model for a scripless securities market;</i> <i>-local ICT players has received much international recognition;</i>	1) “Complimenting the favourable development” of the events mentioned in the speeches. For examples, at the celebration of the fifth year of listing of Hong Kong Exchange and Clearing limited on the 17 th June 2004 when discussing the important development of the Exchange and Clearing Limited, the FS uses <i>pleased</i> and the associated co-text to intensify his greeting when he notes that the Exchanges has made progress towards a scripless securities market. The development towards a scripless securities market is a response towards the demand of the stock market players in which the FS has no control.	<i>-I am pleased (10);</i> <i>-pleased to note (9);</i> <i>-very pleased to (9);</i> <i>- pleased to see (7);</i>
					Pre: <i>-Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, good morning, I am very;</i> Post: <i>-join you all this morning to help open;</i> <i>-to officiate at the Opening Ceremony;</i> <i>-join you all this evening at the Award Presentation</i>	2. “Expression of pleasure in officiating the opening ceremony of the event”. For example, in the opening ceremony of the Hong Kong & Watch & Clock Fair 3 rd Sept 2003, the FS said, “I am very <i>pleased</i> to be here this morning”.	

	<i>major</i>	6.02	$a \geq 4.53$ $is \geq 4.20$ $of \geq 3.75$ $in \geq 3.61$	7 4 8 5	Pre: - <i>world-class Asset Management Centre in Asia;</i> - <i>more than half of our market turnover;</i> - <i>some 40 economies;</i> Post: - <i>regional fund management centre;</i> - <i>pillar of Hong Kong's economy;</i> - <i>incredible contributions;</i> - <i>driver of growth in our securities market;</i> - <i>milestone in the development of Hong Kong's capital market;</i> - <i>economic significance;</i>	1) "Emphasis on high degree of importance or size" of business schemes, or financial markets, or the economies of some countries. For example, at the SCMP Fund Manager of the Year Awards 2003 when discussing fund management industry in Hong Kong, the FS uses <i>major</i> and the associated co-text to intensify the size and importance of fund business in Hong Kong (e.g. <i>Hong Kong has already come a long way as a major regional fund management centre</i>)	nil
	<i>delighted</i>	5.68	$join \geq 8.48$ $am \geq 8.00$ $here \geq 7.75$ $gentlemen \geq 7.61$ $most \geq 7.35$	6 16 5 7 5	Pre: - <i>distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, I am most;</i> - <i>I am very much;</i> - <i>I am truly</i> Post: - <i>to join you this evening;</i> - <i>that you can join us;</i> - <i>to be here with you;</i> - <i>and privileged today;</i>	1) "Expression of pleasure in officiating the opening ceremony of the event" such as <i>I am most delighted to join you this evening for the presentation ceremony of the Hong Kong Awards for Industry.</i>	- <i>I am delighted (7);</i> - <i>most delighted to (5);</i> - <i>am most delighted (5);</i> - <i>delighted to join (5);</i>
					Pre: - <i>innovative and creative ideas put forward;</i> - <i>enhanced access to debt capital markets for our borrowers from both the public and private sectors;</i> Post: - <i>the remarkable achievements of the School of Hotel;</i>	2) "Complimenting for favourable developments of the events mentioned in the speeches". For example, in Annual Dinner of the Hong Kong Federation of Insurers dated of 2 nd April 2004 when discussing the progress in making recognition of qualifications and practising requirements for the	

					<p>-that this offer has attracted a high quality order book;</p> <p>-today to the successful completion of the HKSAR Government's \$20 billion Global Bond Offering;</p>	insurance professions between Hong Kong and China, the FS uses <i>delighted</i> and the associated co-text to intensify his greeting in noting that some insurance companies were actively exploring the opportunities provided by CEPA (e.g. <i>I am delighted to learn that some insurance companies</i>).	
CBUSS	major	6.60	<p><i>Economies</i> ≥ 6.76 <i>such</i> ≥ 5.97 <i>other</i> ≥ 5.94 <i>all</i> ≥ 5.34 <i>international</i> ≥ 5.13</p>	<p>3</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p> <p>4</p> <p>3</p>	<p>Pre:</p> <p>-amongst the;</p> <p>-has been one of the;</p> <p>-one of the two;</p> <p>Post;</p> <p>-economies in the world;</p> <p>-boosts;</p> <p>-logistics node and a trading hub;</p> <p>-infrastructure works;</p> <p>-challenge facing us;</p>	“Emphasis on the high degree of importance or size” of the business schemes, or financial markets, or the economies of Hong Kong. For example, in the Business Community Luncheon on 8 th March 2007 when discussing the amount of foreign direct investment (FDI) in Hong Kong, the FS uses <i>major</i> and the associated co-text to intensify that many large countries have FDI (e.g. <i>Hong Kong has the highest level of inward FDI amongst the major economies in the world ; a major logistics node and trading hub</i>).	nil
	significant	4.64	<p><i>has</i> ≥ 5.66 <i>have</i> ≥ 4.66 <i>a</i> ≥ 4.59 <i>will</i> ≥ 4.52 <i>in</i> ≥ 4.27</p>	<p>6</p> <p>5</p> <p>12</p> <p>4</p> <p>12</p>	<p>Pre:</p> <p>-will be highly;</p> <p>-the cumulative effect of this activity (US\$3 billion share offering);</p> <p>-reduce poverty and create competition;</p> <p>-these operations (helping integration of the disabled and other marginalised group);</p> <p>-get the lion's share;</p>	“High degree of economic or financial contribution or impact” of a place or business project. For example, in the Investor' Forum 2003 when discussing the business ties between Hong Kong and Guangdong, the FS uses <i>significant</i> and the associated co-text to intensify the high degree of growth in Pearl River Delta (PRD) which	nil

					Post: -impact; -growth in economic strength; -contributions to helping; -improvement in health, education; -advancement of corporate governance; -mismatch in the maturity structure;	could provide business contributions to Hong Kong such as <i>the PRD has been significant growth in economic strength.</i>	
	<i>exciting</i>	2.32	<i>shape</i> ≥ 12.05 <i>opens</i> ≥ 11.05 <i>taking</i> ≥ 9.31 <i>even</i> ≥ 8.54 <i>opportunities</i> ≥ 7.35	3 3 3 3 4	Pre: -drawing us closer to our motherland; -easing restrictions on Mainland travellers; -signing of Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement; -new prospects Post: -development is taking shape; -opportunities for Hong Kong and the Mainland ; -investment opportunities; -opening of Hong Kong Disneyland ;	“Anticipation for good future business developments” of Hong Kong or Mainland China. For example, at the Gala Dinner in Auckland in May 22, 2006 when discussing the future economic outlook of Hong Kong, the FS uses <i>exciting</i> and the associated co-text to intensify the potential of good economic developments of Hong Kong when making closer ties with PRC such as <i>an even more exciting developments is taking shape.</i>	-new and exciting (4); -more exciting development (3); -exciting opportunities for (3); -even more exciting (3);
CBUDS	<i>major</i>	9.45	<i>backing</i> ≥ 9.97 <i>statutory</i> ≥ 9.56 <i>listing</i> ≥ 8.56 <i>requirements</i> ≥ 8.10 <i>centre</i> ≥ 7.29	3 3 3 3 7	Pre: -expanding the existing “dual filing” system; -introducing two bills which will give statutory backing; -our salaries and profit tax; -as an international financial centre; -our motherland is currently the fast-growing; -continue to improve our regulatory framework; Post: -requirements for listing; -recurrent revenues of the	1) “Emphasis on high degree of importance” of the policies and measures, business tasks, and business strategies. For example, in the 2005-06 budget speech when discussing the future development of the policies and measures that might or might not under his control, the FS said he would introduce two bills, which were statutory backing of the <i>major</i> listing requirements.	-is a major (4); -major asset management (3); -backing to major (3); -a major asset (3);

					Government; -asset management centre in Asia; -bearing on the stability of our monetary and financial systems; -international business and financial centre;		
	<i>encouraging</i>	3.46	<i>been</i> ≥6.94 <i>has</i> ≥5.49 <i>by</i> ≥5.39 <i>is</i> ≥4.65 <i>to</i> ≥3.57	3 3 3 3 6	Pre: -knowledge-based economy; -strengthening education in parenting; -retraining and skills-upgrading schemes; -facilitate urban renewal and building management; -further development of our tourism industry; Post: -creative industries; -assisting more women to enhance; -these projects create more job opportunities; -economic development; -ecotourism in the Northern New Territories;	“Suggestions for the future directions of activities” mentioned in the events. For example, in the 2007 budget speech when discussing the allocation of funds to various uses, the FS said, “... to strengthen education in parenting, <i>encouraging</i> continuous learning and assisting more women to enhance...”.	-has been <i>encouraging</i> (3);
	<i>specific</i>	3.00	<i>put</i> ≥9.72 <i>proposals</i> ≥9.46 <i>forward</i> ≥ 9.38 <i>to</i> ≥3.51 <i>and</i> ≥3.18	4 8 4 5 4	Pre: -to levy a tyre tax; -charging scheme for plastic shopping bags; Post: -proposes for fee revisions; -relevant bill will be introduced; -a service quality audit; -co-operation proposals with individual airports; -proposals to help the disadvantaged;	“Proposals of government policies and measures”. For example, in his 2005 budget speech when discussing the ways to improve our business environment, the FS uses <i>specific</i> and the associated co-text to intensify a particular proposal that the Economic and Employment Council, which is under his control, puts forward for improving the Hong Kong business environment (e.g.	-put forward <i>specific</i> (4); -forward <i>specific</i> <i>proposals</i> (4);

					<i>-Plans for co-operation in four selected areas;</i>	<i>specific proposal by the end of this year).</i>	
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As shown in Table 38, in CORDS, *pleased*, *major*, and *delighted* are the most frequent adjective intensifiers. The five collocates of *pleased* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *note*, *see*, *particularly*, *am*, and *very*. The co-selections of *pleased* with *am* have the highest frequency at 26. All instances of *am* appear to the left of *pleased*. The cluster *I am pleased* has the highest frequency at 10. The four collocates of *major* with MI values ≥ 3 are *a*, *is*, *of*, and *in*. The co-occurrences of *major* with *of* have the highest frequency at 8. No cluster of *major* is found with a frequency of three or above. The five collocates of *delighted* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *join*, *am*, *here*, *gentlemen*, and *most*. The co-selections of *delighted* with *am* have the highest frequency at 16. All instances of *am* appear to the left of *delighted*. The cluster *I am delighted* has the highest frequency at 7.

In CBUSS, *major*, *significant*, and *exciting* are the most frequent adjective intensifiers. The five collocates of *major* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *economies*, *such*, *other*, *all*, and *international*. The co-occurrences of *major* with *other* and *all* have the same frequency at 4. All instances of *other* appear to the left of *major*. Three instances of *all* appear to the left and one instance appears to the right of *major*. No cluster is found with *major*. The five collocates of *significant* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *has*, *have*, *a*, *will*, and *in*. The co-selections of *significant* with *a* and *in* have the highest frequency at 12. 11 instances of *a* appear to the left of *significant* and one instance appears to the right. Three instances of *in* appear to the left and nine instances appear to the right of *significant*. No cluster is found with *significant*. The five collocates of *exciting* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *shape*, *opens*, *taking*, *even*, and *opportunities*. The co-occurrences of *exciting* with *opportunities* have the highest frequency at 4. All instances of *opportunities* appear to the right of *exciting*. The cluster *new and exciting* has the highest frequency at 4.

In CBUDS, *major*, *encouraging*, and *specific* are the most frequent adjective intensifiers. The five collocates of *major* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *backing*, *statutory*, *listing*, *requirements*, and *centre*. The co-occurrences of *major* with *centre* have the highest frequency at 7. One instance of *centre* appears to the left and six instances appear to the right of *major*. The cluster *is a major* has the highest frequency at 4. The five collocates of *encouraging* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *been*, *has*, *by*, *is*, and *to*. The co-selections of *encouraging* with *to* have the highest frequency at 6.

One instance of *to* appears to the left and five instances appear to the right of *encouraging*. The only cluster of *has been encouraging* has the frequency at 3. The five collocates of *specific* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *put*, *proposals*, *forward*, *to*, and *and*. The co-occurrences of *specific* with *proposals* have the highest frequency at 8. All instances of *proposals* appear to the right of *specific*. The clusters of *put forward specific* and *forward specific proposals* have the same frequency at 4.

In CORDS, *pleased* and *delighted* have the meaning of intensifying the speaker's pleasure or satisfaction in joining the events. The three-word units of *I am pleased* and *I am delighted* are relative fixed phrases used to express the wholehearted pleasure of the FS to be participating in the events. *Pleased* and *delighted* are associated with the semantic preference of "expression of pleasure in officiating the opening ceremony of the event". Both *I am pleased*, *very pleased* and *I am delighted to* are formulaic expressions which are associated with thanking at the beginning of a speech for reinforcing courtesy to the audience. Another semantic preference of *pleased* and *delighted* is "complimenting for the favourable development" of the activities mentioned at the events. The nature of CORDS is to pay tribute, celebrate or commemorate. The use of *pleased* or *delighted* can intensify the important accomplishments and achievements of the activities mentioned in the speeches. *Major* has the semantic preference of "emphasis on high degree of importance or size" of the business schemes, or financial markets, or economies of some countries. One reason for this semantic preference would be that one type of speech in CORDS is for inspiration. In the speeches, the FS may want to draw attention to the audience to appreciate the high degree of importance of a particular industry in Hong Kong such as the *fund management business*. The use of *major* and the associated co-text helps the FS to intensify the degree of importance of a particular activity for the audience to appreciate, commit to and pursue a related goal.

In CBUSS, *major* has the same semantic preference of "emphasis on high degree of importance of Hong Kong, the business schemes, or financial markets" as in CORDS. One of the purposes of the business speeches is to encourage potential investors to invest in Hong Kong. The use of *major* and the co-text can emphasize the high degree of importance of the economy of Hong Kong such as *Hong Kong is a major logistics node and a trading centre*. *Significant* has a semantic preference of "high degree of economic or financial contribution or impact" of a place or business

project. One possible explanation for this semantic preference would be that in some speeches, the FS may want to draw attention to the audience to the new height in the co-operation between Hong Kong and Guangdong Province. The use of *significant* and the co-text helps him to intensify the economic or financial contribution when Hong Kong develops closer ties with Pearl River Delta in the Guangdong Province. *Exciting* has the semantic preference of “anticipation for good future business developments” in Hong Kong or Mainland China. The aim in some business speeches is to provide new information to the audience relating to future business developments in Hong Kong. The use of *exciting* and the associated co-text helps the FS to intensify the certainty of competitive advantages and glowing market potential of Hong Kong because Hong Kong has benefitted from the business growth of Mainland China. The three-word units *new and exciting*, *more exciting development*, *exciting opportunities for*, and *even more exciting* are open choice clusters used by FS for strengthening the positive aspects of the events mentioned in the speeches.

In CBUDS, *major* has a semantic preference of “emphasis on high degree of importance” of the policies and measures, business tasks and strategies over which the FS has control. One of the main purposes of CBUDS is to present proposals for changes in the present policies and measures. The use of *major* and the associated co-text can help the FS to emphasize a high degree of importance to the proposed changes for more efficient administration of the services, or achieving some other advantages such as *increasing the recurrent revenues*. The associated co-text indicates that *encouraging* has the semantic preference of “suggestions for the future directions of the activities mentioned”. One possible explanation for this semantic preference is that when the FS offers some business suggestions to show their potential for supporting the proposals, the audience or the councillors may expect to see the benefits of the suggestions. The use of *encouraging* and the associated co-text may help to persuade or arouse the interest of the suggestions as well as the benefits of the proposed measures or policies. *Specific* has the semantic preference of “proposals of policies and measures”. The use of *specific* and the associated co-text can highlight the best aspects of the suggested proposals.

In sum, the FS uses adjective intensifiers when expressing his pleasure and appreciation at officiating the opening of the ceremony. Adjective intensifiers are used when the discussions related to paying compliments for the favorable developments,

emphasize on the high degree of importance of business schemes, financial markets and the economies of some countries. It also relates to the compliments for the high degree of economic or financial contribution of a place or business project, anticipation for good future business developments in Hong Kong or China and so on. *I am pleased*, and *I am delighted* are the most frequent clusters used. They express formulaic meaning on what is said.

9.8 Collocates, clusters, and semantic preferences of the most frequent closed-class intensifiers

Table 39 below is a summary of the most frequent three closed-class intensifiers in the corpora with their frequencies, collocates with the MI values ≥ 3 , number of instances, associated phrases, semantic preferences, and 3-word clusters with a frequency at 3 or above.

Table 39: Summary of the collocates, clusters, associated co-text, and semantic preferences of the most frequent closed-class intensifiers

Corpus	Closed-Class intensifiers	Frequency per 10,000 words	Collocates		Examples of the associated co-text before and after the intensifiers	Semantic preference	Clusters (frequency)
			Most frequent collocates with MI value ≥ 3	No. of instances			
CORDS	very	19.39	<i>warm</i> ≥ 8.95	3	Pre: <i>-organizers;</i> <i>-ladies and gentlemen;</i> <i>-congratulate you;</i> <i>-board of directors, distinguished guests;</i> Post: <i>-warm welcome to our overseas buyers;</i> <i>-warm welcome to all overseas guests;</i> <i>-delighted that my first major public function;</i> <i>-delighted to join you this evening to celebrate;</i>	1) “Creation of a positive atmosphere” for the audience of the events such as <i>very warm welcome to our overseas buyers</i> .	<i>-I am very (12);</i> <i>-we are very (6);</i> <i>-am very pleased (5);</i> <i>-is a very (4);</i> <i>-very warm welcome (3);</i>
			<i>welcome</i> ≥ 6.36 <i>extend</i> ≥ 6.25 <i>pleased</i> ≥ 6.04 <i>special</i> ≥ 5.90	3 3 6 4		2) “Complimenting for the success of the events”. For example, at the Hong Kong Watch & Clock Fair held in Sept 2003, the FS uses <i>very</i> and the associated co-text to intensify his greeting for the success of the fair (e.g. <i>so, very well done, organizers</i>).	

