



**International
Journal of Society, Culture & Language
IJSCL**

Journal homepage: www.ijscf.net
ISSN 2323-2210 (online)

Hedge Markers: A Study of Politeness and Gender in Media Interaction

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ARTICLE HISTORY:

Received March 2023
Received in Revised form May 2023
Accepted May 2023
Available online June 2023

KEYWORDS:

Gender
Hedge markers
Political issues
Rosi talk show
Speech acts

Abstract

The study aims at analyzing politeness and gender around the postponement of election discourse in the Rosi Talk Show (RTS). This qualitative study applies a pragmatic approach that investigates hedge markers (HM). Data were collected from the utterances of nine participants using basic tapping, free-flowing listening, and note-taking. The results indicated several findings. First, academics (males) represented hedge markers with assertive acts of expressing an opinion. However, the practitioner (female) tended to use directive acts of questioning. Second, academics and practitioners (males) often used hedges for quality maxims. While the practitioner (female) often used hedges with question tags. Third, the function of HM showed performative hedges as hesitation and meta-comments; particles to emphasize questions, soften act, and give flexibility; adverbial clauses to show cause-effect and conditions; hedges to quality maxims to show hesitation, raise objections, minimize criticism, and other corrections; hedges to relevance maxims as allegation and hesitation; and hedges in politeness as indifference, rejection, and avoidance.

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.22034/ijscf.2023.2002556.3035>

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1. Introduction

Postponement of Election 2024 (PE) was launched on March 1, 2022, by several political chairman parties. It becomes a phenomenal conversation among the public, politicians, academics, and political practitioners. The conversation is aired on the Kompas TV YouTube channel, namely Rosi Talk Show (RTS). It takes two episodes with three categories of speakers, specifically politicians, academics, and political practitioners (Kompas TV, 2022).

The discussion of the discourse significantly impacts participant behavior (Aini et al., 2022b). The discussion refers to the certainty of the political law of the PE in order not to affect the country's stability (Sapri et al., 2022). The result of the analysis of the discussion of PE shows that these opinions can reflect the participants' behavior and preferences, especially to change their viewpoints of certain issues based on their political background (Aini et al., 2022b).

It is assumed that the prominent focus of the discussion of PE lies in the way of RTS participants present their argument, argue with others' points of view using meta-comment, prefer to deliver the argument using meta-discourse, and persuade the hearer using consistency of their political parties (Kompas TV, 2022). The participants strongly prefer to deliver their arguments using hedge markers (HM) as politeness (Aini et al., 2022a).

A hedge is considered a polite strategy in human communication (Brown & Levinson, 1987). It can reflect the speaker's attitude and viewpoint (Liu, 2020). It indicates that a polite strategy that reflects speakers' attitudes in PE requires a lot of mitigating acts to increase or reduce the statement force (Hyland, 1998). In the context of HM in the media with political issues, male and female participants can emphasize their ideological position to enhance public trust. HM might help them to convey as much information and uncertain views as possible with a few words, which might contribute to improving the efficiency and modality-expressing ability of expressions (Yu & Wen, 2022).

Generally, females are less confident than males when speaking because they do not have

high social status as well as power in social interactions (Brown, 1980; Holmes, 2013; R. Lakoff, 1973). Females preferred to protect and increase the speech value to attract the hearer's attention (Bacha et al., 2012; Mills, 2003). In addition, gender is still under-represented in the media and always represented as a minority to create a good image (Kristina & Ramadona, 2019).

Females are not allowed to show annoyance, anger, or complaints in their speech (Holmes, 2013; R. Lakoff, 1973). However, they can voice their opinions and make decisions independently (Darta & Kristina, 2018). The complex relationship between gender and politeness argues that although there are circumstances when females speak femininely to show their behavior that appears to be more polite than males, there are times when females speak as disrespectfully as males (Mills, 2003).

Hedging explicitly shows the speaker's pessimism so that it convinces the hearers by increasing the cooperative form in speech events (Brown & Levinson, 1987). It has certain markers that show pessimism, uncertainty, and ambiguity in social interaction (Beeching, 2016). HM can be particles and words or phrases that modify the degree of prepositions (Hassan, 2019). The use of HM in politeness and gender is to avoid disagreements between males and females (Lakoff, 1977). Lakoff (1977) listed that hedge as one of the typical features of female utterances is one way of sounding feminine and reflecting their position in society. Some linguists believe that gender influences the use of hedges (Azizah, 2021).

Some linguists have conducted studies on HM and gender in political interviews in media interaction (Azizah, 2021; Faris and Alla, 2019; Hassan, 2019; Jalilifar and Alavi-Nia, 2011; Ohorella et al., 2019; Pellby, 2013; Sabah, 2014; Taweel et al., 2011). Azizah (2021) and Faris and Alla (2019) criticized the gender language features proposed by Coates (2004) and Lakoff (1977) by investigating male and female utterances in the interview genre with the result that male-female language features can be used by opposite gender by looking at the context (Faris & Alla, 2019). In line with these studies, Hassan (2019) counters Lakoff's claim that men do not use hedging devices at all and do not

signal uncertainty in their speech. In fact, he indicated that men had an equal number of hedges in both uncertainty and affective function. Yet, women had a higher number of hedges in epistemic modal function to seek confirmation. In addition, Ohorella (2019) argued that both male and female politicians in political interviews preferred to use modal auxiliaries, if clauses, and introductory phrases as hedges in stating their arguments (Ohorella, 2019).

