Russian lexical and syntactic hedges in dissertation reviews

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Abstract. The author analyzes Russian lexical and syntactic hedges as a rhetorical strategy for mitigating the negative evaluation of the reviewed research. The relevance of the study is due to the ongoing attempts to reconceptualize the nature of academic discourse, which is increasingly viewed both as an interactive space and an information environment. This approach determines the need to study metadiscourse as an effective strategy for constructing a harmonious dialogue between the reviewer and the author of the dissertation under review. The purpose of the study is to identify lexical and grammatical categories of hedges and their rhetorical functions in the thesis reviews. A corpus of 90 dissertation reviews published on the websites of Russian dissertation councils in 2019–2022 was used as research materials. The object of the study was the genre of a dissertation review, where for the first time the linguistic means of mitigating negative evaluation on two linguistic levels were identified. This determines the scientific novelty of this study. To analyze the lexical and syntactic realizations of the hedging strategy, the methods of quantitative and interpretive analysis were used. The quantitative analysis revealed that the hedging strategy is mainly verbalized with the help of verbs, adverbs and introductory constructions. The interpretive analysis showed that hedges perform a wide range of communicative functions: shifting the communicative focus; modal mitigation of criticism; deintensification. The research contributes to linguistics disciplines such as pragmalinguistics, text theory and discourse analysis. The prospects of the research are an analysis of lexical and grammatical categories of other metadiscursive strategies.

Keywords: academic discourse, dissertation review, hedging, negative evaluation, softening, Russian syntactic construction, Russian lexical item, modality

Introduction

In contemporary linguistics, with the dominant principle of anthropocentrism, academic discourse is an important object, as it is a space for personality expression with its characteristic system of life values and attitudes, as well as

speech-thought operations, inevitably accompanied with critical reflection. Academic discourse is increasingly seen not only as an information environment, but also as an interactive space. The changed approach to understanding academic communication requires the study of rhetorical strategies for an effective dialogue with the addressee. Hedging is one of such strategies.

The term "hedging" was introduced by J. Lakoff, who defined hedges as language units with vague semantics (Lakoff, 1973). This definition has been repeatedly used as a starting point in a number of studies (see, for example: Vlasyan, 2019; Channel, 1994). Thus, G.R. Vlasyan conceptualized hedging as "a pragmatic strategy that performs the protective function of an utterance by presenting objects and phenomena as vague and ambiguous" (Vlasyan, 2019: 75). However, in the linguistic literature one can also find a definition of hedging as a politeness strategy (Brown, Levinson, 1987). One of the basic concepts of this approach is the notion of face, a communicative image constructed by the author in their interaction with the reader. P. Brown and S. Levinson distinguished two types of face – positive and negative. The positive image is based on the desire of the author to be accepted by others. The negative one is based on the desire to have freedom of action and not to allow others to interfere. Politeness is seen as the primary motivating factor for hedging, and academic discourse is defined as a verbal interaction where face-saving (Myers, 1989) and the ability to avoid apodictic statements ignoring readers' desire to draw independent conclusions are crucial (Hübler, 1983). According to J. Myers, presenting one's own views always involves tension: staying within a certain paradigm and generally accepted theory, the author must produce new knowledge, endangering other researchers and the scientific community on the whole. To avoid this, the author has to convince readers that his position does not exclude the existence of alternative points of view (Myers, 1989).

The concept of politeness generates the definition underlying this study: hedging as a rhetorical strategy for mitigating the illocutionary force of a categorical statement, reducing the undesirable effects of the speaker's communicative behavior (Fraser, 2010) and ensuring the success of communication by creating a sense of psychological comfort (Caffi, 2007).

In this perspective, hedging is studied in a number of foreign works based primarily on an interdisciplinary or intercultural approach. For example, from an interdisciplinary perspective, N. Haufiku and J. Kangira analyzed the role of hedges in master theses and concluded that the frequency of this strategy is predetermined by the stylistic norms of writing accepted in a particular discursive community (Haufiku, Kangira, 2018). O. Dontcheva-Navratilova, who investigated cross-cultural differences of hedging in English-language academic discourse by native and non-native speakers, found that the former far more often soften the illocutionary force of an utterance (Dontcheva-Navratilova, 2016). N. Thuy, who also outlined the cross-cultural aspect of linguistic analysis of hedging, found that in Vietnamese academic discourse modal verbs in hedging strate-

gy are used more often than in English discourse (Thuy, 2018). A cross-cultural study by A. Rezanejad showed that unlike Vietnamese academics, Iranian authors for hedging purposes more often use adverbs-approximators (Rezanejad, 2015).