					<p>Pre: <i>-congratulate the Hong Kong Trade Development Council;</i> <i>-congratulate you;</i> <i>-special performance by the HK Chinese Orchestra;</i></p> <p>Post: <i>-celebrate the accomplishments of our your people;</i> <i>-the contributions of everyone;</i></p>	<p>3) “Complimenting for the contributions” of certain groups of persons. For example, at the opening ceremony of the Stamp Expo in January 2004, the FS uses <i>very</i> and the associated co-text to intensify his appreciation to those persons who contribute to the continuous growth and development of the tourist industry (e.g. <i>business depends very much on the contributions of everyone</i>)</p>	
					<p>Pre: <i>-most important private banking centre;</i> <i>-unique institutional strengths;</i> <i>-Hong Kong investors;</i></p> <p>Post: <i>-well received;</i> <i>-will be remembered as a successful one;</i> <i>-impressive figures;</i> <i>-deserves to be underlined;</i> <i>-good progress;</i></p>	<p>4) “Complimenting for the achievements” of a particular industry or business project. For example, at the opening ceremony of the Technical Advisory Committee Meeting of the Institute of Nanomaterials and Nanotechnology dated 12th March 2004, the FS uses <i>very</i> and the associated co-text to intensify the achievements of the Institute in the nanotechnology research (e.g. <i>the institute has been making very good progress</i>).</p>	
	<i>most</i>	17.72	<i>valuable</i> ≥ 8.63 <i>asset</i> ≥ 8.26 <i>delighted</i> ≥ 7.35 <i>cities</i> ≥ 7.24 <i>important</i> ≥ 6.16	5 5 5 3 4	<p>Pre: <i>-young people;</i> <i>-our people;</i> <i>-Hong Kong’s people are;</i> <i>-a pool of capable human capital; talent;</i> <i>-entrepreneurship;</i></p> <p>Post: <i>-valuable assets;</i> <i>-valuable resource;</i> <i>-employing over 50,000 people;</i></p>	<p>1) “Importance of human Resources”. For example, in the launching ceremony of Youth Business dated 12th July 2005, the FS used <i>most</i> and the associated co-text to intensify his appreciation of young people in their contributions to the success of the society (e.g. <i>young people are our most valuable assets</i>).</p>	<p><i>-I am most (6);</i> <i>-most delighted to (5);</i> <i>-most valuable asset (4);</i> <i>-of the most (4);</i></p>

					<p>Pre: nil Post: <i>-delighted to join you tonight;</i> <i>-delighted to join you this evening;</i> <i>-delighted to be here to attend;</i></p>	<p>2) “Praising for the participation of the events” For example, at the 2006 Hong Kong Awards for Industries Presentation Ceremony, the FS uses <i>most</i> and the associated co-text to intensify his appreciation in joining the event (e.g. <i>I am most delighted</i>).</p>	
					<p>Pre: <i>-to excel in ICT development;</i> <i>-first mover advantages;</i> <i>-won the support and recognition of their nominators;</i> <i>-second largest financial market in Asia;</i> Post: <i>-encouraging to see so many local ICT innovative products;</i> <i>-open insurance markets in the world;</i> <i>-contribute towards the monetary and financial stability;</i> <i>-impressive contributions are the Faculty’s research findings;</i> <i>-see the fruit of your efforts;</i></p>	<p>3) “Complimenting for the success or achievement” of the business projects or countries. For example, at the cocktail reception to launch the Deposit Protection Scheme dated 25th Sept 2006, the FS uses <i>most</i> and the associated co-text to intensify the success of the scheme (e.g. <i>we are most pleased to see the fruit of your efforts today</i>).</p>	

					Pre: <i>-world-class infrastructure;</i> <i>-second largest financial market in Asia;</i> <i>-heart of the Asia Pacific region;</i> Pro: <i>-so many local ICT innovative products;</i> <i>-our premier status as an international financial centre;</i>	4) “Praising for the development” of a product of place. For example, at the press conference on Hong Kong’s bid to host the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) dated 3 rd June 2006, the FS uses <i>most</i> to praise the ITU is the largest Telecom event (e.g. <i>ITU World is the largest and most influential Telecom</i>).	
	<i>only</i>	8.69	<i>not</i> ≥8.04 <i>but</i> ≥6.74 <i>us</i> ≥5.54 <i>these</i> ≥5.29 <i>business</i> ≥4.42	25 7 3 3 3	Pre: <i>-has provided quality education to more than 100,000 graduates;</i> <i>- to highlight the huge commercial potential of designs and innovations;</i> <i>-thank IPD for its exemplary work;</i> <i>-all of them are of high calibre;</i> <i>-have done Hong Kong proud;</i> <i>-the importance of design becomes more widely recognized;</i> <i>-pioneers in nanotechnology research;</i> Pro: <i>-we are both leading watches and jewellery exporters</i> <i>-our triumph in improving the quality of life;</i> <i>-its contributions in raising the standard of architecture in Hong Kong;</i> <i>-our superior market infrastructure and unique institutional strengths;</i> <i>-provided us with high quality and responsive registration services;</i>	“Praising for the achievement” on the matters mentioned in the speeches. For example, at the launching ceremony of Youth Business Hong Kong dated 12 th July 2005 when appreciating the work done by the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups, the FS said, “... young people services <i>not only</i> to enhance their self-esteem...but also to foster a younger generation of entrepreneurs”. The use of <i>only</i> and the co-text can intensify the second achievement as well as the first one of the youth business.	

					<p><i>-demonstrate her leadership in spearheading Hong Kong's innovation and technology development;</i></p> <p><i>-more than 270,000 service companies in Hong Kong;</i></p> <p><i>-honour excellence in business;</i></p>		
CBUSS	<i>most</i>	13.03	<p><i>popular</i> ≥ 9.14</p> <p><i>economically</i> ≥ 9.14</p> <p><i>dynamic</i> ≥ 8.10</p> <p><i>strategic</i> ≥ 7.33</p> <p><i>effective</i> ≥ 7.33</p>	<p>3</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p> <p>3</p> <p>3</p>	<p>Pre:</p> <p><i>-Hong Kong as an international financial centre;</i></p> <p><i>-Hong Kong is one of the;</i></p> <p><i>-one of the world's;</i></p> <p><i>-Hong Kong is attracting more investment, and more business;</i></p> <p>Post:</p> <p><i>-popular tourist destination;</i></p> <p><i>-Popular place in;</i></p> <p><i>-best bargain tourism destination;</i></p> <p><i>-open, externally orientated economy;</i></p> <p><i>-Hong Kong is the chosen base for some 3,000 regional headquarter;</i></p>	<p>1) "Comparison" on the importance among places, industries, people, or economies. For example, at the Gala Dinner in Auckland on 22nd May 2006 when mentioning the number of companies running their regional operations in Hong Kong, the FS uses <i>most</i> and the associated co-text to intensify that Hong Kong has the highest popularity for setting up regional offices (e.g. <i>to be the most popular place in the region</i>).</p>	<p><i>-of the most (10);</i></p> <p><i>-the most important (6);</i></p> <p><i>-the world's most (5);</i></p> <p><i>-make the most (5);</i></p> <p><i>-be the most (4);</i></p> <p><i>-the most economically (3);</i></p> <p><i>-the most strategic (3);</i></p>
					<p>Pre:</p> <p><i>-I do urge you to try;</i></p> <p><i>-our respect strengths to develop one of the word's;</i></p> <p><i>-leveraged our respective strengths to develop;</i></p> <p><i>-continue to be the main drawcards of businesses;</i></p> <p>Pro:</p> <p><i>-other societies in the world, family</i></p>	<p>2) "Emphasis on the high degree of involvement" of people, societies, and resources. For examples, in his speech of "Seeing into 2007: Challenges and Prospects for Hong Kong Businesses," at the 13th Annual Hong Kong Business Summit, the FS uses <i>most</i> and the co-test to emphasize the high degree of involvement of the entrepreneurs in the development of HK such as "HK's</p>	

					<p><i>is the foundation of our society;</i> <i>-ability to rise above challenge, but their ability to seize the opportunity and make the best use of strength;</i> <i>-active corporate issuer of retail bonds;</i> <i>-of the PRD's resources;</i></p>	entrepreneurs impress me most is not their ability to rise challenges, but their ability to seize the opportunity...".	
	very	12.32	<p><i>questions</i> ≥ 7.56 <i>pleased</i> ≥ 7.56 <i>big</i> ≥ 6.77 <i>early</i> ≥ 6.52 <i>much</i> ≥ 6.14</p>	<p>4 4 4 3 9</p>	<p>Pre: <i>-economic restricting;</i> <i>-fiscal deficit and deflation;</i> <i>-big questions;</i> <i>-high unemployment;</i> <i>-how serious the task;</i> <i>-no one should be left behind;</i> <i>-no room for complacency;</i> <i>-suffered several years of set-back;</i> <i>-will not regain balance;</i> Post: <i>-big questions;</i> <i>-challenging issues;</i> <i>-tackle them head on;</i> <i>-we can do a better job;</i> <i>-substantially reduce taxes and raise spending;</i></p>	<p>1) "The challenges" of economic or business matters. For example, at the Luncheon organised by the Federation of Hong Kong Industries dated 22nd August, 2003 when discussing the economic outlook of the Hong Kong, the FS uses <i>very</i> and the associated co-text to intensify the big challenges we are facing (e.g. <i>these four are very, very big questions</i>).</p>	<p><i>-I am very (4);</i> <i>-questions and very (4);</i> <i>-very pleased to (3);</i> <i>-very big questions (3);</i> <i>-is a very (3);</i> <i>-am very pleased (3);</i></p>
					<p>Pre: <i>-to report that Hong Kong has been doing very well;</i> <i>-value-added products to establish their plants in Hong Kong;</i> <i>-favourable environment for our financial markets to develop ;</i> <i>-secure and sustainable employment and opportunities;</i> Post: <i>-overseas and Mainland companies</i></p>	<p>2) "High degree of confidence" in Hong Kong's economy such as <i>we are a very competitive society with an open and vibrant economy</i>.</p>	

					<i>have been increasing their investment;</i> <i>-active in promoting social enterprise;</i> <i>-competitive society with an open and vibrant economy;</i> <i>-the significant presence of foreign savings;</i> <i>-our strengths;</i>		
	<i>only</i>	5.89	<i>not</i> ≥ 7.02 <i>place</i> ≥ 6.14 <i>great</i> ≥ 6.10 <i>but</i> ≥ 5.76 <i>is</i> ≥ 3.89	30 3 3 8 12	Pre: <i>-our strengths as an international listing platform;</i> <i>-optimistic about the prospects of Hong Kong;</i> <i>-we shall build a world-class financial centre;</i> <i>-respond positively to economic shifts;</i> <i>Notably a high degree of certainty for doing business;</i> <i>-boosting our cultural, entertainment and recreation offerings;</i> Post: <i>-co-operation with our Guangdong neighbour is underpinning our economy;</i> <i>-more positive signs emerging</i> <i>-upheld our position as an international financial centre;</i> <i>-a great place to work, but also a great place to live;</i>	“High degree of confidence” in Hong Kong’s economy such as ... <i>our equity market not only for efficient access to capital, but also for the badge of quality from our internationally recognized regulatory standards.</i>	<i>-is not only (6);</i> <i>-not only to (4);</i> <i>-not only a (4);</i> <i>-not only a (3);</i>

CBUDS	<i>most</i>	5.99	<i>important</i> ≥ 7.69 <i>opportunities</i> ≥ 6.46 <i>are</i> ≥ 5.87 <i>is</i> ≥ 4.54 <i>of</i> ≥ 3.64	3 3 6 5 11	Pre: <i>-our economy continues to pick up;</i> <i>-united and work together, we shall be able to;</i> <i>-continue to promote our bond market;</i> <i>-successful implementation of nearly all these measures;</i> <i>-the launch of the Individual Visit Scheme;</i> Post: <i>-developing a knowledge-based economy;</i> <i>-the brightest pearl of our nation;</i> <i>-vibrant international financial centre;</i> <i>-Hong Kong ranked first in Asia;</i>	1) “High degree of confidence” in the economy of Hong Kong. For example, in the 2005-06 budget speech when discussing the development of financial markets, the FS uses <i>most</i> and the associated co-text to intensify his confidence that a greater number of fund-raising activities in Hong Kong were now carried out (e.g. <i>most fund-raising activities in Hong Kong...</i>).	<i>-the most important (3);</i> <i>-most of the (3)</i>
					Pre: <i>-quality human capital;</i> <i>-can pool the most talent;</i> <i>-human resources;</i> Post: <i>-talent;</i> <i>-precious asset;</i> <i>Nurture and attract the best talent;</i>	2) “Importance of human capital” of Hong Kong such as <i>can pool the most talent</i> .	
	<i>very</i>	5.76	<i>important</i> ≥ 7.69 <i>about</i> ≥ 5.91 <i>is</i> ≥ 5.07 <i>are</i> ≥ 4.87 <i>be</i> ≥ 4.62	3 3 7 3 3	Pre: <i>-fiscal deficit problem;</i> <i>-SARS, the economy had dipped sharply;</i> <i>-economic fluctuations, is unstable;</i> <i>-land premiums and investment income, as volatile;</i> <i>-highly externally-oriented;</i> Post: <i>-serious, with consolidated account</i>	1) “Challenges” of economic and business matters in Hong Kong. For example, at the 2007 budget speech when discussing the fiscal reserves, the FS said, “... the fiscal deficit problem was very serious...”. The use of <i>very</i> and the associated co-text is to intensify the highest degree of the challenge, that is the fiscal deficit problem.	nil

					<p><i>running a deficit;</i> <i>-depressed, deflation persisted;</i> <i>-sensitive to outside factors;</i></p>		
					<p>Pre: <i>-our tax regime;</i> <i>-Hong Kong's tax rate;</i> <i>-the financial services industry is a high-value-added industry;</i> <i>-the tenacity, ingenuity and enterprising spirit;</i> <i>-a hospitable culture;</i> <i>-our younger generation;</i></p> <p>Post: <i>-we observe the rule of law and love freedom;</i> <i>-favourable business environment, underpinned by a sound legal system;</i> <i>-good at picking up new ideas and knowledge;</i></p>	2) "Economic and business advantages" of Hong Kong (e.g. <i>our tax regime remains very low</i>)	
	<i>only</i>	4.15	<i>not</i> ≥7.72 <i>but</i> ≥6.92 <i>is</i> ≥4.25 <i>on</i> ≥3.72	12 3 5 3	<p>Pre: <i>-ratepayers;</i> <i>-tax base;</i> <i>-rates bill;</i> <i>-one-off tax rebate;</i> <i>-a tax deduction;</i> <i>-the duty on alcoholic beverages;</i> <i>-a duty above \$500;</i> <i>-the duty under review;</i> <i>-broadly-based taxes;</i></p> <p>Pro:</p>	<p>"Tax rates and duties" in Hong Kong. For example, in the 2006-07 budget speech when discussing the current tax arrangements, the FS uses <i>not only</i> and the associated co-text to intensify the second drawback as well as the first one if group loss relief and loss carry-back arrangement were introduced (e.g. <i>the government would not only suffer a loss in tax revenue, but also have to refund tax collected</i>).</p>	<p><i>-will not only (4)</i> <i>-not only on (3)</i></p>

					-a loss in tax revenue; -GTS; direct taxes; -profit and salaries taxes		
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As shown in Table 39, in CORDS, *very*, *most*, and *only* are the most frequent closed-class intensifiers. The five collocates of *very* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *warm*, *welcome*, *extend*, *pleased*, and *special*. The co-occurrences of *very* with *pleased* have the highest frequency at 6. All instances of *pleased* appear to the right of *very*. The cluster *I am very* has the highest frequency of 12. The five collocates of *most* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *valuable*, *asset*, *delighted*, *cities*, and *important*. The associations of *most* with *valuable*, *asset*, and *delighted* have the same frequency of five each. All instances of *valuable*, *asset*, and *delighted* appear to the right of *most*. The cluster *I am most* has the highest frequency of six. The five collocates of *only* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *not*, *but*, *us*, *these*, and *business*. The co-selections of *only* with *not* have the highest frequency at 25. All instances of *not* appear to the left of *only*. No clusters of *only* are found.

In CBUSS, *most*, *very*, and *only* are the most frequent closed-class intensifiers. The five collocates of *most* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *popular*, *economically*, *dynamic*, *strategic*, and *effective*. The co-selections of *most* with *dynamic* have the highest frequency at 4. All instances of *dynamic* appear to the right of *most*. The cluster *of the most* has the highest frequency at 10. The five collocates of *very* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *questions*, *pleased*, *big*, *early*, and *much*. The co-occurrences of *very* with *much* have the highest frequency at 9. All instances of *much* appear to the right of *very*. The clusters *I am very* and *questions and very* have the same frequency at 4. The five collocates of *only* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *not*, *place*, *great*, *but*, and *is*. The co-occurrences of *only* with *not* have the highest frequency at 30. All instances of *not* appear to the left of *only*. The cluster *is not only* has the frequency at 6.

In CBUDS, *most*, *very*, and *only* are the most frequent closed-class intensifiers. The five collocates of *most* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *important*, *opportunities*, *are*, *is*, and *of*. The co-occurrences of *most* with *of* have the highest frequency at 11. Six instances of *of* appear to the left and five instances appear to the right of *most*. The clusters *the most important* and *most of the* have the same frequency at 3. The five collocates of *very* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *important*, *about*, *is*, *are*, and *be*.

The co-occurrences of *very* with *is* have the highest frequency at 7. Six instances of *is* appear to the left and one instance appears to the right of *very*. No clusters of *very* are found. The four collocates of *only* with the MI values ≥ 3 are *not*, *but*, *is*, and *on*. The co-selections of *only* with *not* have the highest frequency at 12. All instances of *not* appear to the left of *only*. The cluster *will not only* has the frequency at 4.

In CORDS, *very* has four semantic preferences. Firstly, it is associated with co-text such as *organizers*, *everyone*, *our visitor*, *warm welcome*, and *delighted*. This indicates that *very* has a semantic preference of “creation of a positive atmosphere” with the audience, where the FS can build a friendly atmosphere at the beginning of the speech. *Very* is associated with co-text such as *well done*, and *successful fair*. This indicates that it has a second semantic preference of “complimenting for the success” of the events stated by the FS. Thirdly, *very* is associated with co-text such as *special performance by the HK Chinese Orchestra*, and *the contribution of everyone* and. This indicates that *very* and the co-text helps the FS to intensify his “compliments for the particular contributions” of the persons or activities mentioned in the speeches. *Very* is also associated with *most important private banking centre*, and *deserves to be underlined*. This indicates that *very* has the fourth semantic preference of “complimenting for the achievement” of a particular industry or business project.

These four semantic preferences are associated with thanking the audience, organizers, or intensifying the compliments for the success of the activities or persons. The clusters *I am very*, *am very pleased*, and *very warm welcome* are formulaic expressions for reinforcing his praise and compliments at the speeches.

