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### **PERSUASIVE STRATEGIES AND HEDGING DEVICES IN CORPORATE PRESENTATIONS AND REPORTS**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

This thesis examines the pragmalinguistic features of corporate presentations and written reports, focusing on the persuasive strategies and hedging devices professional communicators deploy in these genres. Drawing on genre theory, metadiscourse analysis, and corpus-based pragmalinguistics, the study identifies how corporate communicators manage epistemic commitment, organize complex information, and position themselves persuasively in relation to their audiences. The analysis demonstrates that hedging performs not only epistemic but also interpersonal and institutional functions, and that the appropriate management of hedging and boosting constitutes a central dimension of professional communicative competence in international business contexts.

**Keywords:** corporate presentations, hedging devices, metadiscourse, persuasive strategies, pragmalinguistics, professional communication, genre analysis

Corporate presentations and written reports are among the most consequential genres in professional communication. These genres are not merely informational: they are designed to persuade. Whether a manager presents quarterly results to investors or submits a strategic proposal to senior leadership,



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the language of the text is shaped by deliberate rhetorical choices whose pragmalinguistic logic is far from obvious. Understanding these choices requires a framework that moves beyond grammar and vocabulary to examine how language constructs persuasive positions, manages uncertainty, and negotiates the relationship between communicator and audience.

The importance of this inquiry has grown alongside the globalization of business communication. English today functions as the principal medium of international corporate discourse, and professionals from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds must navigate its pragmalinguistic conventions without always having received explicit instruction in them. For students and professionals in Uzbekistan entering international business contexts, developing this kind of genre-specific communicative competence is a practical as much as an academic priority.

The pragmalinguistic analysis of corporate communication rests on two complementary theoretical foundations. The first is Swales's genre theory, which defines a genre as a communicative event shaped by the shared purposes of the professional community that produces and uses it. On this view, corporate presentations and reports are not random collections of professional language but conventionalized communicative forms carrying recognized structural and linguistic expectations. To write or present within a genre competently is to deploy its pragmalinguistic conventions appropriately, including its conventions for asserting claims, hedging predictions, and engaging an audience.

The second foundation is Hyland's framework of metadiscourse, which he defines as the linguistically realized aspects of a discourse that refer to the evolving text or to the writer's stance toward its content and reader. Hyland distinguishes between *interactive metadiscourse* devices that guide the reader through the text's organizational structure (frame markers, transitions, code



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glosses) and *interactional metadiscourse* devices that position the communicator in relation to propositional content and audience (hedges, boosters, engagement markers, self-mention). Both dimensions are operative in corporate communication, and their systematic analysis illuminates how professional texts accomplish their persuasive purposes.

Hedging is the use of linguistic means to present propositions as less than fully certain is one of the most pragmalinguistically significant features of corporate reports and presentations. Hyland identifies a range of devices through which hedging is realized: modal auxiliary verbs (*may, might, could, would*), epistemic lexical verbs (*suggest, indicate, appear, seem*), adverbial approximators (*approximately, generally, typically*), and conditional constructions that frame claims as contingent on external factors. In corporate communication, these devices appear most densely in forward-looking statements, financial forecasts, and strategic outlooks, precisely the sections where the highest uncertainty coincides with the highest rhetorical stakes.

The functions served by hedging in corporate genres are multiple. At the epistemic level, hedging signals that a claim is probabilistic rather than certain, protecting the communicator from criticism if predictions prove inaccurate. At the interpersonal level, hedging performs face-work by presenting conclusions as reasoned inferences rather than personal assertions, which reduces the appearance of overconfidence and invites the audience's interpretive participation. Hyland and Tse's corpus-based analysis confirmed that these patterns vary systematically across professional genres, with corporate communication exhibiting distinct hedging frequencies and device preferences shaped by audience expectations and institutional conventions.

Mauranen's analysis of rhetorical strategies in professional texts found that the explicit acknowledgement of uncertainty through hedging paradoxically



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increases rather than undermines persuasive credibility, because it demonstrates the communicator's analytical rigour and professional integrity. This counterintuitive finding is essential for understanding why experienced corporate communicators routinely hedge financial projections and strategic claims: they are not signalling weakness but demonstrating genre-specific competence.

Alongside hedging, corporate presentations and reports deploy a range of boosting and engagement strategies that serve the persuasive function of these genres. *Boosting* is defined as the use of linguistic means to strengthen epistemic commitment is accomplished through intensifiers (*clearly, significantly, undoubtedly*), emphatic auxiliaries (*we do believe*), and reporting verbs that project confidence (*demonstrate, prove, confirm*). The strategic management of the balance between hedging and boosting reflects the communicator's reading of the audience, the genre's institutional conventions, and the degree of certainty warranted by the available evidence. Investor relations presentations typically show the highest boosting frequencies in their narrative sections, while hedging concentrates in forward-looking disclosures.

Engagement markers devices that address the audience directly are a further characteristic feature of the genre. Rhetorical questions (*What does this mean for our growth strategy?*), inclusive first-person constructions (*as we have seen*), and orienting directives (*let me draw your attention to*) all create the effect of interactive reasoning while maintaining the communicator's rhetorical control over the direction of the argument. Khakimov argues that pragmatic competence in professional communication requires precisely this kind of genre-specific awareness: not just the ability to produce grammatically correct utterances but the capacity to deploy contextually appropriate rhetorical strategies that align with the institutional norms and audience expectations of the specific communicative situation.



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The cross-cultural dimensions of these strategies deserve particular attention. Connor's contrastive rhetoric research demonstrated that corporate texts produced in different national professional cultures may deploy different rhetorical organizations and different calibrations of hedging and directness even when written in English. For Uzbek professionals preparing presentations and reports for international business audiences, these cross-cultural differences constitute a genuine pragmalinguistic challenge. What registers as appropriately cautious and professionally rigorous in one institutional context may appear evasive or underconfident in another.

Safarov's account of communicative purpose provides a useful synthesis here: in any professional communicative act, the speaker simultaneously pursues informational, relational, and institutional goals that cannot be separated from one another. The linguistic features of corporate presentations and reports the hedges, the boosters, the engagement markers, such as all serve this multi-dimensional communicative purpose simultaneously. A single hedged claim such as *this strategy may generate significant value for stakeholders* conveys propositional content, manages epistemic commitment, attends to the audience's expectations of professional caution, and positions the communicator as rigorous and credible: all at once, in a single grammatical construction.

The pragmalinguistic analysis of corporate presentations and written reports reveals that these genres deploy a rich repertoire of hedging devices and persuasive strategies that serve simultaneous epistemic, interpersonal, and institutional functions. Hedging is not a stylistic preference but a strategically motivated pragmalinguistic choice whose appropriate deployment is conditioned by genre conventions, audience expectations, legal constraints, and cross-cultural communicative norms. The analysis confirms that an adequate account of corporate communication must attend to both the interactive and interactional



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dimensions of metadiscourse, recognizing that organizing information and managing the communicator-audience relationship are mutually constitutive aspects of professional discourse. The findings have direct implications for professional English language education in Uzbekistan. Developing communicative competence in international business genres requires explicit attention to genre-specific pragmalinguistic conventions is particularly hedging and persuasive strategies that go beyond grammatical accuracy. Hyland's corpus-based research remains the most comprehensive empirical foundation for this work. Future research should extend the analysis to corporate communication produced by Central Asian professionals in international business contexts, addressing a significant gap in the existing literature.

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