CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter provides the findings as well as the discussion of the study result on the use of hedging by students during oral presentation.

4.1.   Data Description

The data are the lexical forms which are considered functionally as hedging devices in the phrases and sentences that make the utterances are hedged in the 23 transcribed video recordings of students' oral presentation. The data were taken from the 10 up to 20 minutes oral presentation of each students' performance on the final test of Academic Presentation course by 11 Dik B students of English Department State University of Jakarta on May 24th and 26th, 2014.

4.2.   Findings and Discussion

The result of the study shows that the use of hedging devices in students' oral presentation is still lacking. To answer the research questions of this study, the researcher describes the result by some different parts in this chapter.

4.2.1. The Overall Number of Lexical Hedges

From the 23 oral presentation performances, the number of lexical forms that are considered as hedging devices are counted. In the total of running words in students'

oral presentation, there are only about 641 lexical hedges that are used by students. The average of the overall number of lexical hedges used in students' oral presentation is shown in the following table.

	Total of Running Words	Total of Hedges Used	Percentage
Average	29610	641	2.20%
Highest	1.159	48	3.71%
Lowest	910	9	0.99%

Table 1. The Overall Use of Hedging Devices by Students

The frequency of hedges used by all students in comparison to the total of running words in all students' presentation is only about 2.20% in average. Among all students, the highest percentage of hedges used is 3.71% with the number of approximately 48 lexical hedges out of 1.159 total running words, whereas the lowest is nearly 1% with 9 lexical hedges out of 910 total running words. Nevertheles, it cannot be interpreted that the students almost never use the hedging in their oral presentation since one lexical hedges can be used to hedge a phrase or a sentence which can consist of several words, depending on the students.

4.2.2. The Distribution of Hedging Devices

The hedging devices are used by each students differently in term of the frequency of use of each students, the frequency of each lexical forms, and the frequency of each functions categories.

In term of the frequency of hedging use by each students, the highest number of hedges used is 58 while the lowest one is 9 from the total of roughly 641 lexical hedges used by all students. Meanwhile in the distribution of hedging devices by their lexical forms can be seen as follows.

Forms	Frequency	Percentage
Modal Verbs	249	38.85%
Lexical Verbs	87	13.57%
Adverbs	184	28.71%
Prepositions	45	7.02%
Adjectives	6	0.94%
Nouns	2	0.31%
Others	68	10.61%
Total	641	

Table 2. The Distribution of Hedging Devices by Their Forms

The table shows that the most frequently used hedging devices in their lexical forms are modal verbs which reaches 38.85% of all hedges. Then it is followed by the adverbs with 28.71% and lexical verbs 13.57%. The rest consist of various kinds of forms of hedging devices used by students. The most lexical hedges that are mostly used during the oral presentation are *can*, *will*, and *kind of*, as shown in the following list of the frequently used lexical hedges.

Form	Percentage	Form	Percentage
can	24.18%	from	3.12%
will	9.52%	based on	2.34%
kind of	4.68%	usually	2.18%
I think	4.52%	according to	2.03%
maybe	3.74%	may	1.87%
like	3.74%	perhaps	1.56%
just	3.59%	could	1.40%
something like that	3.28%	like that	1.40%

Table 3. The Frequently Used Lexical Hedges

However, the hedging devices were not merely identified by their forms instead they were also analyzed on their functions. In this study, the distribution of the hedging devices is also described based on the hedging functions in which the researcher uses the hedging classification by Meyer (1994) that has been described in the previous chapter. There are five categories of hedging devices based on their functions, specifically in academic discourse, as proposed by Meyer, they are shields, approximators, speaker's personal doubt and direct involvement, emotionally charged intensifier, and compound hedges. The distribution of hedging devices according to Meyer classification is shown in the following chart.