Most has four semantic preferences. Firstly, it is associated with the co-text such as *young people*, and *valuable resource*. This indicates that *most* has the semantic preference of “importance of human resources” where the recognition of human accomplishments is being intensified. *Most* is associated with the co-text such as *delighted to join you tonight*, and *delighted to be here to attend*. This indicates that *most* has the second semantic preference of “praising for the participation of the events”. The use of *most* and the co-text helps the FS to intensify his gratitude expression to the organizers who invited him to be the honourable guest. Thirdly, *most* is associated with the co-text such as *to excel in ICT development*, and *impressive contribution*. The co-text indicates that *most* has a semantic preference of “complimenting for the success or achievement” of the business projects. The use of

most can help the FS to intensify his recognition of the contributions of the business projects and Hong Kong's infrastructure. *Most* is associated with co-text such as *world-class infrastructure*, and *so many local ICT innovative products*. This indicates that *most* has the fourth semantic preference of "praising the development of a product or place". *Only* has the semantic preference of "praising for the achievements of the matters" mentioned. One possible explanation is that in CORDS, in addition to use of formulaic expressions, the FS may have felt the need to highlight the outstanding accomplishments of the participating individuals and the organizations. The use of *only* and the co-text helps the FS to draw attention to the audience the fact that he acknowledges the contributions or achievements of the individuals as well the other business communities.

In CBUSS, *most* has two semantic preferences. One is associated with the co-text such as *Hong Kong as an international financial centre*, and *popular tourist destination*. This indicates that *most* has a semantic preference of "comparison" on the importance of different places, industries, people, or economies. One possible reason for this semantic preference is that one type of speeches in CBUSS has an informative dimension, offering new business or economic information about Hong Kong to overseas audience. In order to arouse the audience's interest, the FS may use *most* to add strength to these positive aspects of Hong Kong when compared with other countries. Secondly, *most* is associated with co-text such as *leveraged our respective strengths to develop*, and *active corporate issuer of retail bonds*. This indicates that *most* has the semantic preference of "emphasis on the high degree of involvement". In order to convince the audience that nearly all concerned people support his business proposals, the FS uses *most* to form superlative comparison. The use of *most* may help to increase the degree of persuasiveness of his claims because the use of *most* as an indication of the *majority*. The frequent use of the fixed three-word unit *of the most* indicates that the FS wants to add strength to his claims. *Very* has two semantic preferences. *Very* is associated with co-text such as *economic restricting*, and *big questions*. This indicates that *very* has the semantic preference of "the challenges" of the economic matters. One possible explanation for this semantic preference is that in order to provide evidence to support the proposed government's policies, the use of *very* and the co-text may help the FS to intensify the importance and relevance of the proposed policies to meet the challenges. The second semantic preference of *very* is

“high degree of confidence” in the Hong Kong economy. When the FS gives speeches to promote the investment opportunities available in Hong Kong for overseas investors, he might try to highlight the positive aspects of Hong Kong in addition to giving factual evidence. Showing a high degree of confidence is one of the possible ways to get the audience to think favourably about Hong Kong. *Only* has the semantic preference of “high degree of confidence in the Hong Kong economy”. Like the use of *very*, when the FS tries to highlight the positive aspects of Hong Kong, he may use *only* and the co-text to intensify the principal benefit or advantage as well as other benefits or advantages which can be obtained from the particular economic or business activities mentioned.

In CBUDS, *most* has two semantic preferences. It is associated with the co-text such as *our economy continues to pick up*, and *developing a knowledge-based economy*. This indicates that *most* has the semantic preference of “high degree of confidence” in the Hong Kong economy. One possible reason is that the FS may foresee that some proposals in CBUDS are controversial. In order to persuade the councillors to accept the proposals, the FS uses *most* and the associated co-text to intensify his high degree of confidence in the economy of Hong Kong for gaining support from the councillors in his proposals. *Most* is also associated with the co-text such as *quality human capital*, and *talent*. This indicates that *most* has another semantic preference of “importance of human capital”. The use of *most* and the co-text can help the FS to intensify the importance of the man-power management for the success of launching business initiatives in Hong Kong. *Very* has the semantic preference of “challenges” for Hong Kong. In a budget proposal, the FS frequently mentions three claims to meet the challenges; policies should be changed, measures or activities should be changed, and policies, measures and activities should remain unchanged. Consequently, it is up to the FS to use reasoning to support his claims. The use of *very* and co-text may help the FS to emphasize the cost and benefit for convincing the councillors that his propositions are workable and the challenges ahead can be tackled. *Very* has another semantic preference of “economic and business advantages” of Hong Kong. One possible reason for the semantic preference is that, in addition to mentioning the challenges that Hong Kong faces, the FS may also include economic and business advantages in his budget speeches. The use of *very* and the co-text helps the FS to foster positive attitudes towards his claims in CBUDS. *Only*

has the semantic preference of “tax rates and duties” in Hong Kong. Tax rates and duties are common topics discussed in CBUDS. When proposing changes in tax rates and duties, the FS needs to provide detailed information for the consideration of the councillors and public. The use of *not + only* helps the FS to intensify both the principal benefit as well as the ancillary benefits of the changes.

In summary, the FS uses closed-class intensifiers in thanking the audience for the participation in the events at the speeches. In addition, closed-class intensifiers are used when the topics are related to: the compliments for the success of the events or persons; praise for the achievement of business projects or industries; the importance of human capital; the emphasis on the high degree of involvement of persons or societies; the challenges; high degree of confidence in Hong Kong’s economy and so on. *I am very, we are very, I am most, of the most, and the most important* are the clusters frequently used. They are used to intensify degree of appreciation or importance on what the FS said.

9.9 Collocates, clusters, and semantic preferences of the most frequent *ly*-intensifiers

Table 40 below is a summary of the most frequent three *ly*-intensifiers in the corpora with their frequencies, collocates with MI values ≥ 3 , the number of instances, associated phrases, semantic preferences, and the 3-word clusters with a frequency at 3 or above.

Table 40: Summary of the collocates, clusters, associated co-text, and semantic preferences of the most frequent *ly*-intensifiers

Corpus	<i>Ly</i> -intensifiers	Frequency per 10,000 words	Collocates		Examples of the associated co-text before and after the intensifiers	Semantic preferences	Clusters (frequency)
			Most frequent collocates with MI value ≥ 3	No. of instances			
CORDS	<i>certainly</i>	4.35	<i>would</i> ≥ 6.41 <i>a</i> ≥ 4.52 <i>our</i> ≥ 4.13 <i>of</i> ≥ 3.54	3 5 3 5	Pre: -winners and nominees; -excellent work deserves our recognition; -contributions to our community; Post: -outstanding achievements; -world-class architectural projects; -inspire many of our fellow designers;	“Complimenting for the achievement” of the persons, winners, or projects. For example, at the Prize Presentation and Exhibition Open Ceremony of Hong Kong Institute of Architects Annual Awards dated March 15, 2003, the FS used <i>certainly</i> and the associated co-text to intensify the winners who deserved for the winning the awards such as <i>the winners have certainly demonstrated outstanding achievements</i> .	nil
	<i>particularly</i>	4.01	<i>pleased</i> ≥ 7.93 <i>am</i> ≥ 6.09 <i>that</i> ≥ 5.56 <i>our</i> ≥ 4.98 <i>I</i> ≥ 4.63	3 3 4 5 3	Pre: -resounding success; -fostering the development of the <i>Mainland's fund management industry</i> ; -PolyU's contribution; -launching ceremony of Youth Business Hong Kong; Post: -service industry; -Yet you have once again demonstrated your perseverance, professionalism; -Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce; -the school was ranked the fourth; -IT Support has enabled the	“Complimenting for the contribution” of an institute, event, or industry. For example, in the Hong Kong Award for Services in Jan 5, 2003, the FS uses <i>particularly</i> and the associated co-text to intensify the contributions of the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce to the success of the services industry.	-particularly <i>pleased to</i> (3); -I am particularly (3);

					<i>department to handle an increase number of applications;</i>		
	<i>highly</i>	2.01	$a \geq 3.22$	3	Pre: -young people; -graduates, educated, enthusiastic, and committed; Post: -business executives; -youths and employers; -winners; -skilled; -people with aspiration;	“Human resources” of Hong Kong such as a total of 58 highly deserving nominations.	nil
CBUSS	<i>particularly</i>	6.07	Province ≥ 8.27 areas ≥ 7.92 strong ≥ 7.27 Guangdong ≥ 7.07 those ≥ 7.00	4	Pre: -fast growing China economy; -Mainland's rapid economic development; Post: -burgeoning Pearl River Delta; -gradual liberation of the Mainland;	1) “Positive economic development” of Mainland China. For example, in the speech dated 22 nd October 2003 when discussing the growing reliance of Hong Kong on Mainland in providing support, the FS uses <i>particularly</i> and the associated co-text to intensify the fast economic growing of the Pearl River Delta.	- <i>particularly in the (8);</i> - <i>has been particularly (4);</i> - <i>province particularly in (3);</i> - <i>been</i>
				3	Pre: -to promote bond market' robust and diversified bond market; -managed bond funds; -debt issuance activities; -development of our stock market; Pro: -development of bond market; -simplifying the issuance process; -long term funding sources; -to list the Pan-Asian Fund; -longer maturity periods; -raise over US\$42 billion through	2) “Positive aspects of capital markets” of Hong Kong such as <i>particularly helpful has been the development of the bond market.</i>	<i>particularly strong (3);</i> - <i>Guangdong Province particularly (3)</i>

					IPO;		
					Pre: <i>-the interaction of Hong Kong and Guangdong Province;</i> <i>-substantial New Zealand community in Hong Kong;</i> <i>-Japanese SMEs also flourish in Hong Kong;</i> Post: <i>-the PRD, has contributed greatly to the prosperity on both side of the boundary;</i> <i>-Air New Zealand and Eurocell Paper Sales have a presence in Hong Kong;</i>	3) “Positive business relations” between Hong Kong and other countries such as <i>Japanese SMEs also flourish in Hong Kong, particularly in the areas...</i>	
	<i>certainly</i>	5.00	<i>will</i> ≥5.22 <i>it</i> ≥4.92 <i>not</i> ≥4.91 <i>are</i> ≥4.81 <i>is</i> ≥4.6	7 4 3 5 9	Pre: <i>-US\$3 billion IPO for China Life;</i> <i>-financial services and real estate sectors have benefited;</i> <i>- flows of services as well as the flows of capital;</i> <i>-gain preferential access to the Mainland;</i> Post: <i>-expect more to come;</i> <i>-the bank sector will benefit from lower entry thresholds;</i>	1) “Economic benefits” obtained from cooperation with Mainland China. For example, at the luncheon of the Second Pearl River Delta Conference dated 17 Oct 2003 when discussing the development of the cooperation between Hong Kong and Mainland China, the FS uses <i>certainly</i> and the associated co-text to intensify the benefits Hong Kong can get such as “... <i>will certainly benefit</i> ”.	<i>-it is certainly (4);</i>
					Pre: <i>-renewed growth;</i> Post: <i>-good news;</i> <i>-cautiously optimistic;</i> <i>-starting 2004 on a strong note;</i>	2) “Positive economic prospects” of Hong Kong such as <i>we are certainly starting 2004 on a strong note.</i>	

					-economic indicators turning better;		
					Pre: <i>-No one can be complacent about the corporate governance;</i> <i>-Hong Kong – Guangdong cooperation;</i> <i>-high degree of transparency;</i> <i>-policy with consistency;</i> <i>-big market, small government;</i> Post: <i>-strong co-operations with our Guangdong neighbour;</i> <i>-low profit tax, abolish estate duty;</i>	3) “Upholding principles of good governance” in Hong Kong such as <i>big market, small government is certainly the right way to go.</i>	
	<i>especially</i>	3.03	<i>those</i> ≥8.00 <i>how</i> ≥7.53 <i>are</i> ≥5.20 <i>with</i> ≥4.72 <i>on</i> ≥4.56	3 4 4 3 3	Pre: <i>-to an even more knowledge-based economy;</i> <i>-a clean bill of health on our economy;</i> <i>-close economic ties with the Mainland;</i> Post: <i>-leveraging our proximity and unique circumstances to benefit from China;</i>	“Updating the latest positive economic news” of Hong Kong such as <i>give you a brief idea on our close economic ties with the Mainland, especially on how we are leveraging our proximity...</i>	<i>-especially on how (3);</i>
CBUDS	<i>fully</i>	2.07	<i>I</i> ≥5.72 <i>we</i> ≥4.99 <i>the</i> ≥3.10	3 3 5	Pre: <i>-RMB business can develop more rapidly;</i> <i>-recruitment of 5000 staff;</i> <i>-more employment opportunities for the local construction industry;</i> <i>-GDP surpassed its 1997 peak to reach a new high;</i> Post: <i>-has regained its strength;</i>	“Positive anticipation for future business development” in Hong Kong such as <i>hope that RMB business can develop more rapidly, and I fully appreciate...for further expansion.</i>	nil

					<i>-a number of tourism infrastructure projects will be completed;</i> <i>-liberalised trade in goods between Hong Kong and the Mainland;</i>		
	<i>particularly</i>	2.07	<i>the ≥ 4.10</i> <i>of ≥ 3.71</i>	10 4	Pre: <i>-creation of employment opportunities;</i> <i>-assist more elderly singletons;</i> <i>-tax concessions reduce the burden on taxpayers;</i> Post: <i>-provide referral and supporting services to those in need;</i>	“‘The provision of economic support” to Hong Kong citizens in need such as <i>creation of employment opportunities, particularly those lower-skilled workforce.</i>	nil
	<i>greatly</i>	1.84	<i>will ≥ 4.81</i> <i>of ≥ 3.88</i> <i>the ≥ 3.27</i>	3 4 5	Pre: <i>-trade to settle in RMB and establish a RMB debt issuance mechanism;</i> <i>-two-way platform;</i> <i>-upgrade their efficiency and rationalize their businesses;</i> <i>-providing quality public services;</i> Post: <i>-inject new impetus;</i> <i>-strengthened the resilience of our economy;</i> <i>-facilitate the use of Hong Kong as a gateway to the international market by Mainland enterprises;</i>	“‘Benefits” obtained from the closer ties between Hong Kong and Mainland China such as... <i>will greatly promote trade between two places and the development of our bond markets.</i>	nil

As shown in Table 40, in CORDS, *certainly*, *particularly*, and *highly* are the most frequent *ly*-intensifiers. The four collocates of *certainly* with MI values ≥ 3 are *would*, *a*, *our*, and *of*. The co-selections of *certainly* with *a* have the highest frequency at 5. One instance of *a* appears to the left and four instances appear to the right of *certainly*. No clusters of *certainly* are found. The five collocates of *particularly* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *pleased*, *am*, *that*, *our*, and *I*. The co-occurrences of *particularly* with *our* have the highest frequency at 5. Two instances of *our* appear to the left and three instances appear to the right of *particularly*. The clusters of *particularly pleased to* and *I am particularly* have the same frequency at 3. The only collocate of *highly* with MI value ≥ 3 is *a*. The associations of *highly* with *a* have the frequency at 3. All instances of *a* appear to the left of *highly*. No cluster of *highly* is found.

In CBUSS, *particularly*, *certainly*, and *especially* are the most frequent *ly*-intensifiers. The five collocates of *particularly* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *province*, *areas*, *strong*, *Guangdong*, and *those*. The co-occurrences of *particularly* with *province*, *strong*, and *Guangdong* have the same frequency at 4. All instances of *strong* appear to the right of *particularly*. Three instances of *province* and *Guangdong* appear to the left and one instance of each appears to the right of *particularly*. The 3-word cluster *particularly in the* has the highest frequency at 8. The five collocates of *certainly* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *will*, *it*, *not*, *are*, and *is*. The co-selections of *certainly* with *will* have the highest frequency at 7. All instances of *will* appear to the left of *certainly*. The cluster *it is certainly* has the frequency at 4. The five collocates of *especially* with the highest MI values ≥ 3 are *those*, *how*, *are*, *with*, and *on*. The associations of *especially* with *how* and *are* have the same frequency at 4. All instances of *how* and *are* appear to the right of *especially*. The cluster *especially on how* has the frequency at 3.

In CBUDS, *fully*, *particularly*, and *greatly* are the most frequent *ly*-intensifiers. The three collocates of *fully* with MI values ≥ 3 are *I*, *we*, and *the*. The co-occurrences of *fully* with *the* have the highest frequency at 5. All instances of *the* appear to the right of *fully*. No clusters of *fully* are found. The two collocates of *particularly* with the MI values ≥ 3 are *the*, and *of*. The co-occurrences of *particularly* with *the* have the highest

frequency at 10. Four instances of *the* appear to the left and six instances appear to the right of *particularly*. No clusters of *particularly* are found. The three collocates of *greatly* with MI values ≥ 3 are *will*, *of*, and *the*. The co-occurrences of *greatly* with *the* have the highest frequency at 5. One instance of *the* appears to the left and four instances appear to right of *greatly*. No clusters of *greatly* are found.

In CORDS, *certainly* is associated with the co-text such as *winners and nominees*, and *outstanding achievement*. This indicates that *certainly* has the semantic preference of “complimenting for the achievement” of the persons, winners, or projects. One possible reason for this semantic preference is that one of the aims of CORDS is to present awards. As the award presenter, the FS may use *certainly* and the co-text to emphasize the prestige of the awards and the winners’ accomplishments. *Particularly* has the semantic preference of “complimenting for the contribution” of an institute, a project. Another purpose of CORDS is to celebrate the contributions and success of the events mentioned. The use of *particularly* and the associated co-text helps the FS to intensify the specific contribution or success of an institution, a project, or an industry. *Particularly pleased to* and *I am particularly* are the two frequent clusters found. *Highly* has the semantic preference of “human resources” of Hong Kong. On many occasions, the FS is invited to tertiary institutions where he would praise the accomplishments for commemorating the anniversary. The FS may use *highly* and the associated co-text to emphasize the importance of human capital.

In CBUSS, *particularly* is co-selected with the co-text such as *fast growing China economy*, and *burgeoning Pearl River Delta*. This indicates that *particularly* has the semantic preference of “positive economic development” of Mainland China. One of the explanations is that when giving business speeches that cover the economic development in Hong Kong, the FS may use *particularly* and the co-text to emphasize the importance of the future economic development of Mainland China for Hong Kong. The second semantic preference of *particularly* is “positive aspects of capital markets” of Hong Kong. In some speeches in CBUSS, the FS attempts to convince overseas investors to invest in the Hong Kong capital markets because other Asian countries such as Japan and Singapore are starting to overtake Hong Kong. The use of *particularly* and other co-selections may help the FS to highlight the advantages of the capital markets in Hong Kong. The third semantic preference of *particularly* is “positive business relations” between Hong Kong and other countries. One plausible

reason to have such semantic preference is that when the FS highlights the positive economic outlooks of Hong Kong, he needs to provide further information for supporting his claims. The use of *particularly* and the co-selections helps the FS to intensify the existence of the strong and positive linkages and interactions between Hong Kong and other countries. *Certainly* has three semantic preferences. The first and second semantic preferences are “economic benefits” and “positive economic prospects”. One plausible reason to have these semantic preferences is that in some business speeches, the FS, like a typical politician, repeatedly said that the local economy has fared well. He also believes that the closer ties between Hong Kong and China have brought many “economic benefits” in the four key pillar industries – financial services, trading and logistics, tourism, and professional services for Hong Kong. The use of *certainly* and the co-selections helps the FS to underscore the benefits obtained from the co-operation with the Mainland China and he is confident that Hong Kong is on the road of economic recovery. The third semantic preference is “upholding the principles of good governance” in Hong Kong. Likewise in the first and second semantic preferences, one of the explanations would be that, in some business speeches the FS repeatedly said that Hong Kong’s success is based on upholding some principles which he believes they are good for the future economic growth of Hong Kong. The use of *certainly* and the associated co-text can help the FS to emphasize the certainty in holding these governing principles. *Especially* has the semantic preference of “updating the latest economic news” of Hong Kong. In many speeches, the FS is required to update the latest economic news of Hong Kong when giving business speeches. The use of *especially* and the co-selections helps the FS to highlight the major and positive economic indicators for convincing the audience.