Meanwhile, Jalilifar and Alavi-Nia (2011) prove that hedging in political discourse and political power affects the quantity and quality of hedge features which contribute to the enforcement of positive and negative politeness. At the same time, Tawel et al. (2011) have examined the density of lexical and syntactical HM in the pragmatic functions of male and female Arab politicians. These studies show that the presence of HM in the political interviews genre in media interaction is urgently needed for mitigating acts.

Beyond those studies that address hedging in the political discourse regarding gender, studies investigating HM in relation to Indonesian male and female politicians, academicians, and practitioners in the context of substance, power, face, and politeness are limited. Furthermore, gender-based language feature analysis, especially in the use of hedging, is not strictly based on the gender stereotypical aspects of the speakers. In other words, males can use female language features and vice versa by looking at such existing factors as the politeness strategy, culture, environment, and hearers' attitude on topic discussions. Recently, political interviews were selected from two episodes in RTS regarding PE and were analyzed following existing hedges taxonomies by Brown and Levinson (1987) as politeness among male and female politicians, academicians, and practitioners notably in providing a holistic view of the HM role and function in political issues instantiated by particular speech acts.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Hedge Markers and Gender in Political Issues

The language use category based on male and female for certain languages indicates different

words for the same reference caused by gender (Lailiyah et al., 2023). The linguistic component of the study of gender and language has three directions. They are differences in the use of language between genders, linguistic constructions of gender, and linguistic ways to refer to different genders (Wijayanti et al., 2022). The associations are evidenced by the use of hedges and boosters by certain genders, demonstrating the diverse functions of words or phrases (Surtikanti et al., 2022). Language differences in males and females are the consequence of male dominance and female subordination. HM are one of the investigation areas of supporting the argument on it (Lakoff, 1973).

Hedges can reflect the speaker's attitude and viewpoint (Liu, 2020). HM are devices like *possible*, *might*, and *perhaps* that demonstrate the speakers' decision to withhold commitment to a proposition entirely, enabling information to be preserved as an opinion rather than a credible fact (Hyland, 2005). Additionally, in Journalist Ethics Indonesia (KEWI), the use of HM is represented by modality, adverb, and conditional (Wibowo & Yusoff, 2014). Consciously, speakers prefer to use HM in political discussions to diminish or empower hearers (Coates, 2004).

Cap and Okulska, 2013 reported that hedging and gender in the political discussion are to avoid responsibility and anticipate future conflicts in a neutral way which had no impact on the utterances. Gender has a substantial impact on hedging. The speech event context plays an important role in verbal communication (Hassan, 2019).

2.2. Hedge Markers as Politeness Strategy

A pragmatic approach has been adopted to set the basis for this paper, namely Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, especially in taxonomies of HM and its function in the media interaction with a gender perspective by Holmes (2013), Mills (2003), and Lakoff (1973). The reason is that both politeness and HM from a gender perspective have become social interpretation forms revolving around the concept of face-saving in political discussions.

For many linguists, HM are mainly used for obtaining politeness purposes (Brown &

Levinson, 1987; Jalilifar & Shooshateri, 2011; Leech, 1983). The speakers take precautions to shield themselves from the negative effect of their utterances or to shield themselves and their hearers from the concept of face-threatening acts. Brown and Levinson (1987) conceive that hedging is a sub-category of positive and negative politeness. It can be seen as a means of showing solidarity and sustaining harmony as a way to minimize imposition and others' power. Brown and Levinson (1987) propose some HM that can be used as an element of politeness strategy, such as *you know, you see, I think, I suppose, I am sure*, etc. An important point of HM in politeness is that the more sophisticated and more hesitant the utterance, the more polite it will seem (Lafi, 2011).

The conceptual theory of politeness, especially for HM is associated with expressing opinions (Leech, 2005). Conveying a speech act (SA) is greatly influenced by social norms and values, such as politeness and the degree of social status between the interlocutors (Pishghadam et al., 2020). This has been demonstrated by Ali et al. (2017) that the speakers prefer to express opinions with meta-analysis as mitigating acts. Besides, tag questions are somewhat more complex since they both strengthen or weaken an utterance, depending on the context. However, it is a softening action in hedges (Granqvist, 2013). Concerning gender and politeness, it is common sense that females prefer to make direct compound requests than males (Nugroho, 2012). Direct requests reflect performative hedges as being polite, which illocutionary forces are modified by HM (Jalilifar et al., 2011). In addition, prohibition could be expressed as a performative hedge that expresses the speaker's desire for the hearer to fulfill the state of affairs conveyed in the proposition (Al-Saaidi et al., 2013).