THE OVERALL NUMBER OF HEDGING DEVICES USED PER CLASSIFICATION

SHIELDS
APPROXIMATORS
SPEAKER'S PERSONAL DOUBT AND DIRECT INVOLVEMENT
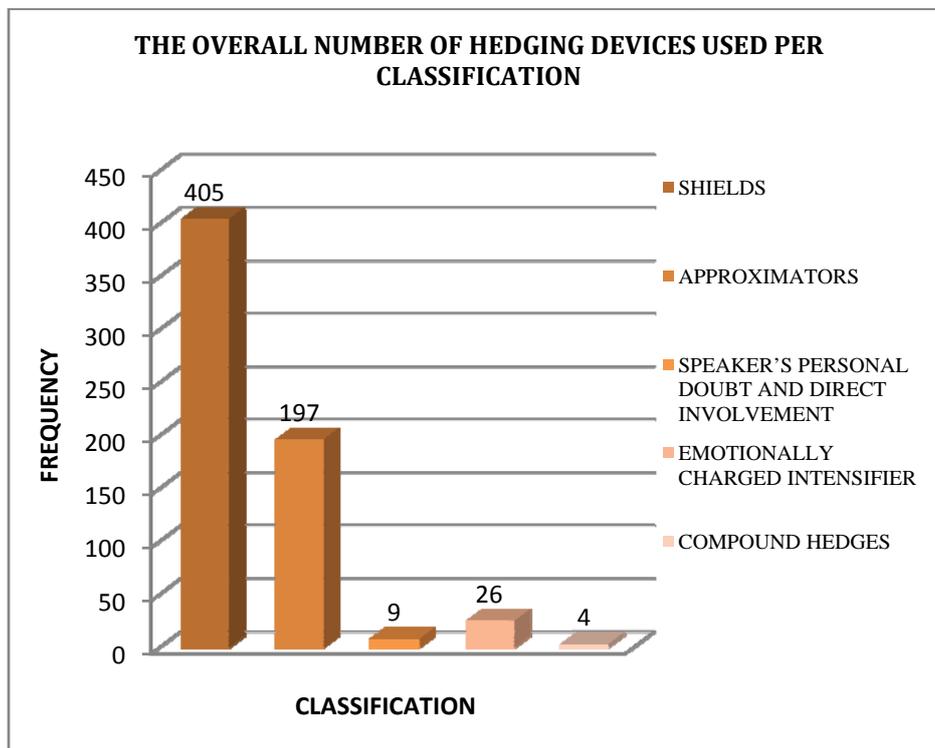EMOTIONALLY CHARGED INTENSIFIER
COMPOUND HEDGES

Figure 1. The Overall Number of Hedging Devices Used According to Meyer

Classification

As can be seen above, the most frequently used hedging is shield which reaches more than 60% of all hedging classifications. Then the least frequently used one in students' oral presentation is compound hedges, the combination of more than one hedging devices in an utterance.

Thus, the results above show the answer to the first research question in this study "what are the hedging devices used by students in their oral presentation?". Then, to explore the answer for the second research question "how do they use the hedging devices in their oral presentations?", the students' use of hedging will be described in accordance to their functions, mainly based on the five classifications of hedging devices by Meyer (1994) and will be supported by some related theories of hedging and

experts' views in the previous research. The further discussion on the students' use of hedging will be described in the next parts.

4.2.3. The Students' Use of Hedging Devices

As mentioned above, the hedging devices cannot simply be identified by their lexical forms. Hedging might be found in the utterances with the use of certain lexical forms, but one lexical form is not always used to perform hedging.

Therefore, this study adopts Salager-Meyer's (1994) research on hedging in which the study use both formal and functional analysis. In addition, Meyer's research is used as the basis in this study for its relevance to academic discourse, which would be somewhat different with the hedging use in general. Eventhough Meyer's work on hedging was on written text like research papers, the researcher believes that it can also be applied for this study since the spoken text analyzed in this research is on the students' oral presentation, specifically academic presentation, in which it is the presentation or the delivery of academic researches where the content can include academic writing such as research paper itself.

According to Meyer (1994), there are five classifications of hedging devices, they are shields, approximators, author's (here the speaker/ presenter) personal doubt and direct involvement, emotionally charged intensifier, and compound hedges. The students' use of hedging devices are mainly analyzed according but not limited to these functions in academic discourse. The further discussion and analysis will be presented in each classifications.

4.2.3.1.   Shields

The first type of hedging by Meyer is shield, which previously has been suggested by Prince et al (1987). Generally, shields are those function to show the the probability of statement and contribute to the speaker's level of certainty. When someone does not use shields in his/her statement, it can be considered that the the speaker is sure about the statement uttered. In academic world, we know that the science is dynamic so that it is necessarily important not to make 'a big claim' in the statement to be presented because the responsibility of the statement might be required. Eventhough the 'big claim' should be avoided, it does not mean that the presenter cannot be convincing. Instead, the presenter can still deliver his/her argument by adding the shields in the utterance.