In CBUDS, *fully* has the semantic preference of “positive anticipation for future business development” in Hong Kong. A budget proposal is a set of policies and measures that the Government wants to implement to achieve economic goals and solve existing financial problems. In order to justify the proposed policies and measures, the FS may cite some of the government projects that will be implemented to achieve these goals. The use of *fully* and the co-selections helps the FS to stress the positive anticipation for future business developments in Hong Kong when the proposed policies and measures will have been implemented. *Particularly* has the semantic preference of “the provision of economic support” to Hong Kong citizens.

Same as in the use of *fully*, the FS may need to cite some potential policies and measures for providing feasible solutions to existing problems. The use of *particularly* and the associated co-text helps the FS to emphasize how the proposed policies and measures can provide assistances to the needy. *Greatly* has the semantic preference of “benefits” obtained from the closer economic and business ties between Hong Kong and Mainland China. The FS may need to provide information on what are the benefits can be obtained for exemplifying the maximal advantages of the proposals. The use of *greatly* and the associated co-text helps the FS to highlight the benefits that will be gained from the closer ties.

In conclusion, the FS uses *ly*-intensifiers when appreciating the achievements or contributions of winners, projects, institutes, or industries. The *ly*-intensifiers are also used when the discussion topics are related to: positive economic development of the Mainland; positive aspects of the capital markets of Hong Kong; positive business relations between Hong Kong and other countries; economic benefits obtained from the cooperation with Mainland China; upholding principles of good governance; updating the latest economic news of Hong Kong; provision of economic support to Hong Kong citizens; and benefits obtained from closer ties between Hong Kong and Mainland and so on. All these semantic preferences indicate the positive aspects of Hong Kong’s economy and business development. *Am particularly pleased* and *it is certainly* are the two open-choice clusters frequently used by the FS.

9.10 Summary of the findings of semantic preferences of the hedges and intensifiers

Through the analysis of the previous sections, it is found that in some cases, the same hedge or intensifier in one corpus have the same or different semantic preferences in other corpora. In some cases, a hedge or intensifier in one corpus may have a different number of semantic preferences in another corpus. A summary of the findings of the semantic preferences of the most frequent hedges and intensifiers is shown in the following table.

Table 41: Summary of the semantic preferences of the most frequent hedges and intensifiers

CORDS		CBUSS		CBUDS	
Hedges/ intensifiers	Semantic preferences	Hedges/ intensifiers	Semantic preferences	Hedges/ intensifiers	Semantic preferences
Verbal hedges					
<i>wish</i>	Expression of gratitude to the audience or events at the end of the speeches	<i>Hope</i>	1) Expression of optimistic confidence on activities mentioned; 2) Expectation for the materialization of the activities mentioned; 3) Expression of gratitude to the audience or events at the end of the speeches;	<i>expect</i>	1) Quantity and size of the government revenue and expenditure, fiscal reserves, and percentage of ratepayers or GDP; 2) Comparison of interest rate, GDP, inflation rate, and expenditure and revenue between two intervals; 3) Anticipation for the completion of activities;
<i>hope</i>	1) Expression of gratitude to the audience or events at the end of the speech; 2) Expectation for the materialization of the activities mentioned;	<i>believe</i>	1) Expression of optimistic confidence towards the activities mentioned; 2) Governing principles of the FS;	<i>Propose</i>	Suggestion for the introduction of business plans and measures;
<i>believe</i>	Tentative prediction for the development of the activities mentioned	<i>consider</i>	A desire for the introductions of policies and measures	<i>consider</i>	A desire for the introductions of policies and measures
Adjective hedges					
<i>fair</i>	Reasonable and justice business environment of HK	<i>fair</i>	Enhancement suggestions for the business directions of Hong Kong's justice environment;	<i>fair</i>	Enhancement suggestions for the business directions of Hong Kong's justice environment;
<i>considerable</i>	Quantity and size of the activities mentioned	<i>proposed</i>	Intention to introduce policies and measures;	<i>proposed</i>	Intention to introduce policies and measures;

<i>close</i>	Approximation of the amount of money	<i>possible</i>	The likelihood of the introduction of government measures;	<i>possible</i>	The likelihood of the introduction of government measures ;
Adverb hedges					
<i>some</i>	1) Quantity, amount or numbers of money, persons, countries, companies, index, per cent; 2) Positive aspects of economic or business development in Hong Kong;	<i>some</i>	1) Number of people, enterprises, challenges, opportunities; 2) Positive aspects of economic or business development in Hong Kong; 3) Challenges of Hong Kong	<i>some</i>	1) Quantity, amount or number of money, companies, percent of the people or GDP or stock turnover; 2) Proposals for the introduction of policies and measures; 3) Projects of government;
<i>about</i>	“Quantity, amount or numbers” of money, people	<i>about</i>	“Quantity, amount or numbers” of money, people, enterprises, trading turnover, market capitalisation, jobs;	<i>about</i>	“Quantity, amount or numbers” of money, people, enterprises, trading turnover, market capitalisation, jobs;
<i>nearly</i>	“Quantity, amount or number” of money, company, percent	<i>nearly</i>	“Quantity, amount or number” of money, companies, jobs, percent of the people or GDP or stock turnover;	<i>nearly</i>	“Quantity, amount or number” of money, companies, jobs, percent of the people or GDP or stock turnover;
Noun hedges					
<i>potential</i>	The likelihood of the growth and developments of the financial, design, and nanotechnology industries	<i>potential</i>	The likelihood of the growth and developments of the financial markets of Hong Kong, and economic corporation between HK and Mainland	<i>potential</i>	The likelihood of the growth and developments of the tourism industry;
<i>expectation</i>	nil	<i>forecast</i>	Estimation of the amount of deficit or size of GDP growth;	<i>forecast</i>	Estimation of the amount of deficit or size of GDP growth;
<i>thought</i>	nil	<i>consideration</i>	Assessment of	<i>estimate</i>	A rough

			proposed taxes;		calculation of the amount of the operating revenue and expenditure, land premiums, and taxes;
Modal hedges					
<i>would</i>	1) Appreciation for the participation of the audience at the beginning of the speeches; 2) Appreciation for the contribution of the organizers of the activities at the beginning of the speeches;	<i>would</i>	1) Tentative predictions for developments on the matters discussed; 2) Appreciation for the participation of the audience and honourable guests, and the contributions of the organizers;	<i>will</i>	1) Prediction for the amounts of fiscal reserves, operating expenditure and revenue, number of jobs or persons, and so on. 2) The likely development of the business activities mentioned;
<i>will</i>	1) Possible future business development between Hong Kong and the Mainland; 2) The likely developments of the business activities mentioned at the events	<i>will</i>	1) The possible future business development between Hong Kong and the Mainland; 2) The likely developments of the business activities mentioned at the events;	<i>can</i>	Tentative expectation for the development of the activities mentioned at the events;
<i>must</i>	Advice on the directions of business strategies in Hong Kong	<i>can</i>	Tentative expectation for the development of the activities mentioned at the events;	<i>must</i>	1) Advice on the directions of the business strategies of Hong Kong; 2) Guidelines for managing public finances;
Adjective intensifiers					
<i>pleased</i>	1) Complimenting for the favourable development of the events; 2) Expression of pleasure in officiating the opening ceremony of the event;	<i>significant</i>	High degree of economic or financial contribution or impact of a place or business project;	<i>encouraging</i>	Suggestions for the future directions of the activities
<i>major</i>	Emphasis on high degree of importance or size of the business, or	<i>major</i>	Emphasis on high degree of importance or size of the	<i>major</i>	Emphasis on high degree of importance of the policies and

	financial markets, etc;		business, or financial markets, etc;		measures
<i>delighted</i>	1) Complimenting for the favourable development of the events; 2) Expression of pleasure in officiating the opening ceremony of the event;	<i>exciting</i>	Anticipation for good future business development of Hong Kong or China;	<i>specific</i>	Proposals of government policies and measures
Closed-class intensifiers					
<i>very</i>	1) Creation of a positive atmosphere; 2) Complimenting for the success of the events; 3) Complimenting for contributions of certain groups of persons; 4) Complimenting for achievements of a particular industry or business project;	<i>very</i>	1) The challenges of economic and business matters in Hong Kong; 2) High degree of confidence in Hong Kong's economy;	<i>very</i>	1) The challenges in economic and business matters in Hong Kong; 2) Economic and business advantages of Hong Kong;
<i>most</i>	1) Importance of human resources; 2) Praising in participating the events; 3) Complimenting for the success or achievements of the business projects or countries; 4) Praising for the development of a product or place;	<i>most</i>	1) Comparison on the importance among countries, industries, people, or economies; 2) Emphasis on high degree of involvement of the people, or resources;	<i>most</i>	1) High degree of confidence in Hong Kong's economy; 2) The importance of human capital;
<i>only</i>	Praising for the achievements on the matters mentioned;	<i>only</i>	High degree of confidence in Hong Kong's economy	<i>only</i>	Tax rates and duties
<i>ly</i> -intensifiers					
<i>certainly</i>	Complimenting for the achievements of the persons, winners, or projects;	<i>certainly</i>	1) Economic benefits obtained from cooperation with Mainland China; 2) Positive economic prospects of Hong Kong;	<i>fully</i>	Positive anticipation for future business development in Hong Kong;

			3) Upholding principles of good governance in Hong Kong;		
<i>particularly</i>	Complimenting for the contribution of an institute, event, or industry;	<i>particularly</i>	1) Positive economic development of Mainland China; 2) Positive aspects of the capital markets of Hong Kong; 3) Positive business relations between Hong Kong and other countries;	<i>particularly</i>	The provision of economic support to Hong Kong citizens
<i>highly</i>	Human resources of Hong Kong	<i>especially</i>	Updating the latest positive economic news of Hong Kong	<i>greatly</i>	Benefits obtained from the closer ties between Hong and Mainland

As shown in the above table, the total number of semantic preferences associated with the most frequent hedges is 17, 22, and 21 in CORDS, CBUSS, and CBUDS respectively. In fact, the difference in numbers is not so great. The total number of semantic preferences associated with the most frequent intensifiers is 17, 15 and 11 respectively in the three corpora. One of the explanations why CBUSS has the highest number of semantic preferences associated with the hedges is that the main purpose of giving business speeches is to inform the audience of various sectors the latest business and economic developments in Hong Kong. One of the main purposes of the overseas business speeches is to persuade potential investors to invest in Hong Kong. The overseas audience may have higher expectations of the speeches because they may have limited knowledge of Hong Kong. In order to increase the interest of the audience, the FS may prepare a possible subject list of greater variety for different audiences. The use of the hedges with the co-selections may help to make the contents tentative to avoid commitment or challenges or if the FS does not have the precise information or numbers at the time of giving the speeches. However, it still allows the FS can provide lots of information with certain degree of exactitude.

One possible reason why the hedges in CORDS have fewer semantic preferences is that CORDS is mainly ceremonial in nature for praising persons or

events. Most of the audience, who are the selected guests of the events are already familiar with the awardees, honorees, or the purposes of the events. The FS may just need to capture the audience's sentiments by introducing the purposes of the events and acknowledging the significant achievements of the celebrated persons. Therefore, the need to hedge different purposes of the events or to hedge the contents is not so frequent. As such, the speeches in CORDS may have a shorter set of semantic preferences.

The most frequent intensifiers in CORDS have the highest number of semantic preferences. One plausible explanation is that, in addition to presenting awards, praising the honourees, or celebrating the events, the FS may take the opportunity to build credibility by intensifying his personal respect for the accomplishments of the awardees, honourees or events. Consequently, the FS may have a possible longer subject list of semantic preferences to intensify the celebrated persons or events for strengthening the audience's respect and admiration for them. In CBUDS, the most frequent intensifiers are associated with the lowest number of semantic preferences. The budget speeches are high stakes speeches where the FS would make claims on his budget proposals. The FS is required to present factual details in greater depth for the evaluations and decisions of the councillors and public. Consequently, instead of using a higher number of semantic preferences associated with the intensifiers to intensify his claims, the FS uses a higher number of semantic preferences associated with the hedges to qualify his descriptions and explanations in order to indicate his modesty in front of the audience. Another possible reason is that CBUDS is not ceremonial in nature; a higher frequency of intensifiers in thanking the councillors for their attending the speeches is not required.

The verbal hedges in CBUSS have the highest number of semantic preferences at six. CBUDS and CORDS have a similar number of semantic preferences of five and four respectively. The verbal hedge *hope* has two similar semantic preferences in CORDS and CBUSS. One plausible explanation for them to have the same semantic preference of "expression of gratitude" is that the FS uses the formulaic thanking language as the honourable guest in giving the speeches at the end in both CORDS and CBUSS. One possible reason to have the same semantic preference of "expectation for the successful materialization of activities mentioned" is that the FS may take the chances in both CORDS and CBUSS to inspire the audience by reporting the likely

materialization of some business activities for them to think favourably about Hong Kong. *Expect* has three semantic preferences in CBUDS. The reason to have the semantic preferences of “quantity and size” and “comparison” may be that, in order to show that all figures in the budget proposals are true and plausible, the provision and comparison of many financial data are required. For diluting the force of his claims in the budget proposals, the FS uses *expect* and the semantic preference of “anticipation for the completion of activities” to indicate that the information presented are anticipative and tentative in nature.

The most frequent adjective hedges in CBUSS and CBUDS are the same. They are also associated with the same semantic preferences. *Fair* appears in the three corpora but it is only associated with the semantic preference of “reasonable and justice business environment” in CORDS. At the same time in celebrating the successes of the awardees, honourees, or their activities, the FS may highlight the reasonable and justice business environment in Hong Kong for facilitating the successes of the celebrated persons and activities. One possible reason for the CBUSS and CBUDS to have the same semantic preference of “enhancement suggestions for the business directions” might be that suggestions for future business directions are conventional in CBUDS. After the budget speeches, the FS is usually invited by other professional institutions to give further explanations on his budget proposals. As a result, economic and business enhancement suggestions are repeatedly described in CBUSS.

Some, *about*, and *nearly* are the most frequent adverbial hedges in the three corpora and they are all associated with the semantic preference of “quantity, amount or numbers”. As the FS needs to provide quantitative data to support his claims in the speeches, the use these hedges and the associated co-text may help the FS to achieve clarity in the delivery of the quantitative data, but without committing to the exactitude. *Some* in CORDS and CBUSS is also associated with the semantic preference of “positive aspects” of economic and business developments in Hong Kong. It is natural for the FS to cite some positive aspects of Hong Kong in both corpora because they are ceremonial and publicity in nature. The use *some* and the co-selections can inspire the audience to think favourably about Hong Kong.

The semantic preference of “the likelihood of the growth and developments” of the activities mentioned is associated with *potential*, a possibility noun hedge

appearing in the three corpora. In order to convince the audience to think favourably about Hong Kong, the FS may cite the possible growth and developments of some activities as evidence in the three types of speech.

The number of semantic preferences associated with modal auxiliaries is five in each corpus. In addition to have the semantic preference of “the likely business development on the activities mentioned in the events” in the three corpora, *will* has a semantic preference of “prediction for the amount of fiscal reserve, revenue, and expenditure in CBUDS. On the one hand, in order to convince the councillors and public to agree the budget proposals, the FS needs to provide quantitative information or numerical data to support his predictions. On the other hand, the FS would try to shield him by indicating that the amounts provided are predictive in nature. The use of *will* and the semantic preference may help the FS to dilute the force of his statements by indicating the data are tentative and beyond his control. *Will* also has the semantic preference of “the possible future business development between Hong Kong and China” in both CORDS and CBUSS. The business co-operation between Hong Kong and China has substantially increased in recent years, for example, the signing of Closer Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) in 2003. It is natural for the FS to update the audience on the business developments between Hong Kong and Mainland China in any occasions. *Must* has the semantic preference of “advice on the directions of business strategies in Hong Kong” in both CORDS and CBUDS. To be the senior government official of Hong Kong in monitoring the public finance, it is natural for the FS to have the knowledge and experience in giving business advice in any public speeches, including the budget speeches in the Legislative Council.

In CORDS, the most frequent adjective intensifiers have the highest number of semantic preferences at five. CBUSS and CBUDS have four and three semantic preferences respectively. Although the semantic preference of “emphasis on the degree of importance or size of an industries or economies, and so on” is associated with the *major* in the three corpora, it has different functions. It may be on ad hoc basis in CORDS and CBUSS for the FS to highlight the high degree of importance of some industries in Hong Kong or the economies of some countries just to arouse the interest of the audience. Whereas in CBUDS, it is a convention for the FS to highlight the high degree of importance of some industries or the economies of some countries, etc. to indicate the impact on his budget proposals.

In CORDS, the most frequent closed-class intensifiers have the highest number of semantic preferences at nine. Both CBUSS and CBUDS have the same number of semantic preferences at five. In CORDS, *very* and *most* have four semantic preferences each whereas they have two each in both CBUSS and CBUDS. Although CORDS is mostly ceremonial in nature, there are many possible reasons behind such events. *Very*, *most* and the co-selections are used by the FS to express his appreciation to a greater variety of audience such as the awardees, groups of persons, honourees, institutions, and organizers. In addition, the FS may take the opportunity to reinforce the importance of human resources and other businesses or government initiatives. *Only* appears in the three corpora and it is associated with different semantic preferences. One possible explanation for the different semantic preferences is that *only* is a common intensifier, which can be used in different contexts. Since the nature of the three corpora is different, it is to be expected that *only* is associated with different semantic preferences.

In CBUSS, the most frequent *ly*-intensifiers have the highest semantic preferences at seven. Both CORDS and CBUSS have the same number of semantic preference at three. *Particularly* appears in all three corpora but it is associated with three semantic preferences in CBUSS and one in each of CORDS and CBUDS. As explained before, the FS may describe a longer list of attributes of Hong Kong for making his speeches more convincing to the overseas and professional audience. *Certainly* in CORDS and CBUSS is associated with one and three semantic preferences respectively. Like *particularly*, the FS may want to provide a longer list of attributes of Hong Kong such as the current business and economic developments, cooperation between Hong Kong and the Mainland, and good governing principles for conveying the audience from different professions in CBUSS.