3. Methodology

3.1. Corpus

This interwoven single case study is conducted by analyzing hedges in one case, namely PE in RTS, consisting of domain, taxonomic, componential, and cultural theme analysis. This study took the context and cases seriously to understand the problem under study. The

data included nine participants' utterances of politeness around PE which aired Thursday, March 10, 2022, and April 14, 2022, at 20:30 *LIVE* on Kompas TV. The rationale for selecting these issues in RTS is that those reported as the most combative Indonesian election debate with more than 2 million viewers. A total of 8 guests and 1 host were the participants who were purposively selected based on several criteria: (1) academics (male) with political science holding a doctoral degree; (2) practitioners (male/female) who commented PE holding a bachelor degree; (3) politicians (male/female) who agreed and disagreed in PE holding a doctoral degree; (4) 40 to 66 years old in term of age; (5) with occupations such as legislative, executive director, lecturer, and Minister; (6) guest and host in RTS in two episodes.

3.2. Procedure

3.2.1. Data Collection

The data source is in the form of a document (orthographic transcription of politeness as realized by hedges) collected from two episodes of RTS. The data in the document contained conversations among moderators and guesses. The data were collected by basic techniques of tapping, free-flowing listening, and note-taking (orthographic transcription). The first analysis categorizes nine participants' utterances into segments, substances, and gender domains. After identifying the utterances realized in the schematic structure of RTS, HM were analyzed and categorized into Brown and Levinson's (1987) taxonomy of hedges in politeness. The componential analysis depicted the domain and taxonomy items that related to one another. Afterward, this study applied the triangulation method carried out with Focus Group Discussion (FGD) to validate the data regarding HM. The theories related to politeness and gender in political discourse were applied in analyzing the phenomenon revealed in the results.

3.2.1. Data Analysis

The study employed Spradley's (1980) model, which was developed by Santosa (2021), including domain, taxonomic, component, and cultural themes analysis. Figure 1 portrays the analytical model.

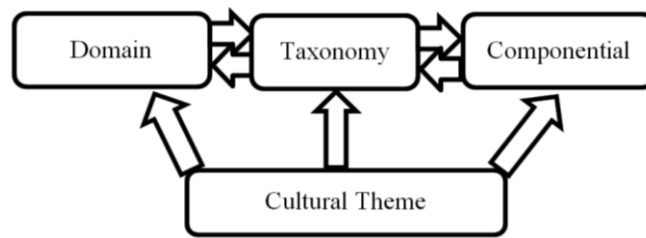


Figure 1
Analysis Model Spradley (1980) Developed by Santosa (2021)

Domain analysis was carried out by segmenting the data and categorizing utterances based on segment, substance, and gender (gender, age, and profession). Taxonomic analysis was carried out by classifying data on types and functions of speech acts and politeness based on the participants. Componential analysis was carried out by incorporating data on gender, types, and functions of SA, and politeness. Cultural themes were analyzed by explaining participants' interaction patterns, both government officials and academics, based on

their political behavior and attitudes toward discourse in accordance with the substance and the hearers.

4. Results

4.1. Hedge Markers in Media

The use of HM is actualized with two SA, namely directive speech acts (DSA) with *questioning, requesting, asking permission, recommending,* and assertive speech acts (ASA) with *expressing opinions*. The figure is as follows.

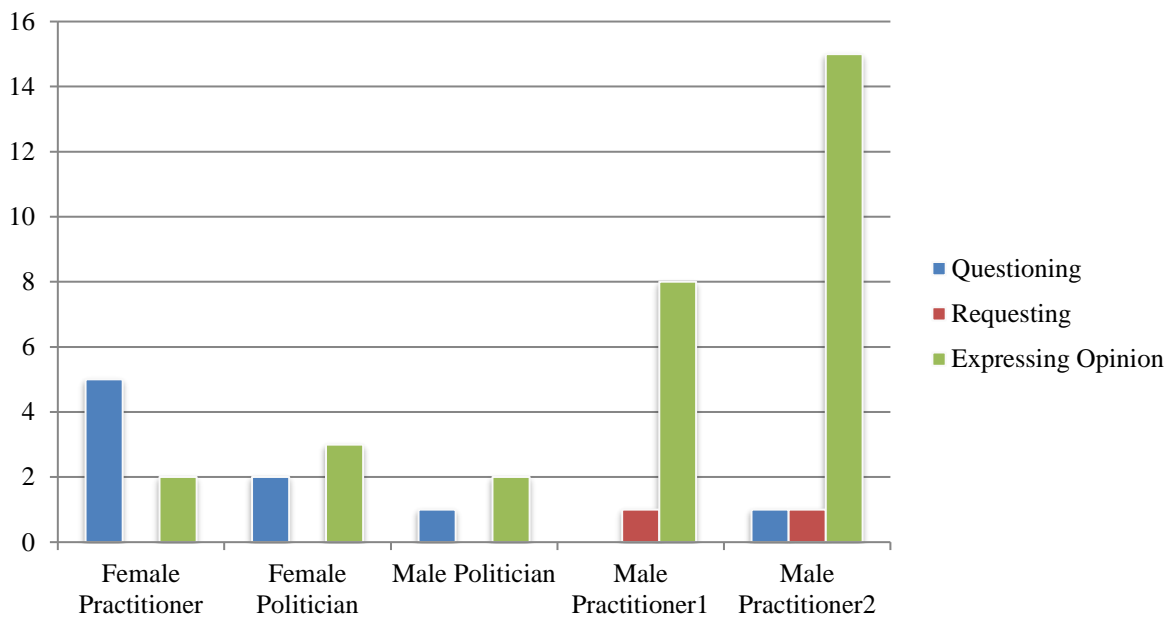


Figure 2
SA in Hedges Markers by Male and Female RTS1

Figure 2 indicates that males and females use SA in RTS1. They prefer to use *questioning, requesting,* and *expressing opinions* to mitigate acts with HM. Figure 2 illustrates that male practitioner 2 is dominant in expressing opinions as a mitigating act with 15 data. He is a practitioner of the executive director of Cyrus Network (CN). He has lots of impressions regarding PE and the public's

satisfaction with the president's performance. Therefore, he expresses his opinion using HM to protect his self-image on television. Male practitioner 2 also uses *questioning* and *requesting* with HM to mitigate acts. However, the request is softened as a suggestion.