As presented in the previous part, shields are the most frequently used hedges of all five classifications. Shields usually appear in form of modal verbs such as *can*, *will*, *could*, and *would*, and lexical verbs showing possibility of hypotheses being true (Meyer: 1994) like *I think* and *I suggest*.

Shields are divided into two sub classifications in performing hedging, plausibility shields and attribution shields in which each sub classification have different functions. Plausibility shields are usually used to show the possibility of statement or proposition made by the speaker being true in the speaker's point of view, whereas the attribution shields are used to refer a statement made to others to avoid responsibility of the statement presented.

The forms used by students in this study that are classified into shields are listed as follows.

Plausibility	Frequency	Attribution	Frequency
can	155	based on	15
could	9	according to	13
will	61	(st/sb) proves that…	1
would	8	(sb) suggest that…	1
may	12	(sb) say that…	2
might	3	(sb) stated that…	8
maybe	24	(sb.) argue that …	1
perhaps	10	(sb) write that…	1
I think	29	(sb) found that…	1
I suggest	2	(sb) view that…	1
tend to	8	(sb) report that…	1
seem	2	(sb/sth) show…	2
my suggestion…	1	(sb) cited that…	1
possible	4	some thought that …	1
probably	1	it is stated	1
likely	3	cited by (sb)	1
there's possibility	1	by	1
must	1	from	20

Table 4. The Forms Classified to Shields

From the list of shields above, it is clearly seen that the highest frequently used shields is *can*, followed by *will*, *I think*, *maybe*, and so on.

1) Plausibility Shields

This first sub classification of shields consists of some lexical form, mostly modal verbs and lexical verbs showing probability. The most frequent form used to perform plausibility shields in this study is *can*, which almost used by all students during their oral presentation. But the thing that should be highlighted here is that *can* do not always be a plausibility shield in a statement. *Can* is a modal verb that has some functions, it can serve as dientic modality that shows ability or necessity and can also be an epistemic modality which is usually used to state speaker's inference, judgment, or opinion that lead to the level of certainty as well as the probability of the proposition. The difference can be seen in the student 1's following statements:

(a) *This is the example how student <u>can</u> get crazy if they get stuck in their research*

(b) *So it's different by the major itself, as you <u>can</u> see the percentage*

In statement (a), the speaker shows that when student get stuck in their research, they can be crazy. It shows the speaker's inferences towards the phenomena mentioned. They perhaps can be crazy but it does not mean that they have the ability to be crazy, instead the speaker speculates that they may be crazy for getting stuck in their research. It either can happen or not, since it is just the speaker's judgment. Here, *can* serve as an

epistemic modal verb that functions to show the possibility of the statement happening. Meanwhile, in statement (b) the speaker explains the difference that is shown by the percentage displayed on the slide, which is able to be seen by the audience. It shows that the audience have the ability to see the percentage displayed. In this statement, *can* serve as a dientic modal verb showing the ability. Thus, *can* in statement (b) is not considered as hedging device since it does not carry the possibility or uncertainty towards the utterance. Therefore, *can* and other modal verbs that are counted as the hedging devices in this study are excluding those modal verbs that indicate ability or considered as permissive, directive, and the like, but instead including those indicating possibility or considered as assumptive, speculative, inferential, hypothetical, or potential to happen.

Generally, plausibility shields used by students during oral presentation are these epistemic modal verbs that show some functions for their use. Most of them are used to show suggestion (Wilamova: 2005) related to the topic presented like in some sentences below:

(a) *The purpose of this presentation is to give you information about semantic mapping that <u>can</u> be used as one of technique classroom later* (student 4)

(b) *The outside class education <u>can</u> be used as an extension of the classroom which brings authentic materials for the students to learn* (student 8)

(c) *This (K-W-L strategy) is one of the classroom assessment that <u>can</u> be used in order to improve your teaching and learning in the classroom* (student 11)

These kinds of sentences are used by almost all students in their presentation. It can be seen that the academic presentation is a way to share ideas among academic community and thus make the presenter 'suggest' their researches in which they can promote or propose techniques or methods in developing the academic world among their community themselves. The use of plausibility shields in those sentences also reduce the authoritativeness of the speaker (Wilamova: 2005) where the presenter just suggests the idea, so the audience have their own choice whether or not they want to implement the given suggestion. But this function is not only achieved through the use of modal verbs, instead the lexical verbs are also used by students to show suggestion like in the sentence below.