This chapter has summarized the semantic preferences associated with the most frequent hedges and intensifiers. The findings indicate that the most frequent hedges in CBUSS have a comparatively higher number of semantic preferences. A hedge or an intensifier in one corpus may not have the same number of semantic preferences of the same hedge or intensifier in the other corpora. One possible reason would be that in CBUSS, the possible subject list has a greater variety than the other two corpora. The most frequent intensifiers in CORDS have the highest number of semantic

preferences among the corpora. One plausible explanation would be that a greater variety of purposes might increase the number of semantic preferences. Again, an intensifier in one corpus may not have the same semantic preference of the same intensifier in other corpus because the discussion topics in the three corpora may be different. For example, *particularly* have three different semantic preferences in the individual corpus.

The findings also indicate that the FS uses intensifiers when the discussion topics are related to such as the praising for the participations or contributions of the audience or organizers, challenges of Hong Kong, positive anticipation for the future business development of Hong Kong, and so on. The FS uses hedges when the discussion topics are related to such as quantity and numbers, advice on the business directions, prediction for amount of fiscal reserves, the future introduction of policies and procedures, and so on. The FS also frequently uses thanking formulae such as *I wish you, I hope you, I am pleased, and I am very pleased* to intensify his appreciation and pleasure both in CBORD and CBUSS. Clusters such as *I believe that, we believe that, I hope that, is expected that, we expect that, I propose to, and will continue to* are frequently used by the FS to hedge his propositions. The results of the findings of this chapter have answered research question 4. The major collocations, clusters, and semantic preferences co-selected with the most frequent hedges and intensifiers have been identified. What follows, is a summary discussion of the findings.

Chapter 10 Discussion

Chapters 7 and 8 have discussed the variations in frequency and number of different types of hedge and intensifier in the three corpora. Compared with previous studies, both the frequency and the number of different types of hedge and intensifier are higher in this study. This chapter discusses the possible reasons for the variation.

10.1 Possible reasons for the differences of hedges and intensifiers compared with other studies

Table 42 below shows the comparison of frequencies of hedges and intensifiers in this study and other studies.

Table 42: Comparison of hedges and intensifiers across different studies

Category	FS's speeches	Grabe & Kaplan's 1997 study in 5 types of written texts	Hyland's 1998 study in scientific research articles	Varttala's 2001 study in scientific discourse	De Klerk's 2006 study of Xhosa spoken English	Lorenz's 1998 study of argumentative essays
Hedges	604	352	209	249	NA	NA
intensifiers	566	142	NA	NA	432	87

(All frequencies adjusted to per 10,000 words)

i. Comparison of hedges among different studies

In this study of the speeches of the FS, the overall frequency of hedges is 604 per 10,000 words. There are possible reasons for using written discourse for comparison. Firstly, the use of hedges in written discourse such as academic writing and scientific discourse, research articles, and applied linguistics articles have been extensively studied in their classifications, uses and frequencies (e.g. (Hu & Cao, 2011; Hyland, 1998a; Lewin, 2005; Varttala, 2001)). Secondly, similar studies of the use as well as frequency of hedges in spoken discourse cannot be found in literature. When the study of hedges in spoken discourse is found, they are limited to investigate the reasons in using hedges (e.g. Resche's (2004) study on Mr Greenspan's speeches) or to study a particular type of hedge (e.g. Kaltenbock's (2010) study of the phrase *I think* in a corpus of modern British English). Thirdly, although the present study is the public

speeches of a politician, they are typically written to be spoken. The processes of preparing a speech are similar to a written document, having gone through the preparing and fine-tuning processes.

With reference to Grabe and Kaplan's (1997: 164) study across five types of text, namely "professional natural science, popular natural science, newspaper editorials, annual business reports, and fiction narratives", the overall frequency of hedges is 352 per 10,000 words. Newspaper editorials have the highest frequency at 582, which is similar to the frequency of this study. Hyland's (1998c) study of academic articles and Varttala's (2001) study of scientific research and popular scientific articles have found the frequencies of 209 and 249 respectively (after the conversion from 1,000 words to 10,000 words). When compared with these studies, this study has found a relatively higher frequency. There are some possible reasons for the differences. Firstly, a broader definition of hedging is adapted in this study. One example is the inclusion of the modal auxiliary *will*. In some studies, *will* is generally not classified as a hedge as they indicate that it expresses deontic meaning not epistemic meaning. For example, Palmer (1990: 57) excludes *will* from the epistemic category because he states that the distinction between epistemic and non-epistemic is difficult. The inclusion of some instances of *will* increases the frequency of hedges in this study. The reason for the inclusion of *will* is that the distinction between a factual willingness and a tentative speculation about the future is sometimes difficult. For example, *will* has a semantic preference of "possible future development of the business between Hong Kong and the Mainland". When events refer to future, there is an element of uncertainty, as our knowledge about the future is limited. Therefore, those instances of *will*, which have an epistemic meaning or a tentative speculation about the future, are included in this study.

Secondly, different types of genre may have variations regarding the frequency of use of hedges. The three corpora of this study are public speeches given by the FS, while the studies by Hyland (1998a) and Varttala (2001) cover scientific research articles. Scientific research articles are written documents for communication between scientific writers and their peers and readers. The writers need to meet the social norms and expectations of the scientific community by providing facts and arguments to support their findings (Hyland, 2005a: 87). In this sense, directness, precision, and explicitness are the guidelines, although expressions of claims in a tentative manner

and showing deference to their peers or readers are still required (Hyland, 2005a: 90). However, in the speeches covered in this study, the discourse conventions are quite different as the communicative goals of the speeches are mainly to let the audience know the future plans for the implementation of policies and measures of the government, predictions and forecasts of the economic and business developments of Hong Kong, and so on. While predication and forecasts about the future always involve an element of uncertainty, the messages found in the speeches tend to be cautious and tentative. Below are two comments quoted from the news:

Hong Kong's dilemma is different from that in most other places: it has too much money, rather than not enough. The city has just announced a HK\$71.2 billion budget surplus for the current fiscal year, after forecasting a HK\$25.2bn deficit during last year's budget (The National news March 8, 2011).

The government predicted a year ago that it would run a deficit of \$449 million for the fiscal year through the end of March, but its most recent estimate is that it will now run a surplus of \$8.3 billion instead (The New York Times February 27, 2013).

This kind of comments has been existed for years. In view of these comments and criticisms, the FS may use a higher frequency of hedges for estimations or future predictions so that the possibility of inaccuracy might be mitigated. In addition, the speaker's frankness and acknowledgment of future uncertainty may evoke a positive response from the audience. The FS may use a greater frequency of hedges to indicate his modesty and caution in communicating with the audience and public. With these modest tones, the FS's presentations seem to be more acceptable to the audience.

Thirdly, a speech is a face-to-face communication between the speaker and audience, which is different from the conventions of written discourse. In the speeches given by the FS, usually there is a question and answer session (Q & A) after the speech. It is possible for the FS to face criticisms or challenges in the Q & A sessions for overestimation/underestimation of predication or exaggeration for the forthcoming implementation of measures and policies. The criticisms and challenges may threaten the faces of both the FS and the persons who raise the challenging

questions. In order to create a harmonious atmosphere, the use of hedges by the FS helps to ensure his messages are not too assertive and the faces are taken care of. For example, in the speech at the cocktail reception to launch the Deposit Protection Scheme at the office of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority on September 25, 2006, the FS said:

“*I believe* all depositors in Hong Kong are glad to see the Scheme getting off the ground today”.

The launch of the Deposit Protection Scheme was a controversial issue. The majority of the depositors agreed with the scheme but not the banks since it would increase their operational cost. Many bankers were invited to the reception. The frequent use of *I believe* is concerned with the interpersonal relationship between the FS and the bankers and the audience as well as hedging the challenging questions raised by the audience.

Fourthly, one of the common communicative functions of the three types of speech in this study is to share information about the current and future economic and business developments in Hong Kong. Within the conventions generally followed in such speeches, there is a desire to present statistical data to support the predictions. The audience regards the data as factual and true as the FS, a senior government official in Hong Kong, provides the information. However, in this setting, the audience may merely look for the general trends or directions of the future predictions. Detailed numerical figures may not be required by the audience for validation of the information. As a result, the frequency of use of indefinite degree or indefinite frequency hedges, such as *some*, *about*, and *around* is high when presenting statistical data. For example, *some* (36.55 per 10,000 words) and *about* (21.32 per 10,000 words) are the two most frequent adverbial hedges used by the FS. In addition, as stated above, the audience may not be interested in details of the statistical data, the greater use of indefinite degree or indefinite frequency hedges may help the FS to tailor his utterances in such a way that the right amount of information is presented without flouting Grice's (1975) maxim of quantity. Furthermore, while precision and directness are the main guidelines for writing scientific articles (Hyland, 1994: 92),

the FS may not have the exact details of the statistical data when preparing a speech. The greater use of indefinite degree and indefinite frequency items is possible to hedge the figures presented, allowing the FS to follow Grice's (1975) maxim of quality, maintaining a certain degree of uncertainty while preserving the honesty of his stance (Channell, 1994) as a senior government official.

Finally, the higher use of the modal *would* (52.56) and speculative verbs such as *propose* (16.45), *believe* (16.73), *expect* (21.84), *hope* (17.13), and *wish* (13.31) per 10,000 words was found. *Would* is often co-selected with a semantic preference of "appreciation for the participation in the activities". The FS is the honourable guest in CORDS and CBUSS. It is natural for him to use a greater frequency of formulaic expressions such as *I would like to extend very warm welcome* and *we would like to pay tribute* to indicate his appreciation to the audience, awardees, and organizers. These thanking formulae are not necessary in scientific written discourse. Performative hedges are found more commonly in spoken discourses than written discourses. It is found that these performative hedged items are frequently used by the FS to express either his tentativeness or the accuracy of the information put forth. The collocates such as *I believe*, *we expect*, and *I propose* enable the FS to limit the scope of his assertions.

ii. Comparison of intensifiers across different studies

As previously stated, no similar study of intensifiers in public speech discourse is found in extant literature. Other studies are limited to a particular intensifier (Giuliana, 2008), or a number of intensifiers (Bauer & Bauer, 2002) or a particular type of intensifier such as *ly*-adverbs (Lorenz, 1998, 1999). Therefore, Grabe and Kaplan's (1997), Lorenz's (1998) and de Klerk's (2006) studies are used for comparison. Although these studies are not based on public speeches, the frequency of intensifiers normalized to per 10,000 words is used for comparison. This study shows a relatively higher frequency when compared with these studies. One possible explanation for the difference is simply the data. The focal area of Grabe and Kaplan's (1997) and Lorenz's (1998) studies are written texts. The predominance of factual language rather than the evaluative stance of the writers may be seen in these studies. In addition, Lorenz's (1998) study is of teenagers and university students, covering their argumentative essays. However, this study is a public speaking situation where a

face-to-face encounter with the audience is required. A higher degree of attention to face may be needed.

Myers' (1989) study of scientific articles indicates that intensifiers can be used as positive politeness devices to gain common group membership. But the conventions and expectations of a speech setting may mean that the speaker redresses positive face in order to get reciprocal rights and obligations from the audience (Chilton, 1990). It is possible for the speaker to try to intensify the favourable aspects and tone down the unfavourable aspects of the matters addressed. Therefore, in addition to gaining common group membership, the use of other positive politeness strategies through the application of intensifying features can enable the FS to achieve a desirable interpersonal effect with the audience. Therefore, there are possible reasons for the FS to use a higher frequency of intensifiers in his speeches.

Firstly, the speaker takes notice of the hearer (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 103), for example, "So, *I would also like to thank all participating companies* for your generous donations. *I sincerely* hope the business community will continue with your efforts, not only in donations for charity work..." (Speech at the Stock Code Balloting for Charity Scheme Cocktail Reception in Oct 2005). The use of "*thank all participating companies for your generous donations*" is to intensify his acknowledgment of the generous donations made by the companies of the audience. The use of "*I sincerely*" is to intensify his wish that the hearers would continue to donate. Secondly, the FS exaggerates the message (P. Brown & S. Levinson, 1987: 104), for example, "I would also like to extend a *very, very* warm welcome to our overseas buyers here today" (Speech at the Opening Ceremony of the Hong Kong Watch & Clock Fair in September 2003). The FS uses *very* twice to impart a superlative strength and intensify his appreciation that many overseas buyers are in the fair. Thirdly, the FS intensifies interest to hearer (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 106), for example, "Upon taking up office as Financial Secretary, I set myself the objective of reviving Hong Kong's economy. *I am absolutely delighted* to see that our economy has now *improved so handsomely*". (Speech given at the 2007-2008 budget speech). The use of *absolutely* and *improved so handsomely* is to emphasize a high degree of the improvement for the interest of the hearer. Fourthly, it is the nature of CORDS and CBUSS to intensify favourable things such as generous charitable donations, participation of the audience in the fair, outstanding performance of the winners,

improvements in the economy or positive aspects of Hong Kong's business environment. The frequent use of formulaic expressions is seen in the speeches such as *I would also like to extend a very, very warm welcome, I am absolutely delighted* and so on. Lastly, when this study is compared with de Klerk's (2006), the frequency difference is narrowed. One possible reason is that both studies are of spoken discourse. A higher frequency of use of intensifiers may be used to gain common ground interest or increase solidarity between interlocutors these two spoken discourses.

In addition, compound hedges and intensifiers are counted in this study. This may inflate the overall frequency since the frequencies of the individual items of the compound hedges and intensifiers are also counted according to their functions. Other studies only provide the overall frequency of the hedges and intensifiers, but no frequency data for compound items are mentioned. Therefore, the comparison between this study and other studies may not always on an equal footing.

10.2 Possible reasons for the frequency variation of hedges and intensifiers among the corpora

The communicative purposes of the three types of speech are different. In each type of the speech, the FS may also offer some views on Hong Kong's economic and financial matters such as foreseeable changes of policies and measures, economic forecasts, future business developments between Hong Kong and Mainland China. Some issues are critical and controversial. Some are just for information only.

As stated in Chapter 7, there are frequency variations in the use of hedges among the three corpora. CBUDS has the highest frequency followed by CBUSS and CORDS. The variations may be due to different degree of importance, conventions and expectations of the audience in different types of event.

One of the functions of hedges is the expression of caution. It is used as a strategy that enables speakers to maintain a certain degree of ambiguity embedded in their pronouncements. The use of hedges helps speakers to indicate that what is said is one of the possible outcomes or is only the tentative nature of a phenomenon. There have been many instances when the budget forecasts have been criticised in Hong Kong when critics say the forecasts are inaccurate. The criticisms have been widely

discussed in the media and by the public. When facing such claims and in order to protect himself against the challenges of inaccurate predictions, the FS may use a higher frequency of hedges in CBUDS to signal the figures presented to the Legislative Councillors are only estimates.

Another possible reason for the higher frequency of hedges would be that the endorsement of the budget proposal from the Legislative Councillors is paramount to the FS as it may be a loss of face for him because it may lead to a standstill in the government's operations if the budget proposal is rejected. As stated in the literature review in Chapter 2, social distance (D), relative power (P) and a value indicating the absolute ranking of imposition in a particular culture (R) are the three dimensions attributing to the degree of seriousness of a FTA (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 76). The degree of weightiness of the FTA_x may change; depending on other situational factors that comprise the values for P, D, and R (ibid.: 79). For example, the role-set of a manager in an organization setting has an asymmetrical higher power (P) than his employee (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 78). "Apologies and confessions are threats to the speaker's face, and advice and orders are threats to the hearer's face" (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 76). Brown and Levinson (ibid.: 79) also indicate that "momentary weaknesses in bargaining power, strength of character, or alliances" are important factors for calculating the values of P, D, and R, which are context-dependent (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 78).

In a budget speech setting, the Legislative Councillors have higher power than the FS as their approval of the budget is necessary. If the rejection of the budget proposal is caused by the lack of information, over/underestimation of the forecasts, the inappropriateness of using assertive or demanding attitudes in the speeches which is irritating, it would be a face-threat for the FS regardless of the closeness of social distance or the asymmetric higher power between the FS and councillors in other social or official interactions. In such cases, the imposition of the budget may lead the FS to consider using a higher frequency of hedges to express pragmatic politeness for indicating his sincere request for acceptance from the councillors. In this sense, it would be easier for the FS to offer the budget proposal to the councillors for acceptance if more hedges are used to indicate modesty or provide information with only a certain degree of precision or exactitude. Since all predictions in a budget are bound to have an element of uncertainty, the general conventions are to reduce the

definiteness or exactitude of the data. The FS may use a higher frequency of hedges to cover the risk of being challenged when the issues are controversial or the accuracy of the forecasts is uncertain.

In addition, the FS may announce some major financial measures or future policy changes in the speeches. The announcements might be considered crucial to the financial markets. For example, the use of *propose* in CBUDS is associated with phrases such as *to provide one additional month of standard rate CSSA payments*, *to waive rates for their first two quarters*, *to waive 50 percent of salaries tax*, and *to raise the duty-free quantity of alcoholic beverages that Hong Kong residents may bring back*. These co-selections are associated with a semantic preference of “suggestions for the introduction of business plans and policies and measures”. In this respect, the FS might not have fully assessed the responses from the financial markets before the changes are announced. Instead of using the tone “I will introduce” which is more assertive, the FS uses a higher frequency of tentative verbs such as *propose* to tone down the certainty in order to avoid immediate surprise or shock in the markets.

CBUSS are speeches delivered in business luncheon meetings or overseas business promotion meetings. The findings indicate that the relative frequency of hedges in CBUSS is 219.56 per 10,000 words, with a frequency of 22.59, lower than CBUDS. The main communicative purpose in CBUSS is in fact a public relation strategy intended to create a favourable image for Hong Kong business environment among various audiences such as personal or institutional investors, stakeholders, overseas governments and media. In order to build credibility, impart confidence and convince investors to pursue sound investment opportunities in Hong Kong, the expectations and discourse conventions of the messages are usually cautious, and relevant for creating a sincere interpersonal relationship with the audience. However, the degree of caution of the utterances may not as high as those in CBUDS.