In addition, the female practitioner prefers to use *questioning* with question tags to soften

her utterances with 5 data. She provides a chance to accept or refuse her assumptions. Since the female practitioner is a moderator, she leads a talk show to gather as much detailed information as possible. All the participants used *expressing opinions* in RTS1 to actualize HM.

The use of SA in RTS2 differs from RTS1 since RTS2 has two different participants with the same topic; they are academics and politicians as constitutional law experts. They objectify the use of HM with several SA functions, such as *asking permission*, *prohibiting*, *requesting*, and *expressing opinions*. The figure is as follows.

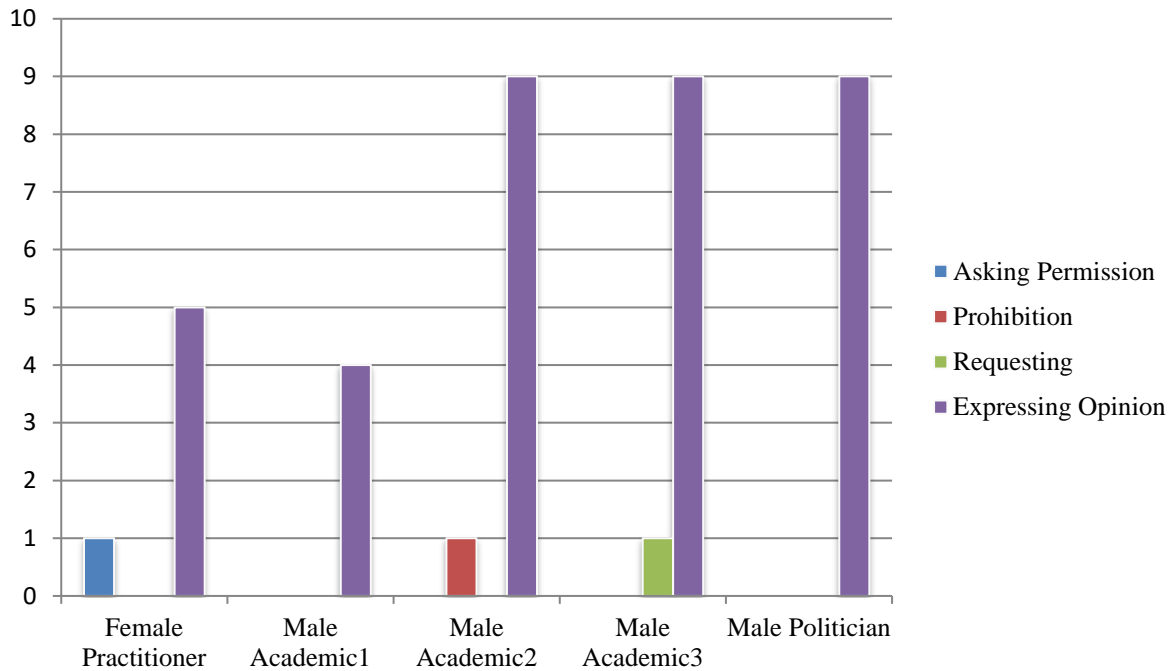


Figure 3
SA in Hedges Markers by Male and Female RT2

Figure 3 indicates the use of SA in RTS2 by female practitioners, male academics, and male politicians. All participants use *expressing opinions* to convey HM. Male academics 1 and 2, and male politicians use *expressing opinions* with the same number of data (i.e., 9 data). Male academics are inclined to use *expressing opinions* with a total of 22 data. They convey possible steps for PE based on applicable laws and regulations as well as the

current situation. Male academics 2 also uses *prohibiting*, which was softened into a suggestion so as not to threaten hearers' faces. On the other hand, the female practitioner as a moderator also uses several *expressing opinions* to summarize the opinions of other participants.

Theoretically, the classification of HM by male and female participants based on Brown and Levinson (1987) can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1
The Taxonomy of Hedges Markers in Media Interaction

Taxonomy	Hedges Markers
Hedges on illocutionary force	I see, I assume, I think, my imagination, I feel, let me, I told you.
Hedges encoded in particles	Isn't that right? Isn't that so? Yes or no? Dangerous or normal? Is that so?