(a) *I suggest* *that there is a final test for this project like what… uh… speaking examination for the conversation* (student 4)

Besides, the students use the plausibility shields to state the claims that something can have some impacts to others. It is mostly used when the students want to say that their topics or the ideas suggested might have advantages or disadvantages in their use.

(a) *Classroom Assisted Oral Reading can help children to enrich their vocabulary* (student 2)

(b) *Peer assessment can enhance the students learning experience* (student 18)

(c) *this (technique) will allow student to more engaged in the classroom activities* (student 9)

The presence of modal verbs in the sentences above make the claims sound more tentative and soften the imposition carried out (Wilamova: 2005). If the modal *can* and *will* are ommitted, the claims will be too strong to the audience, thus they may ask for the 'guarantee' of the statement since the effect of the technique or method they claim, either advantages or disadvantages, might happen or not, they cannot assure that it will really work the way they assume. It also functions as to what Meyer said "strengthening the argument by weakening the claim" (1997) since the statements sound more cautious and tentative in this way.

Beside the modal verbs, the students frequently use lexical verb as plausibility shields like '*I think*' to show their opinion towards the topic as in (a), to provide the possible answer to the audience's question like in (b), as well as to offer appropriate solutions they have when asked by the audience as in (c) below. '*I think*' usually appear in the end of the presentation when they have the question and answer session.

(a) *I think going to the museum won't be that expensive, especially if you go through the public transport* (student 8)

(b) *I think one of the challenges to implement this model classroom activities is... it is needs uh needs high cost* (student 9)

(c) *I think it... it (is) applicable for all level of learner* (student 18)

In these examples, the hedging might changes the relationship between the content of the statement and the speaker by "implicating a level of uncertainty with respect to speaker's commitment" (Fraser: 2010). All these sentences shows how the speakers

might sound hesitant in giving the statement. In addition, *I think* in these sentences imply that the statements are not to be taken as something definitely true, rather as "a personal opinion, judgement or belief, which is open to further negotiation" (Wilamova: 2005). These functions can also be achieved for the use of probability adjective like *maybe* and *perhaps* in student's statement as in the example (a) and (b) below.

(a) *The obstacles are <u>maybe</u> uh... the chosen (choice) of the pictures* (student 15)

(b) *so if you go for the museum <u>perhaps</u>, for example, you make a worksheet about what kind of things that there is in this museum* (student 8)

Other plausibility shields used by students during oral presentation like *seem*, *tend to*, *likely*, *probably*, and the others have similar functions in making the statement sounds more tentative and thus contribute "to anticipate the eventual overthrow of a claim" (Hyland: 2005).

2) Attribution Shields

The second sub classification is attribution shields which generally are used when the speaker's statement is not fully his/her ideas and thus the speaker provides the reference of the statement. In this study, most of the students simply used preposition '*from*' in referring the information they use in their presentation back to the source or the actual owner of the ideas.

(a) *Then the second definition <u>from</u> Wikipedia, the classroom is a form of blended learning...* (student 9)

(b) *First <u>from</u> research of Isak Petersson and Thomas Schweers, the first, boys are victims of feminist ideologies* (student 14)

(c) *<u>From</u> Heald Taylor process writing is an approach which encourages ESL youngsters to...* (student 20)

These sentences used with the attribution of the reference "indicates the responsibility of the message is on someone other than the speaker" (Prince et.al: 1987). The other way of students use this hedging is mostly by "*according to*" and "*based on*" such as in the following sentences.

(a) *<u>According to</u> Draves, icebreaker are techniques used at the beginning of the first class ….* (student 22)

(b) *<u>Based on</u> Anderson in 1984, good learners make connection between prior knowledge and new knowledge ….* (student 11)

Having these kinds of shields in speaker's utterances shows the audience that the information presented is not the presenter's ideas rather the other's. It can avoid the responsibility of the content and especially in academic world, it shows the respect to the other people's work. In this study, the students also use other forms that serve as attribution shields, like simply mention the reference followed by lexical verbs as follows.

(a) *Allwright <u>argues</u>, no "'teacher-proof' teaching materials" or resources…* (student 8)

(b) *Sam Goldstein <u>stated</u> that homework as an intersection between school and home….* (student 12)

(c) *That's what Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary <u>said</u>* (student 17)

However, hedging is initially defined as "whose job to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy, vague or less vague" (Lakoff: 1972), hedging nowadays is not only those that create that kind of vague language, instead, just like this attribution shield in academic discourse, hedging can also contribute to the ethics in academic world with respects to the previous researchers' work and other source of information.