A closer look at the topics discussed in CBUSS indicates that they usually focus on the current economic developments in Hong Kong and the upcoming implementation of policies and measures. From a forward-looking perspective, the discussions predominantly emphasize the favourable business opportunities in Hong Kong and Mainland China in the coming months or years as well as the potential risks emerging in the financial markets. In view of the public profile of the FS, good social interaction with the audience is important to him. In addition, the matters discussed in

the speeches are for information only although the settings of CBUSS are formal and the issues discussed are closely watched not only by the audience present but also by the public and other specific groups. Therefore it is natural for the FS to focus more on what Hyland (1998a: 177) terms “reader-oriented hedges”, addressing the interpersonal relationship with the audience rather than avoiding commitment or challenge. For example, the frequency of *hope* is 6.25 per 10,000 words in CBUSS which is higher than the frequency in CBUDS (5.53). *Hope* in CBUSS is associated with phrases such as *hope that you have chance to visit Hong Kong*; *hope that you have a chance to enjoy*, and *all the best at this festive season*. In this sense, *hope* has a semantic preference of “expression of gratitude” to the audience for maintaining good social relationship with them. Therefore, it is possible that less frequent writer-oriented hedges are required in CBUSS.

In addition, there may not be too many estimations or approximations of figures in CBUSS when compared with CBUDS. For example, the frequency of approximate adverbs in CBUSS is 27.49 per 10,000 words whereas in CBUDS it is 36.86. The forecasts in budget speeches involve many future predictions. The expectations of the audience in CBUSS may just be for high-level business information such as the general economic trends in Hong Kong, progress reports on project development, and future business directions of the government. It is possible that this information can also arouse the attention of the audience. In this sense, approximation hedges in CBUSS may not be as frequent as in CBUDS. Finally, the information in CBUSS is for reference only and there is no intention on part of the FS to appeal for acceptance from the audience like in CBUDS, which are high stakes communication. Some information provided may not necessarily require hedging, it may rather be with a higher degree of precision or clarity and therefore a fewer hedges are found in CBUSS.

Compared with CBUDS and CBUSS, CORDS has the fewest hedges with a frequency of 142.08 per 10,000 words. These speeches are delivered at events like inaugural ceremony of a symposium or business programme, or presentation of awards by an institution. The focus of the speeches usually highlights the success of the programmes or the participants receiving the awards. The expectations and discourse conventions are merely straight and direct, mentioning the positive aspects of the events. Although current and future business and economic developments in

Hong Kong may also be slightly touched, they are only in the form of supplementary information if the FS considers them worth mentioning in the speeches. In these situations, fewer hedges are enough to indicate modest expressions. Therefore, the average frequency of hedges is the lowest among the three corpora.

One possible reason why still there are hedges in CORDS is that they can create relevance in context i.e. what Halliday & Hasan (1989: 45) call “what is said is relevant and relates to context”. In a CORDS setting, a high degree of exactness or accuracy may not be necessary as the audience may only expect to receive the information related to the specific purpose of the event. For example, in the speech given at the open ceremony of the “3rd Hong Kong Tourism Symposium: Quality and Diversity”, the FS said “*Some* 1 million people have received individual visits endorsement, and many more are applying for them every day”. The use of the indefinite frequency hedge *some* can help him to present the information with a certain degree of precision or exactitude without flouting the maxims of quality and quantity. In this sense, hedges are used by the FS in conformity with the conventions of CORDS. In another speech at the 10th Anniversary of the Kellogg-HKUST EMBA programmes on May 26 2007, the FS said, “Within this budget, *some* HKD11 billion or 20%, is set aside for higher education alone”. The use of *some* allows the FS to withhold deliberately the exact amount, which is not needed in this context, as the purpose of the speech is to celebrate the success of the EMBA programme.

As explained in the previous section, the purposes of the three types of speech in the corpora are different and so the frequency of use of intensifiers in the three corpora is different. The quantitative results indicate that CORDS has the highest frequency of 250.06 followed by CBUSS and CBUDS with a frequency of 202.96 and 113.36 per 10,000 words respectively.

One of the possible explanations for why CORDS has the highest frequency of intensifiers is that its speeches are ceremonial in nature. The organizer of the event selects the audience for the specific purposes. The audience may only be interested to hear the positive aspects related to the event, a situation celebrating and toasting the success of the programme. In this sense, the FS, as the honourable guest, may use intensifiers in order to claim common ground interest with the audience. The common ground interest, i.e. congratulating the success of the programme is usually

“undisputed, uncontroversial and taken for granted” (van Dijk, 2002: 218). The higher frequency of use of intensifiers may help the FS to add force to his messages, praising the success of the programmes, congratulating the receivers of the awards, and welcoming the participants.

The purposes of CBUSS and CBUDS are different. CBUSS are mainly speeches to update interested parties on the latest business and economic developments in Hong Kong and CBUDS are budget speeches. It is a conventional ritual to pay attention to the positive face of the audience and the Legislative Councillors in order to create good relationships with the audience in CBUSS and CBUDS. Assertive or conclusive remarks, commands, requests, promises and proclamations of policies and measures may create face threats to the FS, the councillors as well as the wider audience. In order to avoid face threats, a balanced use of intensifiers and hedges is possible in CBUSS and CBUDS. Hedges are used to play down the impositions on the hearers or avoid challenge or rejection. Intensifiers are used when the FS wants to highlight some favourable economic developments in Hong Kong or the importance of the forthcoming policies and measures.

One possible reason why the frequency of intensifiers in CBUDS is lower than CBUSS is that there is an impending need to obtain endorsement of the budget proposals from the councillors that it will be a big threat to his face if the budget is not approved. The FS may use a higher frequency of hedges to make his claims more cautious and modest rather than using a higher frequency of intensifiers to emphasize his propositions. Nevertheless, a lower frequency of intensifiers might be appropriate because it would give an impression that the FS is not too demanding or dogmatic. In this sense, a lower frequency of use of intensifiers to assert his claim may strategically evoke cooperation from the councillors to endorse the budget proposal. Such presentation may lead more tolerance on the councillors’ part towards the FS’s assertive statements.

10.3 Possible reasons for the use of different categories of hedges and intensifiers in the corpora

The list of categories for the hedges in Table 12 shows some uniformity. The rankings of modals, verbs, adverbs, and phrasal items are first, second, third, and seventh respectively across the three corpora. This finding suggests that the FS is

consistent in the use of these four categories of hedges across the three contexts of communication. Minor differences occur among the rankings of adjectives, nouns and syntactic items. In both CORDS and CBUDS, nouns and adjectives rank fourth and fifth, but nouns and adjectives rank fifth and sixth in CBUSS. Syntactic items rank sixth in both CORDS and CBUDS, but rank fourth in CBUSS. In fact, the overall ranking of the seven types of hedge among the three corpora shows a large degree of similarity. One possible explanation for the similarity is that all speeches in the three corpora are given by the same FS although the typical purposes of the three types of speech are different. The FS is repeatedly invited to give similar types of speeches every year. The topics in each type of speech are often similar. For example, in CORDS, they relate to opening ceremonies and presentation of awards. Business trends and recent economic developments are the topics commonly discussed in CBUSS. CBUDS is restricted to the presentation of budget proposals. In these circumstances, some hedges and intensifiers, multi-word lexical strings or frames are formed in the mind of the FS or ghost-writers. When preparing or giving a similar kind of monologue speech, the FS may pull these standard hedges and intensifiers, collocations, and phrasal items available from their memory for the reduction of planning time and achievement of hedging and intensification intentions.

Modal auxiliaries are the most frequent category, representing an average of 37.84% across the three corpora. As mentioned in the literature review in Chapter 2, the notion of modality is closely associated with hedging (Hyland, 1998a; Palmer, 1990) and modal auxiliaries are often regarded as one of the central elements in the system of modality and so the main function of using modal auxiliaries is to hedge. The findings of this study are, however, different from Hyland's (1998a: 104) study where, modal auxiliaries constitute 19.4% across the five lexical categories of hedging. The inclusion of *will* which accounts for 16.43% on the total of hedges in this study but only accounts for 2.3% in Hyland's (1998a) study. *Will* ranks first in CBUSS and CBUDS and second in CORDS. However, the result of this study is not altogether different when compared with Holmes' (1988a) findings on the academic writing sections in the Brown corpus and the informal and semi-formal spoken sections in the LOB corpus. She finds that modal auxiliaries are the most frequent of the five lexical categories, constituting 36.8% and 42.4% in the 2 corpora. She remarks that *will* has a hedging meaning when making future predictions.

Epistemic verbs are the second most frequent hedge in this study. Epistemic verbs represent a means of displaying “the subjectivity of the epistemic source and are generally used to hedge either commitment or assertiveness” (Hyland, 1998a: 119). “Speculative, deductive, quotative and sensory” are the four ways that a speaker can easily “express the non-factual status” of a proposition (Palmer, 1986: 51). Speculative verbs such as *expect*, *hope*, *believe*, and *propose* are the most common items used by the FS to express tentative judgments and speculation. They are usually associated with the discussion topics such as “quantity and size of the fiscal reserves, government expenditure and revenue”, “expectation for materialization of the activities”, “expressing optimistic confidence on the matters discussed”, “suggestions for the introduction of business plans or policies or measures” and so on. As stated, many unpredictable elements affect the accuracy of the predictions or implementation of policies and measures. For example, no one can guarantee the exact quantity and size of fiscal reserves, or successful implementation of the proposed policies and measures or the global business developments in the future because they all involve uncertainty, which some are uncontrollable. The higher frequency of use of speculative verbs allows the FS to self-protect himself by giving the impression that the predictions are based on reasoning without much validated information to support. It also helps the FS to avoid making assertions, which may embarrass him if conflicting evidence or contradictory findings arise later.

Epistemic adverbs rank third across the three corpora. Approximate adverbs such as *some*, *about*, *nearly* are the most common items used by the FS to express estimations of the figures of the propositions. They are usually associated with the semantic preference of “quantity, amount or numbers” when the FS discusses the predicted amounts of fiscal reserves, surplus, deficits, and public expenditure in the budgets. By approximating the amounts, the FS might be able to avoid the possibility of being challenged for overestimating or underestimating of the fiscal reserves and exaggerating the deficit, surplus or public expenditure. Another possible reason is that when giving the speech, the FS may not have the exact figures on hands. The use of approximate adverbs can help the FS to apply the maxim of quantity to guide the audience on receiving the information with an acceptable degree of exactitude.

The frequency of noun hedges ranks fourth in both CORDS and CBUDS and fifth in CBUSS out of the seven types of hedge. Nouns of tentative likelihood such as

potential and tentative cognition nouns such as *estimates* are commonly used and associated with the discussion topics such as “the likelihood of the growth and developments of the matters mentioned” and “a rough calculation of an amount”. These noun hedges have the meaning of likelihood and assumption. It helps the FS to express his tentative constructs by signalling that what is said conveys possible developments or only is referring to his thought of belief.

Adjectives rank fifth in both CORDS and CBUDS and sixth in CBUSS. Probability adjectives such as *possible* and *proposed* are the most common items, which are used to reduce the certainty of the utterances. They only appear in CBUSS and CBUDS. *Possible* typically has the semantic preference of “likelihood of the introduction of measures and policies”. *Proposed* mostly has a semantic preference of “intention on the introduction of new policies and measures”. By using these adjectives, the FS indicates the measures and policies discussed in CBUSS and CBUDS are not yet finalized. They may be at consultation stage where the government is collecting opinions from stakeholders. The use of these adjective hedges allows the FS to signal that the policies and measures proposed can offer possible solutions to the existing problems, but no firm introduction has been made.

The frequencies of syntactic hedges and phrasal items rank sixth and seventh in both CORDS and CBUDS and rank fourth and seventh in CBUSS. Clausal items are found to be the most common item in the syntactic hedge category. The hedging effect of clausal items is illustrated in an entire sentence or a specific part of a sentence. They are mainly used when the FS wants to offer clear and definite explanations based on his limited knowledge (e.g. *I must admit that I am a true layman*), or to mitigate FTAs when disagreement is perceived with the audience (e.g. *I know that this is of great concern to the business community*). Most of phrasal items such as *most of*, *up to* are items closely linked to an approximation in quantity or the information presented is tentative and inconclusive. One possible reason for the lower use of syntactic hedges and phrasal items is that these two categories can be replaced by approximate adverbs and adjectives which are hedges for approximation in quantity and probability adverbs and adjectives which are hedges linked to tentative and non-conclusive. The lower frequency of use of both items are in line with the Hyland’s (1998a) finding that hedging is commonly realized by means lexical hedges.

When looking at the total frequency of each category of the five types of intensifier, it is found that the closed-class intensifiers are the most frequent category and syntactic intensifiers are the least frequent category. The total frequencies of the five types of intensifier in descending order are closed class items (204.64), adjective intensifiers (101.10), *ly*-intensifiers (99.75) and phrasal intensifiers (95.74), and syntactic intensifiers (65.17). In fact, the total frequencies of adjective items, *ly*-intensifiers, and phrasal intensifiers are similar in the three corpora.

Closed-class intensifiers constitute 36.13%, which is the highest out of the five categories. This higher percentage is because some stylistic intensification items such as *very*, *much* are included in this category and they are the two items most frequently used by the FS. *Very* is widely used to intensify adjectives, adverbs (e.g. *many*, *few*, *much*), superlatives (e.g. *best*, *latest*), and nouns (e.g. *end*). *Much* is frequently combined with participial adjectives such as *much needed* and other forms such as *very much*, *so much*, *too much* (Quirk et al., 1985: 591). The frequent use of the combination of *very* + *much* is that it is one of the commonest thanking formulae which can be used at the beginning or end of speeches. *Most* is another frequently used item in the three corpora and it is used in the form of superlatives. It can invite the audience to draw inferences to a highest degree. *Most* has a semantic preference of “comparison on the importance among places”. In order to highlight the possible aspects that are beyond the expectation of the audience, the FS often uses *most* to intensify the greatest advantages of Hong Kong in doing business when compared with other South East Asian countries because Hong Kong has the support from Mainland China.

Adjectives intensifiers constitute 17.85%. *Major*, *pleased*, and *significant* have the highest frequencies. *Major* is a common attributive adjective (Biber et al., 1999) and therefore it appears in all three corpora. It is also associated with the discussion topic of “emphasis on high degree of importance of a place or industry” in the three corpora. In many speeches, the FS wants to intensify the importance of either Hong Kong as one of the financial centres in the world or the financial industry in Hong Kong. The use of *major* and the associated co-text can further reinforce the important status of Hong Kong for drawing attention to the audience. *Pleased* appears more frequently in CORDS. *Pleased* has the semantic preferences of “compliment for the favourable development of the events”, and “expressing gratitude in officiating the

opening of the event” in CORDS. It is used as a formulaic expression when the FS congratulates the success of the events or indicates his pleasure in joining the events. *Pleased* does not frequently appear in CBUSS and CBUDS because they do not need so many formulaic expressions. *Significant* appears more frequently in CBUSS and it has the semantic preference of “high degree of economic or financial contribution or impact” (e.g. *significant advancement*, *significant impact*, and *significant pressure*). The FS is usually asked to up-date the latest economic and financial developments in Hong Kong and therefore he frequently uses *significant*, on the one hand, to express his favourable view towards the major projects being launched for promoting the financial image of Hong Kong in his overseas speeches. For example, in the speech given to the Federation of Hong Kong Industries on 22nd Aug 2003, the FS said, “The signing of Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) also breathes new life to our industrial sector, which plays a *significant* role in our economy”. On the other hand, he uses *significant* to express high degree of impact of the economic challenges that Hong Kong faces.

Ly-intensifiers constitute 17.61% of the five categories. *Particularly*, *certainly*, and *highly* are the most frequent ones in the three corpora and they have the highest frequencies in CBUSS. In fact, the business cooperation between Hong Kong and Guangdong has significantly increased since the handover in 1997. The frequent use of *particularly* and *certainly* can help the FS to emphasize the importance of the Pearl River Delta and Guangdong Province to Hong Kong when compared with other Asian Pacific countries. *Highly* is associated with a semantic preference of “human resources” and frequently appears in CORDS. One of the purposes of CORDS is to present awards to those persons who have outstanding performances in a competition or contributions to a particular industry. The use of *highly* helps the FS to emphasize a higher degree of positive evaluation of human resources in contributing to outstanding performances of the awardees and the success of Hong Kong.

Phrasal intensifiers comprise 16.90% and *more than*, and *very much* have the highest frequencies. Among the three corpora, they appear more frequently in CORDS. *More than* is used for comparative purposes and has the meaning of increasing (Lorenz, 1999). One possible explanation for the higher use of *more than* in CORDS is that when heightening the achievements of the awardees, institutions, or projects in the speeches, the FS may make comparisons with previous similar situations. The use

of *more than* can help the FS to invite the audience to draw inferences to the higher achievements of the matters under discussion when compared with the previous ones. For example, in the Australian Business Awards 2004 Gala Dinner dated 15th Oct, the FS said, “Our bilateral trade with Australia is showing strong growth and was worth *more than* \$17 billion...”. The use of *more than*, as a comparative expression, intensifies the amount business growth between Hong Kong and Australia when compared with previous periods. The collocation of *thank + very + much* is a formulaic expression helping the FS to express his appreciation in thanking the audience in joining the events. The FS is also an honourable guest in CBUSS, this formulaic expression is also appeared frequently in CBUSS.

Syntactic intensifiers constitute 11.51%, which is the lowest among the five categories. The FS may not habitually use syntactic intensifiers to intensify his claims. Compound intensifiers and the strong modal *will* have the highest frequencies in this category. *Will* can express a viewpoint more assertively. *Will* is used predominantly in CBUDS when compared with the other two corpora. One possible explanation is that when presenting the budget proposals in the Legislative Council, the FS must express confidence in the completion of projects. The use of the assertive *will* can help the FS to convey his strong certainty that the completion times of the projects are more definite because they are based on reasonable judgments of the current situation rather than guesswork. Compound intensifiers have a higher frequency in CBUSS when compared with the other two corpora. In the CBUSS settings, for arousing the interest of the audience, the frequent use of compound intensifiers, on the one hand, helps the FS to add strength to intensify the challenges Hong Kong is facing. On the other hand, they help to reinforce the importance of the governing principles for tackling the challenges. For example, at a luncheon speech given to the Federation of Hong Kong Industries on 22nd Aug 2003, the FS said “...unprecedented challenges we are facing – economic restraints, high unemployment, fiscal deficit and deflation. These four are *very, very big questions and very, very challenging issues*”.

This chapter has made three comparisons: 1) between the corpora of this study and other previous studies; 2) among the three corpora; 3) among the seven types of hedge and five types of intensifier in the three corpora. Some possible reasons

underlying the uses and variations are also discussed. The next chapter covers the conclusions of this study.