Adverbial-clause hedges	If, then, until
Hedges addressed to Grice's Maxims	
Hedges to quality maxims	I suppose, well for me, actually, the impression I got, I mean, I guess, I'm worried about, I was surprised, I'm a little hesitant, I myself said actually.
Hedges to relevance maxims	Probably, impossible, apparently, perhaps, approximately, supposed, it should be
Hedges addressed to politeness strategies.	I don't want to know, I don't know, it's nothing about me, it's okay, I want <u>to</u> like that, I want to say, what I want to say,

Table 1 shows the taxonomy of HM by males and females. They both used all types of taxonomy proposed by (Brown and Levinson, 1987). However, they did not use HM, which represent quantity and manner maxim. They preferred conditional sentences as HM with

adverbial clauses. Speakers were inclined to use quality maxim-oriented HM with conditional sentences.

Table 1 excludes HM related to speakers' backgrounds. The distinctions of HM by RTS participants are as follows.

Table 2
Gender Differences in the Use of Hedge Markers

Hedges Markers	Male			Female		Σ	%
	Politicians	Academics	Practitioners	Politicians	Practitioners		
I do not know	0	1	0	0	0	1	1.43%
I feel	0	1	0	0	0	1	1.43%
I do not want to know	1	0	0	0	0	1	1.43%
I suppose	2	4	13	4	1	24	34.29%
I think	0	0	0	0	1	1	1.43%
I was surprised	0	0	0	1	0	1	1.43%
Approximately	1	0	0	0	0	1	1.43%
It should be	0	1	0	0	0	1	1.43%
If	0	1	2	1	0	4	5.71%
Apparently	0	1	0	0	0	1	1.43%
I guess	0	3	0	0	1	4	5.71%
Well for me	1	0	0	0	0	1	1.43%
Probably/impossible	0	2	2	0	1	5	7.14%
Perhaps	0	1	0	0	0	1	1.43%
The impression I got	0	2	0	0	0	2	2.86%
My imagination	0	1	0	0	0	1	1.43%
I'm worried about	0	1	0	0	0	1	1.43%
I assume	0	1	0	0	0	1	1.43%
I want to say	0	1	0	0	0	1	1.43%
Actually	0	2	0	0	0	2	2.86%
I see	1	1	2	0	0	4	5.71%
I'm a little hesitant	0	0	0	0	1	1	1.43%
I told you	1	0	0	0	1	2	2.86%
I mean	2	0	1	0	0	3	4.29%
I want to like that	0	0	1	0	0	1	1.43%
It's nothing about me	0	0	2	0	0	2	2.86%
I myself said actually	0	1	0	0	0	1	1.43%
Let me	0	0	0	0	1	1	1.43%
	Total					70	100%

Table 2 indicates the frequency and percentage of each HM. Males and females have been categorized based on particular groups, namely politicians, academics, and practitioners. Overall, male academics have used HM frequently. Meanwhile, male practitioners exhibited a preference towards HM by '*I suppose*'. Neither female practitioners nor politicians have significant

differences in the use of HM. Nevertheless, female politicians frequently use the HM '*I suppose*', and the female practitioner uses hedges randomly in her utterances.

HM may also be affirmative sentences in the Indonesian language. They are indicated by particular particles and question tags as follows.

Table 3

Gender Differences in the Use of Hedge Markers with Question Tags

Hedges Markers	Male			Female		Σ	%
	Politicians	Academics	Practitioners	Politicians	Practitioners		
Particle <i>-kan?</i>	1	0	0	2	1	4	40%
Particle <i>-kah?</i>	0	0	0	0	1	1	10%
Yes or no?	0	0	0	0	3	3	30%
Dangerous or normal?	1	0	0	0	0	1	10%
Is that so?	0	0	0	0	1	1	10%
	Total					10	100%

Table 3 indicates the frequency and percentage of HM with affirmative sentences by male and female politicians, academics, and practitioners. Neither male academics nor practitioners use HM with affirmative sentences in their arguments. In the context of talk shows, the female practitioner frequently uses affirmative sentences as clarifying questions. She has the power to impose on males and females due to her moderator role. The phenomenon is in accordance with the proposition that legitimacy power is the authority due to her status or role against others (Djatmika, 2016).

4.2. Function of HM in Media

4.2.1. Hedges on Illocutionary Force

Performative hedging has two prominent functions. They are hesitation and meta-comment. The hesitation that is indicated by phrases '*I feel*'; '*I assume*'; '*I think*'; '*My interpretation*'; and '*Let me*' represents the speaker's hesitation toward the participants' arguments on PE. Pragmatically, these expressions are hesitation in HM. They contribute to demonstrating the speaker's judgment to obtain confirmation from the hearers. Hesitation means thoughtful responses and speakers' arguments or judgments concerning the positive and negative comments in a speech event. The expressions are approximate to convey conjectures.

Meta-comments are statements that are grounded in other comments. The speaker was commenting on the hearers' arguments for PE. Comments delivered focus on the hearers' arguments which have multiple interpretations. The following data show both functions.

M3: *I feel* Rocky wants the discussion of PE to always continue.

F1: *I feel* your analysis is quite ambiguous too.

The first utterance, '*I feel*,' indicates prejudice and hesitations on the hearers' arguments of PE. The second utterance, '*I feel*,' expresses F1's feelings regarding hearers' ambiguous arguments in addressing amendments to PE. F1 believes that the hearer has binary opinions, namely anxiety, and hope.