4.2.3.2.   Approximators

The second classification of hedging by Meyer is approximators, which express "heed and coyness" (Meyer: 1994). In this study, approximators is the second most frequently used hedging after shields with the 31.73% out of the total hedging used by student in their oral presentation. There are some forms of approximators used by students as listed below.

Adaptors	Frequency	commonly	1
kind of	30	mostly	6
like	24	dominantly	1
something like that	21	rarely	2
things like that	2	seldom	1
something like	2	sometimes	4

things like	1		almost	6
some kind of	1		simply	1
or something	5		just	23
something else	1			
and stuff	1			
like that	9		Rounders	Frequency
a bit/ little bit	2		about	7
to some extent	1		roughly	1
generally	1		nearly	5
usually	14		some	8
often	7		certain amount	1
common	5		at least	3

Table 5. The Forms Classified to Approximators

As can be seen in the table, the highest number used approximators is "*kind of*" which is followed by "*like*" and "*just*". Approximators, just like shields, are divided into two sub classifications, adaptors and rounders.

1) Adaptors

In approximators, adaptors are those relate to "class membership" like *kind of*, which can be considered similar to Lakoff's "degree of truth". Students usually use

these adaptors when they are about to define something by categorizing or classifying it typically.

(a) *In America this <u>kind of</u> activity is appropriate for the children* (student 2)

(b) *I think that uh students uh... toddlers, or little students can be given this <u>kind</u> <u>of</u> praise* (student 10)

Students also often use 'like' when they explain their proposed technique or methods with the example or the way it is done like in sentence (a) as well as describing what they actually mean as in (b) in the following.

(a) *We can also ask them another question <u>like</u> "what color is this flower?"* (student 8)

(b) *The games here is <u>like</u> action game...* (student 5)

Besides, students also use other forms that are quite similar to the above sentences, to define something typical to what is mentioned previously which they usually put in the end of statement like in the sentences below.

(a) *for example when the students did not uh... doing the assignment well, the teacher could ask them to rewrite again the assignment or <u>something like that</u>* (student 7)

(b) *it can be... we do it in mathematics... math, social, and <u>something like that</u>* (student 11)

Beside the "class membership", the students use the adaptors which are in the adverb form, mostly adverbs showing frequency like '*usually*' and '*often*' as in sentence (a) and

(b), as well as adverbs showing degree such as '*almost*' and '*just*' like in sentence (c) and (d) below.

(a) *Usually the teacher ask the student to discuss about... knowing first about the meaning of words in context* (student 15)

(b) *Praise often occur when someone have done or performed a good job…* (student 10)

(c) *I think the text that has been showed to you is almost the same with in Indonesia* (student 1)

(d) *They just have to click at the word…* (student 2)

The adverb of frequency and degree become the tools for the students "when exact figures are irrelevant or unavailable or when the state of knowledge does not allow the scientists to be more precise" (Meyer: 1997). It can also something that the presenter might see around him/her, but he/she does not really conduct a research to the exact condition. Therefore, most students do not state 'how often' could it be with the fixed frequency like 'once', 'twice', or any other adverbs that can show the actual frequency. Besides, students use adverbs of degree like 'just' that can "minimize the imposition" (Wilamova: 2005) which makes the utterance, for example in sentence (d) above, sounds to be something that is not difficult to do, which might also seem more persuasive to the audience when the speakers suggest a technique or method in their presentation.

2) Rounders

The other approximators suggested by Prince et al (1987) is rounders, in which he said can be used to "conveys a range". It is kind of similar with adaptors but rounders are usually used when the speaker want to present a quantitative data, like showing numbers or percentage. The number itself is actually gained from research, unlike the adaptors that may result from personal view, but still the speaker use rounders hedging that enables them "to express propositions with greater accuracy" (Hidayati et al: 2008).

In this study, the students use rounders like '*about*' and '*nearly*' before they mention the data in their presentation, as in the following examples.