Chapter 11 Conclusions

11.1 Summary of the study

The aim of this study was twofold: (1) to examine the types, frequencies and functions of the hedges and intensifiers used by a FS in Hong Kong; (2) to examine collocations, clusters and semantic preferences associated with the hedges and intensifiers. It has been one of the professional duties of the author of this study to study the speeches of the FS in Hong Kong for advising the management of his company about the likely introduction of the government's measures and policies. It was found that the FS's speeches consist of a number of hedges and intensifiers. The author believes that it is worthwhile to study the use of these items in a public speech setting. The data were collected from all the public speeches given by the FS throughout the period 2003-2007. The speeches were grouped into three corpora; ordinary speeches (CORDS), business speeches (CBUSS), and budget speeches (CBUDS). The taxonomies of the hedges and intensifiers are mainly based on and adapted from other studies (e.g. Crompton, 1997; Hyland, 1998a; Lorenz, 1999; Quirk et al., 1985; Sinclair, 1990; Varttala, 2001). Quantitative and qualitative analyses were carried out for each category of the hedges and intensifiers to find out their frequencies, and contexts of use. In addition, the collocates, clusters, and semantic preferences associated with the most frequent hedges and intensifiers were examined.

11.2 Summary of the results

This section summarizes the major findings in relation to the four research questions.

11.2.1 What are the relative frequencies of hedges and intensifiers

The results indicate that the FS uses a higher frequency of hedges in CBUDS (242.15) per 10,000 words and fewer hedges in CBUSS (219.56) and CORDS (142.08). Compared to hedges, the FS uses a greater frequency of intensifiers in CORDS (250.06) and fewer intensifiers in CBUSS (202.96) and CBUDS (113.36). In other words, the macro context determines the relative frequencies of both hedges and

intensifiers. The reasons are that CBUDS is comprised of speeches that require the FS to submit predictions and proposals. A higher frequency of hedges allows the FS to protect himself from challenges when the predictions and proposals are found inaccurate at a later stage or he genuinely does not know exactly what will happen in the future and so he hedges. CBUDS has a lower frequency of intensifiers because this corpus does not contain many expressions of gratitude or appreciation of the participation. The communicative purpose of CBUSS is to update the audience on economic and financial developments in Hong Kong. These speeches, which contain high-level business information in the contexts, do not require so many hedges and intensifiers. In CORDS, a higher use of hedges is not necessary because the speeches are largely ceremonial in nature and the audience is perceived to be only interested in the specific purpose of the events. A higher use of intensifiers is used in these speeches to help the FS to express gratitude, good wishes or to praise the events.

11.2.2 What are the relative frequencies of hedges and intensifiers compared with HKFSC

The findings show that CORDS, when compared with HKFSC, has a lower frequency of non-specific items, approximators, compromisers, and diminishers. A lower use of compromisers and diminishers is seen in CBUSS. In CBUDS, a lower frequency of use of non-specific items, boosters, compromisers, diminishers, minimizers, and exclusivizers/particularizers is seen. CBUDS has a higher use of approximators. When the three corpora are combined and compared with the HKFSC, the use of non-specific items, boosters⁵⁴, compromisers, diminishers, minimizers and exclusivizers/particularizers are also found to be significantly different. The FS uses these items less frequently than speakers do in the HKFSC. The differences in the sub-categories of maximizers and approximators are not significant. One plausible reason may be that the setting of some speeches in HKFSC is more formal because they

⁵⁴ Boosters are one of the sub-categories under the tagset of A13 (Degree) in the semantic field of General and Abstracts Terms, which is one of the twenty one semantic fields in Wmatrix. A13 consists of non-specific items, maximizers, boosters, approximators, compromisers, diminishers and minimizers.

are the official reports of the companies' performance, business strategies, and plans presented by the senior officers of the companies to the stakeholders. The officers may tend to use more intensifiers to stress the positive aspects of the matters reported in the speeches. One possible reason for using a higher frequency of hedges (compromisers, diminishers, and minimizers) in HKFSC is that, when presenting the future forecasts or plans, the utterances of the officers may be more modest and cautious than the FS for avoiding possible challenges of overestimation and exaggeration of the company's plans by the stakeholders. The inadequate description of their business plans may affect the confidence of the stakeholders of their companies. In this sense, it may have an impact on the share prices of the companies.

11.2.3 What are the variations in the forms of hedges and intensifiers

The findings indicate that the FS uses a greater variety of hedges in CBUSS and a narrower range in CBUDS and CORDS. One hundred and fifty different hedging devices are used in the three corpora. CBUSS has 127 different devices. CBUDS and CORDS have 95 and 79 different devices respectively. Modal auxiliaries are the most frequent category, with a total frequency of 224.99 per 10,000 words. Phrasal items are the least frequent category with a total frequency of 14.80 per 10,000 words. The main motivations for using hedges are informational (expressing tentative or general views on the matters under discussion), positive politeness (showing solidarity), negative politeness (self-protection or being non-committal). When examining the five types of intensifier, CORDS, CBUSS and CBUDS have different devices of 104, 119 and 99 respectively. Totally one hundred and forty five different devices are used. It is found the closed-class intensifiers are the most frequent category and syntactic intensifiers are the least frequent category, at 204.64 and 65.17 per 10,000 words respectively. The FS often uses intensifiers to express appreciation and signal his deep involvement in the events he is participating, and to indicate certainty of the positive aspects, and emphasize the importance of the propositions mentioned in the speeches.

11.2.4 What are the major collocates, clusters and semantic preferences of the most frequency lexical hedges and intensifiers

The findings from the hedges indicate that they are co-selected with 17, 22, and 21 semantic preferences in CORDS, CBUSS, and CBUDS respectively. This indicates

that differences are seen. The analysis of the semantic preferences indicates that the FS uses hedges when the discussion topics are related to such as expressions of gratitude, the quantity and size of fiscal reserves, proposals for the introduction of policies and measures, desires for the implementation of business plans and measures, the approximation of the amount of money, tentative predictions for the developments between Hong Kong and Mainland China, and advice on the directions of business strategies. The analysis of the intensifiers indicates that they are associated with 17, 15 and 11 semantic preferences respectively in the three corpora and it could be agreed that a greater difference is seen. The analysis of the semantic preferences indicates that the FS uses intensifiers when the discussion topics are related to such as complimenting for the success of the events, appreciating for the participation of the events, emphasis on the high degree of importance or size of business projects, challenges, the importance of human resources, and positive anticipation for future business developments. Some collocates and clusters are used by the FS. Details of the collocates, clusters and semantic preferences of each frequent hedge and intensifier are exemplified in Chapter 9.

11.3 Significance of the study

This study fills a gap in the study of hedges and intensifiers in spoken discourse. Previous studies of both hedges and intensifiers have focused on academic writing or casual conversations. In addition, many previous studies have either studied hedges or intensifiers whereas this study looks at both and also the macro and micro contexts in which they are most likely to occur. Researchers have suggested that hedges can generally be used for tentative, cautious, and deferential functions (Hyland, 2005a; Varttala, 2001). Intensifiers can commonly be applied for emphasizing the positive and important aspects of the claims (Hyland, 2005a; Maat, 2007). It is known that different language communities may have their own discourse conventions. This study explores the use of both hedges and intensifiers in public speeches given by a senior government official. Therefore, this study may be useful for researchers and practitioners in business and professional settings to increase their understanding of different types of hedge and intensifier and apply them in their speeches.

This study takes a broader approach to use the concept of co-selections in order to examine the semantic preferences of the hedges and intensifiers. The analysis of

collocations and clusters helps to provide a list of frequent multi-word lexical strings that can be used in the context of hedging or intensification in speech settings. The analysis of semantic preferences reveals the discussion topics which are related to the use of hedges and intensifiers. Therefore, presenting the contextual conditions for the use of hedges and intensifiers has deepened our understanding and may help practitioners to increase their degree of awareness of their use.

11.4 Limitations of the study and suggestions for further research

The present study has some limitations. Firstly, the sample size of this study is limited and all the speeches were delivered by a non-native English speaker. The written texts of the speeches were downloaded from the Hong Kong Government website. However, the audio-visual materials of the speeches were not available. With these limitations, generalizations of the phenomenon were attenuated to some extent since prosodic or kinesic means such as the raising of the eyebrow, the earnest frown, hesitations of the speakers can be an indication of tentativeness or intensification (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Further research on the use of hedges and intensifiers by prosodic means such as intonation, and stress would be worthwhile to see whether more hedges or intensifiers can be found.

Secondly, the focus of this study is on the identification of hedges and intensifiers based on contextual and pragmatic analysis. Although qualitative examination has been done on each item to ensure they have the function of hedging or intensification, errors still cannot be avoided, as different interpretations of certain instances are possible. In order to ensure the accuracy of the interpretation, the input from the speaker is necessary. In this study, a request to arrange a meeting with the FS for further clarification of some indeterminate cases or reasons behind using hedges or intensifiers was sent to the Financial Secretary's Office. However, the request was declined. In the design stage of future studies, it is suggested that consent should be obtained from the speaker to provide this additional information for the study.

Thirdly, when comparing the findings of this study with those of other studies, the nature of the data is problematic, i.e. written academic materials versus public speeches. The academic data may have a larger proportion of the descriptions of the analysis and findings rather than on the future directions of the research. Hence, these texts are present-oriented texts, which may lead to a higher frequency of use of the

present tense. Conversely, one common feature of the speeches in this study is that they are predominantly forward-looking in nature. Hence, a higher frequency of future tense is used, such as the use of *will* in the future-oriented parts of the speeches. It is suggested that equal footing should be used for comparison in future studies.

Fourthly, in his study of research subject-oriented texts, Clyne (1991) finds that German scholars usually use hedging twice or three times more when compared with native speakers. Kreutz and Harres (1997) also find that the application of hedging is culture specific. In her study of intercultural conversation, Cheng (2003: 4) states that Chinese belong to a high context culture. The characteristics of a high context culture are “covert, implicit and internalized with much nonverbal and reserved reaction”. Chinese believe that “group harmony and avoidance of loss of face to others and oneself” and it can be achieved through the respect of social interpersonal aspects (ibid.: 9). Indirectness is one of the most common pragmatic politeness strategies that the Chinese employ when communicating with others to avoid confrontation and accommodate both the interlocutors’ face want (Cheng & Warren, 2003; Scollon & Scollon, 1995). Indirectness is regarded as the opposite to “explicit” or “straightforward” (Sew, 1997: 363) or “being outwardly vocal or blunt” (ibid.: 358). The realizations of indirectness can be in the form of hedges used to address negative or positive politeness. For instance, the use of *someone* instead of explicitly mentioning the name of a particular person/a group of persons is a way of mitigating a FTA when the speaker is in disagreement with the hearer. Below is an example of the use of *someone* by the FS.

“Someone suggested I could display “TAX MAN” on my car”

This example indicates that the FS uses indirectness to redress the negative face of the hearer because he does not explicitly mention the name of the person who advised him to display “TAXMAN”. Cheng (2003: 228) finds that Chinese people use indirectness more than the native English speakers who belong to low-context

culture⁵⁵, in the form of positive politeness in an inductive discourse pattern in order to avoid self-praise. In addition, the speeches of the three corpora are public speeches as they are given in front of the audience. Speakers from a low-context culture may use hedges differently in public speech setting. Based on these assumptions, it is believed that there may be cross-cultural differences in the use of hedges and intensifiers in public speech setting. With these limitations, generalizations regarding some of the phenomena found in this study are difficult.

A worthwhile area for further studies would be to use the corpora of HKFSC for comparison, as there are some similarities between the corpora of this study and the HKFSC as they are Hong Kong-oriented spoken corpora. In addition, many of the speeches in the HKFSC were given by non-native English speakers and the contents of both corpora are business or financial driven. Furthermore, to investigate the universality of this issue, a future study could include cross-cultural comparisons on the use of hedges and intensifiers in the domain of public speeches between non-native English speakers and native English speakers. Such a contrastive analysis would be fruitful for researchers to realize to what extent the differences in the use of hedges and intensifiers are due to language background and culture in the public speech domain.

Fifthly, this study includes all the speeches given by the FS from 2003 to 2007. As mentioned before, these years, economically or financially have both good and bad years. In the years of financial or economic distress, is the use of hedges and intensifiers in terms of frequency or variation different from the rest? It is therefore of interest for future research to use the concept of the five categories of co-selection (Sinclair, 1996, 2004a) to compare the use of hedges and intensifiers by the FS in the good and bad financial years.

Lastly, another possible avenue for further study is the exploration of other types of spoken discourse used by the FS such as press conferences or press interviews. Although in these kinds of settings, the agenda or questions may be given to the FS

⁵⁵ Countries such as England, Germany, Sweden, and so on are classified as low-context cultures. Their cultural preferences in communication are “overt, explicit, plain, precise and concise, with verbalized details and explicit and readily observable reactions” (Cheng, 2003: 4).

before the live broadcast for preparation, there may be some unexpected situations where the FS needs to respond spontaneously to reporters or interviewers. A comparison of the use of hedges and intensifiers by the FS between these settings and public speeches may provide some more insights regarding usage.

Despite the limitations, this study provides original findings about the use of both hedges and intensifiers in the public speech domain which has not been explored by researchers previously.

Appendix I

Appendix I. Summary of hedging devices in the three corpora								
	Financial Secretary's Corpus Ordinary Speeches(CORDS) 29,913 words (running words)	Relative frequency numbers per 10,000 words	Financial Secretary's Corpus of Business Speeches(CBUSS) 56,021 words (running words)	Relative frequency numbers per 10,000 words	Financial Secretary's Corpus of Budget Speeches(CBUDS) 43,402 words (running words)	Relative frequency numbers per 10,000 words	Total No. of frequency	Total frequency normalized
I. Modal Auxiliaries								
would	76.00	25.41	116.00	20.71	28.00	6.45	220.00	52.56
may	11.00	3.68	20.00	3.57	21.00	4.84	52.00	12.09
could	1.00	0.33	19.00	3.39	1.00	0.23	21.00	3.96
should	2.00	0.67	23.00	4.11	28.00	6.45	53.00	11.23
can	12.00	4.01	40.00	7.14	41.00	9.45	93.00	20.60
will	55.00	18.39	161.00	28.74	226.00	52.07	442.00	99.20
might	1.00	0.33	24.00	4.28	5.00	1.15	30.00	5.77
shall	0.00	0.00	4.00	0.71	4.00	0.92	8.00	1.64
must	20.00	6.69	27.00	4.82	28.00	6.45	75.00	17.96
Total of modal auxiliaries	178.00	59.51	434.00	77.47	382.00	88.01	994.00	224.99

II. Epistemic verbs								
a. Judgemental verbs								
-Speculative verbs								
indicate	0.00	0.00	3.00	0.54	3.00	0.69	6.00	1.23
suggest	1.00	0.33	11.00	1.96	13.00	3.00	25.00	5.29
propose	2.00	0.67	20.00	3.57	53.00	12.21	75.00	16.45
believe	11.00	3.68	46.00	8.21	21.00	4.84	78.00	16.73
consider	6.00	2.01	26.00	4.64	29.00	6.68	61.00	13.33
expect	11.00	3.68	23.00	4.11	61.00	14.05	95.00	21.84
imagine	2.00	0.67	5.00	0.89	0.00	0.00	7.00	1.56
wish	26.00	8.69	22.00	3.93	3.00	0.69	51.00	13.31
think	4.00	1.34	26.00	4.64	4.00	0.92	34.00	6.90
hope	16.00	5.35	35.00	6.25	24.00	5.53	75.00	17.13
assume	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.36	1.00	0.23	3.00	0.59
speculate	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18
sub-total	79.00	26.41	220.00	39.27	212.00	48.85	511.00	114.53
-Deductive verbs								
estimate	0.00	0.00	4.00	0.71	24.00	5.53	28.00	6.24
calculate	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.23	1.00	0.23
argue	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	1.00	0.23	2.00	0.41
charge	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.36	2.00	0.46	4.00	0.82
claim	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.46	2.00	0.46
approximate	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18
conclude	2.00	0.67	1.00	0.18	1.00	0.23	4.00	1.08
evaluate	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.23	1.00	0.23
judge	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18

project	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.36	1.00	0.23	3.00	0.59
forecast	1.00	0.33	3.00	0.54	6.00	1.38	10.00	2.25
anticipate	1.00	0.33	3.00	0.54	6.00	1.38	10.00	2.25
assess	1.00	0.33	3.00	0.54	3.00	0.69	7.00	1.56
sub-total	5.00	1.67	21.00	3.75	48.00	11.06	74.00	16.48
b. Evidential verbs								
report	1.00	0.33	10.00	1.79	5.00	1.15	16.00	3.27
notice	2.00	0.67	4.00	0.71	0.00	0.00	6.00	1.38
feel	2.00	0.67	10.00	1.79	4.00	0.92	16.00	3.38
seek	4.00	1.34	18.00	3.21	17.00	3.92	39.00	8.47
tend	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.36	1.00	0.23	3.00	0.59
appear	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.36	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.36
perceive	0.00	0.00	3.00	0.54	0.00	0.00	3.00	0.54
view	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.36	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.36
sub-total	9.00	3.01	51.00	9.10	27.00	6.22	87.00	18.33
Total of epistemic verbs	93.00	31.09	292.00	52.12	287.00	66.13	672.00	149.34
III. Adjectives								
a) probability adjectives								
apparent	1.00	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.33
possible	0.00	0.00	12.00	2.14	7.00	1.61	19.00	3.75
potential	0.00	0.00	6.00	1.07	3.00	0.69	9.00	1.76
alternative	0.00	0.00	4.00	0.71	1.00	0.23	5.00	0.94
anticipated	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.23	1.00	0.23

assumed	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.23	1.00	0.23
proposed	0.00	0.00	9.00	1.61	7.00	1.61	16.00	3.22
evident	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.36	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.36
sub-total	1.00	0.33	33.00	5.89	20.00	4.61	54.00	10.83
b) indefinite frequency adjectives								
common	1.00	0.33	9.00	1.61	0.00	0.00	10.00	1.94
frequent	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.23	1.00	0.23
normal	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.36	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.36
popular	2.00	0.67	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	3.00	0.85
prevalent	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18
regular	0.00	0.00	3.00	0.54	0.00	0.00	3.00	0.54
usual	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18
sub-total	3.00	1.00	17.00	3.03	1.00	0.23	21.00	4.27
c) indefinite degree adjectives								
appreciable	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	1.00	0.23	2.00	0.41
central	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18
considerable	4.00	1.34	4.00	0.71	1.00	0.23	9.00	2.28
fair	5.00	1.67	8.00	1.43	14.00	3.23	27.00	6.33
little	2.00	0.67	2.00	0.36	2.00	0.46	6.00	1.49
marked	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.36	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.36
moderate	1.00	0.33	2.00	0.36	3.00	0.69	6.00	1.38
modest	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.00	0.69	3.00	0.69
noticeable	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.36	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.36
small	3.00	1.00	4.00	0.71	2.00	0.46	9.00	2.18