The correlation between HM and gender indicates several patterns of interaction with each reason. First, a male practitioner, 43-year-old, as an executive director, used '*I feel*', which was addressed to a 63-year-old male practitioner as an educator. He judged that the hearer had a different intention. Therefore, suspicions and hesitations led the hearer to convey his own intentions. The rank of imposition was assigned due to the social context of political analysts. Second, a 50-year-old female practitioner as a moderator applied '*I feel*' as meta-comments with high imposition addressed to a 60-year-old male academic as the executive director of *Saiful*

Mujani Research Center (SMRC) since the speaker had higher power than the hearer in the talk show. Consequently, the utterance was polite and did not threaten the hearer's face.

4.2.2. Hedges Encoded in Particles

The results of this study indicated three functions of particles as HM, namely confirming, softening, and providing flexibility. First, particles in the Indonesian language manifested by affirmative sentences (question tags) and WH questions. Generally, particles *kah* and *kan* are available in spoken and written language to enhance the conversation. Particles *kah* and *kan* are arbitrary where their existence has entities as the sentence focus (Samsuri, 1985). Particles *kah* and *kan* are used as question markers in interrogative sentences (Kridalaksana, 2009). These particles emphasize the speaker's uncertainty about his opinion. Particles *kah* and *kan* as mitigating acts using question tags were manifested by directive speech act to be criticizing. Speakers apply softening tags to minimize the imposition of critics to avoid threatening the hearers' faces (Holmes, 1990). Particles *kah* and *kan* encourage flexibility with question tags to either approve or deny the speaker's proposals. The sentence patterns used are both positive and negative. Speakers express uncertainty that is referential rather than affective due to the emphasis not on the hearers' feelings but on the truthfulness of the statement (Granqvist, 2013). The data of the question tags are to confirm, to mitigate act, and to provide flexibility as follows.

- F1: *Maybe* the context of Bung Rocky's argument is that the issue of the President's decline was banned, *right?*
- F2: Because it's a constitution, *right?* We talk about the constitution as he said earlier, *right?*

HM with tags '*right?*' is aimed at providing the hearer freedom with the possible answer of either accepting or rejecting. Therefore, it can minimize the face threat. The interrogative sentence is signified by the *-kan* particle in the Indonesian language, which is translated into English as *right* as interrogative sentence elements and it does not substitute any particular function in

sentence construction (Pandean, 2018). The *-kan* particle is intended to indicate similarity with the hearer without any explanation.

The correlation between HM and gender indicated several patterns of interaction with each reason. First, a 50-year-old female practitioner as a moderator used affirmative interrogative sentences to a 63-year-old male practitioner as an educator to verify the truth of the speakers' conclusions. Second, a 57-year-old female politician as a legislative officer employed *-kan* particle to verify and mitigate requests for hearers' approval. The speaker needs the hearer to share assumptions with her.

4.2.3. Adverbial Clauses Hedges

The adverbial clauses have two functions, namely showing cause-effect and indicating conditions. The causal sentence is closely related to acts and their consequences. It is indicated by conditional sentences *if*, *so*, and *as well*. It is focused on mentally predicting and eliminating the hearer objection. In the context of PE, HM with conditional sentences is not only realized with suggestions but also with direct requests. Speakers use conditional sentences to convey ideas for impact. Speakers expect their proposition to be acceptable and not overwhelming to the hearer. The data of adverbial-clause hedges are as follows.

- F2: *So I said*, I agree with Bang Hasan Nasbi that the pros and cons person is both wrong and true.
- F1: If only KPU has declared itself incapable of holding the elections in 2024, *could this be a gap?*
- M1: *I read the case yesterday*. DPD member said *if* the president is not Jokowi, Indonesia will be an Islamic State.
- F2: *If I am a lecturer*, I always use the academic language.

In political discussion, conditional sentences are commands which are modified into suggestions to soften them. They convey the speaker's perspective and suspicion of PE, which is softened by adverbial clauses and hedges.

The correlation between HM and gender indicates several patterns of interaction for

different reasons. First, a female politician as a legislative officer implicitly begs hearers to agree with the male practitioners' opinion. She softens her request with a conditional sentence. The speaker instructed hearers to adjust the language when conveying the feedback. The speaker softens her request by presupposing a particular condition as a suggestion. Therefore, the utterance seems polite and not threatening the hearers' faces. Second, a 50-year-old female practitioner as a moderator implicitly commanded, which was modified as suggestions to avoid threatening the hearers' faces. Third, a 66-year-old male academic as an educator was instructed to adjust the DPD's claim on PE. Nevertheless, the speaker softens it by demonstrating the causes and effects of the postponement of elections.

4.2.4. Hedges Addressed to Grice's Maxims

Hedging refers to Grice's (1975) maxims, including two maxims. They are hedges to quality maxims with four functions, namely hesitation, raising objections, minimizing criticism, and other corrections. The other one is hedges to relevance maxims with two functions, namely, allegation and hesitation. Hesitation in hedges to quality maxims indicates that the speakers are not solely responsible for their utterances' truth. Occasionally, speakers emphasize their commitment by using *actually*, *in fact*, and so on. Second, raising objections with illocutionary '*in my opinion*' has a subjective meaning influenced by the speaker's viewpoints. Third, minimizing criticism involves considering both positive and negative by softening critics to seem polite and not threatening the hearers' faces. Fourth, other corrections are widely used to justify the contrary information. Corrections are conveyed with suggestions, opinions, and causal sentences that originate from the speaker's thoughts, experience, and knowledge. However, the information or data is not completely authentic. The data showing hesitations, raising objections, minimizing criticism, and other corrections are as follows.