In Russian linguistics, the strategy of hedging has not received such close attention, but a number of Russian scholars focus on studying the strategy of mitigating the illocutionary force of the proposition. A review of their works showed that most of them consider hedging in connection with the categories of politeness and (un)categoricality. Thus, N.N. Panchenko and Y.A. Volkova, demonstrating the relationship between these categories, convincingly proved that the Russian academic discourse is characterized by a high categoricality and low frequency of hedging, which determines its conflictogenicity (Panchenko, Volkova, 2021). T.V. Larina, who made an attempt to analyze academic reviews in English and Russian from the point of view of their categorical/non-categorical features, came to the conclusion that Russian texts are inherently emotional, straightforward and categorical, which distinguish them from emotionally restrained and constructive English reviews (Larina, 2019).

Although these studies contain valuable theoretical material, studying hedging as an effective strategy of interaction between the author and the reader in the space of academic discourse is quite promising. Moreover, the dissertation review as a critical genre of academic discourse is rarely an object of metadiscursive analysis and is generally understudied in contemporary linguistics. The analysis of theoretical sources found only a few works devoted to separate linguistic, discursive and metadiscursive aspects of reviews. The scientists call evaluation an obligatory semantic component of a review, and evaluation is regarded as an identifying feature of the genre. Thus, L.B. Nikitina and K.Yu. Malyshkin, having examined the critical genre of academic discourse through the prism of categoricality, came to the conclusion about the necessity of negative evaluation implication, which allows to soften the reviewer's position. At the same time, according to the authors, positive evaluation "accepts both indirect and direct ways of expression and is practically free from ethical taboos" (Nikitina, Malyshkin, 2015: 74). Exploring the pragmatic features of the dissertation review, Yu.A. Petrenko distinguished four types of evaluation (general axiological evaluation, intellectual, emotional and practical) and came to the conclusion that the representation of evaluative meaning is determined by the parameters of institutionalism (Petrenko, 2020). Typical ways of expressing evaluation in dissertation reviews became the object of O.S. Bakanova's research. She referred lexemes with metaphorical expression of quantitative-qualitative meaning to the most productive means (Bakanova, 2019). E.Yu. Viktorova chose another metadiscursive component of reviews for analysis – authorizing constructions, which, as the author showed, reduce the categoricality of negative evaluations, emphasize the positive aspects of the study and contribute to strengthening the perlocutionary impact on the addressee (Viktorova, 2022).

It seems that the metadiscursive aspects of this genre as part of Russian academic discursive space deserve closer attention in linguistics, and the small number of Russian works in this area determines the scientific novelty of the present study, aimed, inter alia, at bridging the gap between Russian and foreign linguistics, where the problem of categoricality mitigation in evaluative genres of academic discourse (hedging) has been widely covered (Alcaraz-Ariza, 2011; Hyland, Diani, 2009; Giannoni, 2007; Zou, Hyland, 2020, etc.).

Thus, **the aim of the study** is to quantitatively and interpretatively analyze lexical and syntactic means of the Russian language that actualize the metadiscursive strategy of hedging in the texts of dissertation reviews. In order to achieve the aim, the types, frequency and functions of lexical units and syntactic constructions acting as hedges in the focal genre are identified. It seems that the study of multilevel linguistic means will expand the understanding of the ways of hedging strategy and identify the metadiscursive features of the genre.

Methods and materials

The material of this study included the Russian-language reviews of the official opponents published on the websites of the dissertation councils of the Adygei State University[1], Kemerovo State University[2], Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia[3], Siberian Federal University[4], Novosibirsk State Pedagogical University[5], Irkutsk National Research Technical University[6] in 2019–2022. By the method of continuous sampling 90 reviews were selected. The texts contained 121, 234 words.

To analyze lexical and syntactic means of hedging, quantitative and interpretive analysis was used. Quantitative analysis was supplemented with interpretative analysis in order to clarify the communicative functions of the lexical unit or syntactic construction identified as a hedge. The selected hedges were divided into two categories: (1) lexical means: adjectives, adverbs, verbs and particles; (2) syntactic means: introductory constructions, negative constructions, adversative constructions, concessive constructions, interrogative constructions.