notable	1.00	0.33	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.23	2.00	0.56
sub-total	16.00	5.35	26.00	4.64	27.00	6.22	69.00	16.21
d) approximate adjectives								
close	3.00	1.00	3.00	0.54	2.00	0.46	8.00	2.00
estimated	2.00	0.67	2.00	0.36	5.00	1.15	9.00	2.18
sub-total	5.00	1.67	5.00	0.89	7.00	1.61	17.00	4.18
Total of adjectives	25.00	8.36	81.00	14.46	55.00	12.67	161.00	35.49
IV. Adverbs								
a) probability adverbs								
likely	0.00	0.00	4.00	0.71	1.00	0.23	5.00	0.94
perhaps	3.00	1.00	10.00	1.79	0.00	0.00	13.00	2.79
possibly	1.00	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.33
potentially	1.00	0.33	5.00	0.89	0.00	0.00	6.00	1.23
probably	1.00	0.33	3.00	0.54	1.00	0.23	5.00	1.10
seemingly	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18
tentatively	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.23	1.00	0.23
basically	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18
sub-total	6.00	2.01	24.00	4.28	3.00	0.69	33.00	6.98
b) indefinite frequency adverbs								
normally	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18
rarely	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18

seldom	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18
sometimes	1.00	0.33	2.00	0.36	1.00	0.23	4.00	0.92
sub-total	1.00	0.33	5.00	0.89	1.00	0.23	7.00	1.46
c) indefinite degree adverbs								
considerably	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	2.00	0.46	3.00	0.64
fairly	1.00	0.33	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.51
markedly	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.23	1.00	0.23
moderately	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.46	2.00	0.46
partly	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18
reasonably	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	1.00	0.23	2.00	0.41
relatively	1.00	0.33	6.00	1.07	3.00	0.69	10.00	2.10
slightly	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.36	2.00	0.46	4.00	0.82
somewhat	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18
practically	1.00	0.33	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.51
pretty	1.00	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.33
sub-total	4.00	1.34	14.00	2.50	11.00	2.53	29.00	6.37
d. approximate adverbs								
about	7.00	2.34	25.00	4.46	63.00	14.52	95.00	21.32
approximately	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	2.00	0.46	3.00	0.64
around	2.00	0.67	11.00	1.96	16.00	3.69	29.00	6.32
nearly	7.00	2.34	18.00	3.21	25.00	5.76	50.00	11.31
roughly	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	1.00	0.23	2.00	0.41
some	24.00	8.02	94.00	16.78	51.00	11.75	169.00	36.55
virtually	1.00	0.33	4.00	0.71	0.00	0.00	5.00	1.05

merely	1.00	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.33
broadly	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.46	2.00	0.46
sub-total	42.00	14.04	154.00	27.49	160.00	36.86	356.00	78.40
Total of adverbs	53.00	17.72	197.00	35.17	175.00	40.32	425.00	93.20
V. Nouns								
a. nonfactive assertive nouns								
argument	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	1.00	0.23	2.00	0.41
claim	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18
implication	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	4.00	0.92	5.00	1.10
indication	2.00	0.67	2.00	0.36	0.00	0.00	4.00	1.03
suggestion	2.00	0.67	3.00	0.54	8.00	1.84	13.00	3.05
forecast	0.00	0.00	11.00	1.96	22.00	5.07	33.00	7.03
sub-total	4.00	1.34	19.00	3.39	35.00	8.06	58.00	12.79
b. tentative cognition nouns								
assessment	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18
belief	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.36	4.00	0.92	6.00	1.28
estimate(s)	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	14.00	3.23	15.00	3.40
expectation(s)	3.00	1.00	1.00	0.18	3.00	0.69	7.00	1.87
hope(s)	1.00	0.33	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.23	2.00	0.56
philosophy(ies)	0.00	0.00	5.00	0.89	0.00	0.00	5.00	0.89
scenario	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18
tenet	1.00	0.33	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.51
theory	1.00	0.33	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.51

thinking	2.00	0.67	2.00	0.36	0.00	0.00	4.00	1.03
thought (s)	3.00	1.00	4.00	0.71	0.00	0.00	7.00	1.72
view(s)	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.36	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.36
wish(es)	3.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.46	5.00	1.46
considerations(s)	0.00	0.00	5.00	0.89	5.00	1.15	10.00	2.04
postulate(s)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.23	1.00	0.23
sub-total	14.00	4.68	26.00	4.64	30.00	6.91	70.00	16.23
c. nouns of tentative likelihood								
appearance	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.23	1.00	0.23
chance(s)	1.00	0.33	6.00	1.07	3.00	0.69	10.00	2.10
likelihood	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18
possibility(ies)	1.00	0.33	3.00	0.54	1.00	0.23	5.00	1.10
potential(s)	10.00	3.34	23.00	4.11	9.00	2.07	42.00	9.52
sign(s)	3.00	1.00	5.00	0.89	2.00	0.46	10.00	2.36
tendency	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18
note	2.00	0.67	4.00	0.71	0.00	0.00	6.00	1.38
sub-total	17.00	5.68	43.00	7.68	16.00	3.69	76.00	17.05
Total of nouns	35.00	11.70	88.00	15.71	81.00	18.66	204.00	46.07
VI. Phrasal items								
kind of	1.00	0.33	2.00	0.36	0.00	0.00	3.00	0.69
more or less	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18
close to	3.00	1.00	4.00	0.71	2.00	0.46	9.00	2.18
or so	1.00	0.33	4.00	0.71	3.00	0.69	8.00	1.74
a little	3.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.00	1.00

a bit	1.00	0.33	3.00	0.54	0.00	0.00	4.00	0.87
in a way	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18
up to	3.00	1.00	7.00	1.25	6.00	1.38	16.00	3.63
at least	3.00	1.00	8.00	1.43	2.00	0.46	13.00	2.89
in principle	1.00	0.33	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.51
a large number	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.46	2.00	0.46
in excess of	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.46	2.00	0.46
sub-total	16.00	5.35	31.00	5.53	17.00	3.92	64.00	14.80
Total of lexical hedges	400.00	133.72	1123.00	200.46	997.00	229.71	2520.00	563.89
VII. Syntactic hedges								
if clauses	2.00	0.67	35.00	6.25	24.00	5.53	61.00	12.45
agentless passive	2.00	0.67	9.00	1.61	0.00	0.00	11.00	2.28
normalization	5.00	1.67	5.00	0.89	5.00	1.15	15.00	3.72
pronoun(we)	2.00	0.67	8.00	1.43	5.00	1.15	15.00	3.25
someone	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.36	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.36
clausal items	11.00	3.68	25.00	4.46	16.00	3.69	52.00	11.83
compound hedges	3.00	1.00	23.00	4.11	4.00	0.92	30.00	6.03
sub-total	25.00	8.36	107.00	19.10	54.00	12.44	186.00	39.90
Total of hedges	425.00	142.08	1230.00	219.56	1051.00	242.15	2706.00	603.79

Appendix II

Appendix II. Summary of intensifiers in the three corpora								
	Financial Secretary's Corpus Ordinary Speeches(CORDS) 29,913 words (running words)	Relative frequency numbers per 10,000 words	Financial Secretary's Corpus of Business Speeches(CBUSS) 56,021 words (running words)	Relative frequency numbers per 10,000 words	Financial Secretary's Corpus of Budget Speeches(CBUDS) 43,402 words (running words)	Relative frequency numbers per 10,000 words	Total no of frequency	Total frequency normalized
I. Adjectives intensifiers								
a. Ed-adjectives								
committed	11.00	3.68	7.00	1.25	6.00	1.38	24.00	6.31
delighted	17.00	5.68	8.00	1.43	1.00	0.23	26.00	7.34
determined	7.00	2.34	8.00	1.43	4.00	0.92	19.00	4.69
excited	1.00	0.33	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.51
impressed	5.00	1.67	1.00	0.18	1.00	0.23	7.00	2.08
pleased	30.00	10.03	11.00	1.96	3.00	0.69	44.00	12.68
specialized	1.00	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.33
specified	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18
detailed	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	6.00	1.38	7.00	1.56

Sub-total	72.00	24.07	38.00	6.78	21.00	4.84	131.00	35.69
b. Adjectives								
abundant	2.00	0.67	5.00	0.89	5.00	1.15	12.00	2.71
special	16.00	5.35	8.00	1.43	7.00	1.61	31.00	8.39
specific	2.00	0.67	6.00	1.07	13.00	3.00	21.00	4.73
particular	2.00	0.67	4.00	0.71	2.00	0.46	8.00	1.84
utmost	0.00	0.00	3.00	0.54	0.00	0.00	3.00	0.54
widespread	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	2.00	0.46	3.00	0.64
thorough	0.00	0.00	3.00	0.54	1.00	0.23	4.00	0.77
firm	1.00	0.33	3.00	0.54	4.00	0.92	8.00	1.79
major	18.00	6.02	37.00	6.60	41.00	9.45	96.00	22.07
significant	10.00	3.34	26.00	4.64	8.00	1.84	44.00	9.83
sub-total	51.00	17.05	96.00	17.14	83.00	19.12	230.00	53.31
c. ing-adjectives								
challenging	2.00	0.67	2.00	0.36	1.00	0.23	5.00	1.26
delighting	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18
encouraging	3.00	1.00	8.00	1.43	15.00	3.46	26.00	5.89
exciting	3.00	1.00	13.00	2.32	0.00	0.00	16.00	3.32
awe-inspiring	0.00	0.00	3.00	0.54	0.00	0.00	3.00	0.54
striking	1.00	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.33
surprising	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.36	1.00	0.23	3.00	0.59
sub-total	9.00	3.01	29.00	5.18	17.00	3.92	55.00	12.10
Total of adjectives	132.00	44.13	163.00	29.10	121.00	27.88	416.00	101.10

II. Closed-class intensifiers								
all	14.00	4.68	10.00	1.79	7.00	1.61	31.00	8.08
almost	1.00	0.33	13.00	2.32	2.00	0.46	16.00	3.12
enough	3.00	1.00	7.00	1.25	1.00	0.23	11.00	2.48
must	7.00	2.34	2.00	0.36	0.00	0.00	9.00	2.70
most	53.00	17.72	73.00	13.03	26.00	5.99	152.00	36.74
much	14.00	4.68	28.00	5.00	5.00	1.15	47.00	10.83
quite	1.00	0.33	8.00	1.43	3.00	0.69	12.00	2.45
rather	3.00	1.00	11.00	1.96	4.00	0.92	18.00	3.89
so	17.00	5.68	20.00	3.57	8.00	1.84	45.00	11.10
such	7.00	2.34	14.00	2.50	6.00	1.38	27.00	6.22
too	3.00	1.00	19.00	3.39	4.00	0.92	26.00	5.32
very	58.00	19.39	69.00	12.32	25.00	5.76	152.00	37.47
indeed	18.00	6.02	29.00	5.18	2.00	0.46	49.00	11.65
every	18.00	6.02	15.00	2.68	9.00	2.07	42.00	10.77
entire	5.00	1.67	6.00	1.07	2.00	0.46	13.00	3.20
complete	0.00	0.00	3.00	0.54	0.00	0.00	3.00	0.54
fullest	1.00	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.33
maximum	1.00	0.33	2.00	0.36	4.00	0.92	7.00	1.61
just	14.00	4.68	21.00	3.75	7.00	1.61	42.00	10.04
whole	8.00	2.67	7.00	1.25	4.00	0.92	19.00	4.85
real	4.00	1.34	9.00	1.61	7.00	1.61	20.00	4.56
only	26.00	8.69	33.00	5.89	18.00	4.15	77.00	18.73
always	12.00	4.01	17.00	3.03	4.00	0.92	33.00	7.97
Total closed-class intensifiers	288.00	96.28	416.00	74.26	148.00	34.10	852.00	204.64

III. Phrasal intensifiers								
a great deal	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.36	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.36
a lot	3.00	1.00	5.00	0.89	0.00	0.00	8.00	1.90
to a certain extent	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.23	1.00	0.23
to some extent	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18
as much as	2.00	0.67	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	3.00	0.85
by and large	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18
more or less	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18
more than	40.00	13.37	35.00	6.25	22.00	5.07	97.00	24.69
as far as	1.00	0.33	4.00	0.71	4.00	0.92	9.00	1.97
far away	1.00	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.33
so far	5.00	1.67	7.00	1.25	4.00	0.92	16.00	3.84
in fact	10.00	3.34	11.00	1.96	2.00	0.46	23.00	5.77
at least	3.00	1.00	8.00	1.43	2.00	0.46	13.00	2.89
of course	8.00	2.67	26.00	4.64	3.00	0.69	37.00	8.01
by far	2.00	0.67	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.67
far beyond	1.00	0.33	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.51
all together	1.00	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.33
all time	2.00	0.67	4.00	0.71	3.00	0.69	9.00	2.07
across the board	1.00	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.33
as a whole	2.00	0.67	9.00	1.61	9.00	2.07	20.00	4.35
very much	31.00	10.36	37.00	6.60	1.00	0.23	69.00	17.20
a long way	3.00	1.00	4.00	0.71	0.00	0.00	7.00	1.72
more so	2.00	0.67	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	3.00	0.85
more and more	1.00	0.33	3.00	0.54	1.00	0.23	5.00	1.10
every single	1.00	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.33
such a	8.00	2.67	14.00	2.50	4.00	0.92	26.00	6.10

in particular	8.00	2.67	10.00	1.79	2.00	0.46	20.00	4.92
more to the point	1.00	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.33
in depth	0.00	0.00	4.00	0.71	3.00	0.69	7.00	1.41
make the most of	0.00	0.00	3.00	0.54	2.00	0.46	5.00	1.00
full scale	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.23	1.00	0.23
in total	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	1.00	0.23	2.00	0.41
ultra competitive	1.00	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.33
once and again	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18
Total phrasal intensifiers	138.00	46.13	194.00	34.63	65.00	14.98	397.00	95.74
VI. <i>ly-</i> intensifiers								
a. scalar intensifiers								
absolutely	0.00	0.00	4.00	0.71	1.00	0.23	5.00	0.94
completely	1.00	0.33	2.00	0.36	1.00	0.23	4.00	0.92
entirely	1.00	0.33	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.51
fully	4.00	1.34	6.00	1.07	9.00	2.07	19.00	4.48
perfectly	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.23	1.00	0.23
purely	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18
thoroughly	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.23	1.00	0.23
wholly	1.00	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.33
exactly	0.00	0.00	4.00	0.71	0.00	0.00	4.00	0.71
enormously	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
extremely	1.00	0.33	3.00	0.54	3.00	0.69	7.00	1.56
greatly	3.00	1.00	5.00	0.89	8.00	1.84	16.00	3.74
highly	6.00	2.01	12.00	2.14	7.00	1.61	25.00	5.76
immensely	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18
increasingly	2.00	0.67	13.00	2.32	4.00	0.92	19.00	3.91

profoundly	1.00	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.33
widely	4.00	1.34	9.00	1.61	1.00	0.23	14.00	3.17
excessively	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.23	1.00	0.23
heavily	3.00	1.00	10.00	1.79	7.00	1.61	20.00	4.40
strongly	2.00	0.67	7.00	1.25	3.00	0.69	12.00	2.61
deeply	1.00	0.33	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.23	2.00	0.56
largely	1.00	0.33	1.00	0.18	1.00	0.23	3.00	0.74
abundantly	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.46	2.00	0.46
mainly	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.00	0.92	4.00	0.92
firmly	1.00	0.33	2.00	0.36	4.00	0.92	7.00	1.61
strictly	0.00	0.00	3.00	0.54	3.00	0.69	6.00	1.23
significantly	2.00	0.67	10.00	1.79	6.00	1.38	18.00	3.84
sub-total	34.00	11.37	94.00	16.78	68.00	15.67	196.00	43.81
b. modal intensifiers								
basically	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18
clearly	5.00	1.67	5.00	0.89	2.00	0.46	12.00	3.02
doubtlessly	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
essentially	0.00	0.00	4.00	0.71	2.00	0.46	6.00	1.17
naturally	1.00	0.33	5.00	0.89	1.00	0.23	7.00	1.46
obviously	0.00	0.00	3.00	0.54	1.00	0.23	4.00	0.77
simply	2.00	0.67	12.00	2.14	1.00	0.23	15.00	3.04
surely	1.00	0.33	2.00	0.36	2.00	0.46	5.00	1.15
truly	4.00	1.34	5.00	0.89	0.00	0.00	9.00	2.23
undoubtedly	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.36	1.00	0.23	3.00	0.59
drastically	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.23	1.00	0.23
actually	3.00	1.00	10.00	1.79	3.00	0.69	16.00	3.48
certainly	13.00	4.35	28.00	5.00	0.00	0.00	41.00	9.34

decidedly	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
definitely	1.00	0.33	4.00	0.71	4.00	0.92	9.00	1.97
overly	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.36	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.36
positively	1.00	0.33	2.00	0.36	1.00	0.23	4.00	0.92
really	1.00	0.33	5.00	0.89	1.00	0.23	7.00	1.46
sub-total	32.00	10.70	90.00	16.07	20.00	4.61	142.00	31.37
c. evaluative intensifiers								
finally	5.00	1.67	4.00	0.71	1.00	0.23	10.00	2.62
remarkably	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.00	0.69	3.00	0.69
seriously	0.00	0.00	4.00	0.71	0.00	0.00	4.00	0.71
vividly	1.00	0.33	2.00	0.36	0.00	0.00	3.00	0.69
explicitly	1.00	0.33	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.23	2.00	0.56
critically	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.46	2.00	0.46
sub-total	7.00	2.34	10.00	1.79	7.00	1.61	24.00	5.74
d. comparative intensifiers								
specifically	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.18
specially	1.00	0.33	1.00	0.18	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.51
especially	6.00	2.01	17.00	3.03	1.00	0.23	24.00	5.27
particularly	12.00	4.01	34.00	6.07	9.00	2.07	55.00	12.15
precisely	1.00	0.33	2.00	0.67	0.00	0.00	3.00	1.00
sub-total	20.00	6.69	55.00	9.82	10.00	2.30	85.00	18.81
Total /y-intensifiers	93.00	31.09	249.00	44.45	105.00	24.19	447.00	99.73
V. Syntactic intensifiers								

I know	8.00	2.67	22.00	3.93	3.00	0.69	33.00	7.29
will	39.00	13.04	28.00	5.00	26.00	5.99	93.00	24.03
uphold	2.00	0.67	11.00	1.96	5.00	1.15	18.00	3.78
reiterate	1.00	0.33	5.00	0.89	1.00	0.23	7.00	1.46
emphasize	2.00	0.67	4.00	0.71	3.00	0.69	9.00	2.07
compound intensifiers	45.00	15.04	45.00	8.03	15.00	3.46	105.00	26.53
Total syntactic intensifiers	97.00	32.43	115.00	20.53	53.00	12.21	265.00	65.17
Total of intensifiers	748.00	250.06	1137.00	202.96	492.00	113.36	2377.00	566.38

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