M2: No, *in my opinion, if* shortening is better, why not it is so.

The utterances demonstrate the speaker's opposition. First, M3 conveys the declining

tension of demonstrations due to the appointment of KPU and Bawaslu. The speaker conveys his objection about the demonstrations' conduciveness as evidenced by students' demands about blasphemy. Second, M2 subjectively objected to the perspective of government performance as a possible excuse for extending the presidential term. Consequently, the speaker infers that shortening the presidential term is preferable. The next data shows minimizing criticism.

M2: *In my opinion*, the quality of the coalition members is not supported yet by the 3 parties' aspirations.

M1: *In my opinion*, the saddest is all addressed to Mr. Jokowi.

The utterances reflect polite criticism since it is subjectively addressed. First, M2 criticizes the President's explicit addressing on PE and extending the presidential term. Second, M1 criticizes the hearers who blame everything on the government. Third, M3 criticizes the reasons used to actualize the PE.

The data for other corrections are as follows:

M2: *In my opinion, it must be clear* in his attitude so that there is political and legal certainty.

F2: *In my opinion, If I think so*, as a labor, we should use an appropriate language when communicating with others. *That's my point*.

The utterances function as corrections that imply advice. First, M2 gave a correction to the President's comments and attitude on the postponement of the elections 2024 and extending the presidential term. The speaker corrects by offering advice that the President should be firm and clear as a form of political and legal certainty. Second, F2 corrects M2's utterances with advice to adjust the use of language based on the hearers' background.

The correlation between the use of HM and gender indicates several patterns of interaction with each reason. First, a 43-year-old male practitioner as executive director of CN mostly uses '*in my opinion*' for conveying objections, minimizing criticism, and other corrections. These utterances were addressed to a 63-year-old male practitioner as an educator. Both of them have no inner power in talk shows. In this context, '*in my opinion*' is

used to measure the 63-year-old male practitioner's provocation. These objections are to notify the results of a survey on his institutions. Second, a 57-year-old female politician as a legislative officer satirizes by subjectively intensifying her opinions of the 63-year-old male practitioner as an educator who keeps making provocations. Therefore, the speaker satirizes him as another correction. The corrections provided advice and encouraged solving the problem.

Additionally, the hedge to relevance maxim has a function as a hesitation to force the hearer's face in changing the discussion theme. Frequently, the utterances in the hedge to relevance maxim are fixing the advice. The speaker proposes particular assumptions to be considered by the hearer and even prioritized as suggestions. The function indicates the speaker's hesitations. The speaker proposes a request by modifying it as advice that is possibly disproved by the hearer. Therefore, hesitation can be fixed and accepted. The data of hedge to relevance maxim is as follows.

- M1: And from the texts that are currently developing *as well as* interpretations that are developed, apparently, it is impossible to hold the postponement of elections 2024.
- M1: Social media has *approximately* expedited the situations of national division.
- M3: *But probably*, it won't happen.
- M3: *Impossible if there are no talks* because the news has reached as big as this.
- M3: *Perhaps* Mas Saiful Mujani can answer certainly.

The words *apparently*, *perhaps*, *approximately*, *probably*, and *impossible* represent HM in a media interaction on political discussion. HM in relevance maxim is used to fix offering and advice to avoid seeming pushy. Even though the speaker also has no definite beliefs in his opinion either.

The correlation between HM and gender shows several patterns of interaction with each reason. First, a 66-year-old male academic as an educator mentioned the word *apparently* and *perhaps* as an excuse to the hearer that the election of 2024 was unable to be postponed. Second, a 51-year-old male

politician as a government officer uses the word *approximately* to propose assumptions concerning the development of national cleavage. The speaker intends his proposal to be implicitly relevant to the discussion theme. Third, a 65-year-old male politician as a government official modifies the topic by conveying his assumptions on PE and its uneasy implementation on it. Indirectly, the speaker was unable to ensure the circumstance under which postponing the election broadly circulated in society.

4.2.5. Hedges Addressed to Politeness

Politeness is the starting point of acceptance in speech events (Sumarlam et al., 2017). HM in politeness have three functions, namely indifference, rejection, and avoidance. Indifference is actualized by *'I don't know'* and *'I don't want to know'*. In politeness, phrases *'I don't know'* and *'I don't want to know'* are HM to indicate the ignorance or uncertainty of the speaker's understanding. Thereby, speakers constrain themselves by expressing indifference. Rejection is a declination to give information related to the postponement of elections at a cabinet meeting by softening his act using HM *'I do not know'* and *'I don't want to know'*. Avoidance is evasion from the topic being discussed to avoid potentially violating the ethics code of government officials. Avoidance is accomplished by softening the messages to minimize the statements' impact so that they seem polite and acceptable.

The data on rejection, indifference, and avoidance are as follows:

- M3: *I do not know* there were meetings like that, I just know this one.
- M3: *I don't want to know* and I'm sure that there is; there must be.