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[1] Adygei State University. Postgraduate studies, doctoral studies, dissertation councils. Retrieved August 12, 2022, from https://www.adygnet.ru/nauka/aspirantura-doktorantura-dissertatsionnye-sovety/

[2] Kemerovo State University. Dissertation Council D 212.088.01. Retrieved August 12, 2022, from https://kemsu.ru/science/dissertation-councils/diss-212-088-01

[3] Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia. Announcement of the thesis defense. Retrieved August 12, 2022, from https://disser.herzen.spb.ru/Preview/Karta/karta_000000764.html

[4] Scientific and Innovative Portal of SFU. Retrieved September 23, 2022, from https://research.sfu-kras.ru/sites/research.sfu-kras.ru

[5] NSPU. Dissertation Council D 212.172.03. Retrieved September 23, 2022, from https://nspu.ru/nauka/dissertatsionnye-sovety/dissertatsionnyy-sovet-d-212-172-03

[6] Irkutsk National Research Technical University. Dissertation councils. Retrieved September 23, 2022, from https://www.istu.edu/deyatelnost/obrazovanie/aspirantura_i_doktorantura/sovety/18302

Here are the stages of the analysis presented in this article.

1. Selection of reviews with the help of the continuous sampling and their export into a Microsoft Word file.

2. Text analysis aimed at identifying the linguistic means of hedging.

3. Distribution of hedges into two groups: lexical means and syntactic means.

4. Allocation of hedges to subgroups within the two groups.

5. Determination of the frequency of hedging lexical and syntactic means in the corpus under study.

6. Summarizing the obtained results in tables.

7. Interpretation of the obtained results in order to identify the functions of the linguistic means of hedging in the context of evaluative statements.

Results

The intentionality of the discursive behavior of the speaker/writer manifests itself in the choice of the most adequate to the communicative situation linguistic signs. This choice is not accidental. It is conditioned by the nature of academic discourse, its norms requiring members of the academic community to be tolerant of a different point of view and research results. The choice is based on focusing attention on a certain component of a given situation. Partial withdrawal of undesirable negative information from the pragmatic focus of the statement, deintensification and mitigation of negative evaluation can be realized with the help of hedges, which allow the addressee to avoid communicative risks and to achieve the balance of negative and positive evaluations.

Table summarizes the results of the quantitative analysis of Russian language lexical and syntactic means of hedging in the corpus under study.

The frequency of Russian lexical and syntactic hedges

Category	Frequency
Lexical means	*318*
Adjectives	24
Adverbs	94
Verbs	196
Particles	4
Syntactic means	*154*
Introductory constructions	47
Negative constructions	39
Adversative constructions	26
Concessive constructions	11
Interrogative constructions	31
Total	**472**

The research showed that the most frequent linguistic means of hedging are lexical units, among which the most frequent are verbs and adverbs. Among the syntactic means, introductory and negative constructions prevail.

Discussion

Criticism is a basic academic activity. Representatives of the academic community inevitably have to evaluate the results obtained by other researchers both in the discursive space of their own scientific articles and in the process of reviewing scientific papers of other scientists. They have to follow the norms of scientific ethics – reduce categorical judgments, reject categoricalness and prefer indirect evaluation. Hedges in the evaluative genres of academic discourse are indicators of the author's pragmatic competence and a guarantee of effective communication with the addressee, they create an optimal balance of negative and positive evaluations and construct an image of a communicatively competent partner. As S.T. Nefedov rightly notes, "for ethical professional reasons it is especially important to dose the categoricalness of critical remarks when assessing the position of colleagues in the scientific discipline and generally accepted normative knowledge" (Nefedov, 2017: 599).

In the studied corpus of texts, hedging is represented by a system of multi-level linguistic means, implementing a range of communicative functions (Boginskaya, 2022).

Adjectives

This lexical group is the smallest (24 uses) in the analyzed texts and is represented by alethic adjectives (7 uses) and adjectives with the meaning of indefiniteness (17 uses). Here is an example from the analyzed corpus of reviews.

(1) ***I consider it possible*** *to supplement the dissertator's research position on the following issues.*

The alethic adjective acts as a marker of non-categoricalness, because its semantics indicates that the opponent represents only one of the possible options for the research position. Thus, the hedge, acting as a modus mitigator, weakens the negative emotional impact on the dissertator by reducing the illocutionary force of the utterance. The predicate in the first person strengthens the mitigator, indicating the subjectivity of the evaluation. Thus, mitigation is realized by a combination of lexical means – a verb of epistemic modality in the first person and an alethic adjective.

Adjectives with the semantics of indefiniteness create a non-categorical interpretative statement, narrowing the negative characteristic of the results obtained by the dissertator.