(a) *Wikipedia has <u>about</u> 10 million articles in 253 different languages* (student 1)

(b) *When the brain active, it produces power <u>about</u> 10 to 23 watt* (student 6)

(c) *<u>Nearly</u> 40% of kids aged 8 and under have used tablets or smartphones in some capacity* (student 5)

(d) *Indonesia have <u>roughly</u> 300 million people* (student 17)

Using these rounders in presentation provides the audience with no exact number or data but somehow still considered as scientifically valid because they are the data taken from the research, not just the speaker's speculation. In this way, the speaker can achieve the 'greater accuracy' (Hidayati et al: 2008) than when they mention the number or data without approximators, for example, the data presented have a slight difference when proven later that might make the presenter considered inaccurate. Thus, having this kind of hedging in oral presentation may "enhances their chances of

ratification" (Meyer: 1997) as well as "limit the damage which may result from errors" (Hidayati et al: 2008).

4.2.3.3. Author's (Speaker's) Personal Doubt and Direct Involvement

With respect to the two classifications of hedging in academic discourse suggested by Prince et al (1987), Meyer added the other three classifications that she thought commonly appear in academic world. The third classification after shields and approximators is author's personal doubt and direct involvement where in this study is adopted to 'speaker' rather than 'author'. This hedging is typically similar with shields in use, but it focus more on the way the speaker present the statement based on their opinion. Look at the following statements.

(a) *I, personally... in my opinion, rather than buying expensive computer for the technology learning, I think it's better for us to spend little money for outside the classroom* (student 8)

(b) *what I have know that homework uh maybe included for the assessment to the students* (student 12)

In this study, the students used these forms that are considered as the third classification of hedging since they show how their personal doubt toward their own argument, and involve themselves directly to make their statement valid based on their views, thus not to be judged as scientifically true rather to be perceived as the speaker's perspective on the utterance.

Students usually used this hedging in the question and answer session when they are 'attacked' by questions that they are not really sure of the answer but they need to answer them immediately with the appropriate answer for the audience. That is why instead of making a 'big claim' on something they are not sure of, the speaker put these kinds of phrases to protect their face and respect others' face (Tang: 2013) that might also cover their limited knowledge on the subject questioned.

However, this hedging type is rarely used by the students in this study since maybe this hedging is necessary to respond direct questions, which in this study, the time for question and answer is very limited.

4.2.3.4. Emotionally-Charged Intensifier

This kind of hedging, like the previous type, has no clear definition in the lexical forms that usually signal the hedging. Generally, emotionally-charged intensifier are those "comment words used to project the authors" (Meyer: 1997) that can be considered as the way speaker see the knowledge or phenomena in the topic presented or speaker' feel and attitude toward it. Thus, we can say that this hedging, just like its name, make the utterances stated by speaker contain the speaker's emotion and intensifier.

In this study, the statements used by students are those contains the adverbs that make the statements sounds quite subjective like 'very' , 'so', 'too', 'really' and 'relatively' followed by the adjectives. The examples in students' oral presentations are as follows.

(a) *Pair taping is a <u>very simple</u> method to be used to relieve the nervousness of the students when they speak English* (student 3)

(b) *The differences is <u>too slight</u>* (student 12)

(c) *The problem solving itself is <u>really important</u>* (student 16)

(d) *For us, teachers wannabe are ready to use this method proposed by Schneider in 1993 because it is a <u>relatively easy</u> to use method* (student 3)

4.2.3.5.   Compound Hedges

Among all classifications proposed by Meyer, compound hedges is the least used by students during oral presentation. As suggested by Meyer, compound hedges comprise "strings of hedges" (Meyer:1997) that contain more than one hedges in a series, it can be double, treble, or quadruple hedges. Among all five classifications, compound hedges is the least used by students during oral presentation in this study which does not even reach 1% in their use. The examples are the following.

(a) *The students <u>probably may</u> answer with um..how about carrier mom* (student 11)

(b) *... and <u>seems like</u> they didn't have to work or anything* (student 14)

(c) *... they will have fears that failure or getting a lower score <u>can indicate</u> something about their ability* (student 10)

It is also similar with shields since usually appear in the form of plausibility shields, specifically in the form of modal verb followed by lexical verb as in (c), or probability adverb with modal verb, and other forms from double hedges up to quadruple, which

however, in this study, there are no students using treble or quadruple hedges, they use the double hedges instead.

Meanwhile, in function, compound hedges serve as same of other hedging type function, especially shields, which relates to "the probability of a proposition or a hypothesis being true" (Meyer: 1997). Thus, the use of compound hedges might contribute to the higher degree of speaker's uncertainty that they "weaken their claim" to make their statements have the greater accuracy which would be scientifically valid to be presented, shared and discussed within the academic community in knowledge spreading and development.