'I do not know' and *'I don't want to know'* indicates a rejection of sharing information regarding PE among the political elite. The rejection was due to the reason that M3 was a government officer who expected to be neutral in addressing the discourse. Then, the speaker believes that the election will be held since the government has already settled the date in the cabinet meeting.

The correlation between HM and gender reveals several patterns of interaction with each reason. First, a 65-year-old male

politician as a government officer resorts to '*I do not know*' and '*I do not want to know*' addressed to the 50-year-old female practitioner as a moderator. Even though the hearer has a higher power in the talk show, the age, position, and ethics code of a government officer are unavoidable for the speaker. The speaker softens the utterances to be polite. It could be inferred that only the 65-year-old male politician as a government officer uses '*I do not know*' and '*I do not want to know*' in the context of RTS.

5. Discussion

The discussion interprets the relationship pattern of the preference to use HM in media interactions on gender with politicians, academics, and practitioner participants. The findings demonstrate that both female practitioners and politicians extensively use questions tagged with DSA of *questioning* to provide space for hearers' arguments and HM with *I think* and *It should be* to emphasize the speaker's uncertainty (Aini et al., 2022b; Lafi 2011; Mansur, 2015). The findings are evidenced by Lakoff (1977) that females prefer to use question tags when speaking in both formal and informal interactions. These are in line with Indonesian culture, as stated by Hofstede (1980) on masculinity and feminism, that females have more balance between caring and feeling for others (Hofstede, 1980). HM indicate politeness as a syntactical device manifested as a mitigating act in negative politeness (Beeching, 2016; Holmes, 1984; and Mansur, 2015).

Other findings reveal that participants' views can change depending on the political situation. These results are in line with the notion of G. Lakoff (1973), stating that the main feature of hedging is incidental truth; it is not to mitigate the effect of facing threats; it is rather an acceptable offensive utterance (Taylor, 2011).

The point is that HM applied as a mitigating act actualized in adverbial hedges to enforce the illocutionary power of an utterance (Fraser, 1980). It is reinforced by Holmes (1984) that mitigating acts in HM orient to the main utterances. This study discovers that the 60-year-old male academic uses mitigating acts on the female practitioner to prevent negative impacts that may appear outside of

the talk show. Speakers intended to maintain their self-image on television. The reason is that the subtheme is a sensitive political issue and gains public comments. Therefore, the relationship between mitigating acts and saving face is in accordance with the first politeness formula by (Brown and Levinson, 1987).

Discussions on the constitution to PE in formal programs lead female politicians to be assertive toward female practitioners. These findings are in line with the results of a study by R. Lakoff (1973) and Mills (2003) that females are categorized by tentative sentences, HM, and indirect speech.

Females prefer to use question tags and subjective assumptions they believe to be true (Lakoff, 1977). Females are inclined to use DSA of *questioning* and assertive speech act of *expressing opinions* as HM that are in accordance with Oktapiani et al. (2017). The phrase '*in my opinion*' is commonly used by speakers in talk shows. The phrase is used in spontaneous interactions in certain situations with hesitations. This is in alignment with the findings of Beeching (2016) that this phrase is not used in daily interactions. This phrase is mostly used by males in the 40-60s age groups, both RTS1 and RTS2, by academics, politicians, and practitioners.

Meanwhile, associated with gender and politeness in HM on power and social distance, this study discovered that the hearers' gender impacts speakers' politeness behavior, which is in line with the findings of Keikhaie and Mozaffari's (2015) that the social context between speakers and hearers in certain situations can influence the politeness behavior which is also in accordance with the findings of Watts (2003) that males rarely minimize FTA when speaking with females. Female practitioners not only avoid forcing their opinions but also provide opportunities for hearers to argue. It is also in accordance with the findings of Beeching (2016). Other findings are contrary to the results of R. Lakoff (1973) and Mills (2003) that females are characterized by tentative sentences, hedging, and indirect speech, while males are inclined to minimize face threats when talking to females (R. Lakoff, 1973). This is due to the cultural dimension of females in Indonesia, which emphasizes cooperation,

solidarity, and convenience. The reason is that the practitioner (female) had the power as a host in the context of RTS. She also obeyed the moderator regulations to let the participants express their opinions in order to gain more accurate and comprehensive information.

However, males minimize face threats when interacting with males without discriminating against political behavior in the context of this present study. Then, the 44-year-old male academic uses HM to show his pessimism. Therefore, this finding is contrary to the opinion of Mills (2003) that males generally use direct and optimistic statements when interacting with males and females.

This study concludes that the speech act that represents the use of HM are ASA of *expressing opinions* and DSA of *questioning, ordering, and prohibiting*. Male academics and practitioners frequently use HM more than others in talk shows. Another finding is that female practitioners use HM by *question tags*. The results of this study contribute to the concept of HM and gender in the category of formal interaction, which have been generally formulated previously by Adams (2009), Brown (1980), G. Lakoff (1973), Mills (2003), and Torres (2020). The results of this study uncovered the detailed aspects of HM functions in depth. Researchers only discuss in general based on speech events. They also explain the motive of the speech, but the review has not been fully verified. This is because the researchers did not hold interviews. Researchers only examined the motives in each utterance based on linguistic studies of the speech event in RTS.

Acknowledgments

This work was supported by the Postgraduate Scholarship of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia.

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