(2) *Among other things, this statement comes into **some** contradiction with the indication that the thesis has identified "ethnocultural features of discursive practices of the active legal field".*

The negative tone is weakened with the help of the semantic operator, which reduces the intensity of the feature and the accuracy of the propositional content. The deintensification of the evaluation with the help of the semantics of uncertain-

ty allows to make it less categorical, mitigating the negative emotional impact on the thesis. As V.V. Vinogradov noted, "as if the speaker hesitates to recognize his words as an adequate reflection of reality or the only possible form of expression of the thought conveyed. Therefore, he supplies his statements with reservations, stylistic evaluations and notes" (Vinogradov, 1972: 577).

Adverbs

Adverbs are the second most frequent category of lexical means. The most productive, as the analysis showed, were adverbs of measure and degree (47 uses), which reduce the accuracy of the proposition:

(3) *In addition, the introduction does not clearly point out the differences between the Anglo-Saxon and American legal tradition.*

The fragment is a vivid example of the adverb of measure and degree which mitigates the negative evaluation expressed by the qualitative adverb *clearly*, allowing the author of the review to avoid categorical judgments.

In the second example, the adverb of measure and degree correlates with a pronoun with the semantics of indeterminacy. Deintensifiers allow the author to unobtrusively and kindly point out to the weaknesses in the work.

(4) ***Some*** *of the provisions to be defended* ***slightly*** *repeat the information presented in the text of the thesis.*

Temporal adverbs (31 uses) are also a productive means of mitigating the negative impact on the dissertator by pointing out the irregular negative phenomena in the reviewed study:

(5) *In the text of the paper, we* ***sometimes*** *find expressions such as "prevalence", "large numbers"...*

The adverb *sometimes* understates the meaning of the disadvantage to which the opponent draws attention, expressing the moderate intensity of the feature.

Another group in this lexical category is represented by adverbs of alethic modality (16 uses), which allow opponents to present a critical judgment as possible, alternative.

(6) *In Chapter 1, it is* ***possible*** *to divide the phenomena into more groups than it is suggested by the author.*

Critical evaluation is changed from the actual to the possible, which is expressed through the alethic adverb characterizing the opponent's attitude towards cooperative, benevolent communication. Following the principle of politeness, the addressee minimizes disapproval and disagreement with the structure chosen by the dissertator. Such alethic units are an effective means of non-categorical contestation of the dissertator's position and of presenting the reviewer's position in restrictive modus, assuming alternative points of view.

Verbs

Our analysis of the text corpus revealed three groups of verbs-hedges: verbs of epistemic modality (102 uses), verbs of deontic modality (53 uses), and verbs of alethic modality (41 uses).

The first group proved to be the most productive. Here are some examples.

(7) *We **believe** that Internet commentary is, after all, a genre of popular scientific discourse.*

(8) *It **seems** contradictory to use the concept of communicative tolerance in the hypothesis.*

The modification of the propositional content modus in the examples 1, 2 softens categoricalness by shifting the focus from negative evaluation to the subjectivity of the opponent's opinion and transferring criticism to the field of the possible through axiological predicates, which "enter the structure of evaluation, uniting its subject and object" (Volf, 2014: 97). Verbs of epistemic modality mark the position of the opponent, help producing critical statements in the alternative modus.

The verbs of deontic modality were less frequent, but they were also productive and helped to convey the communicative intention of the opponent in an indirect form and thus reduce the intensity of illocution:

(9) *The author **should** have elaborated on which rocks soil is formed faster.*

(10) *I **would** like to see such results in further works of the author.*

(11) *I **would** suggest splitting this point into 2.*

Verbs of deontic modality are used to express a wish or recommendation to correct part of the work or to continue the development of the problem in a promising, from the opponent's point of view, direction. The verbs testify the author's intention to express a respectful attitude to the dissertator, readiness for dialogue and indicate the desire to follow the cooperative principle and the principle of politeness (Volf, 2014). The subjunctive mood serves as a speech signal of the addressee's communicative intentions. Let us note that the main meaning of the subjunctive mood in this context is the reduction of categorical judgment, the expression of hypothetical desire (9), recommendation or advice (8, 10). T.V. Larina defines this use as pragmatic, used to soften the categoricalness of statements, in contrast to the semantic use, indicating the irreality of the situation (Larina, 2009). As R.D. Brecht notes, "the irreality indicated in these sentences by means of *would* consists in a softened, less categorical way of expression, which is one of the functions of the subjunctive mood in Russian" (Brecht, 1985: 107). Let us point out that this type of subjunctive mood appears only in a narrow circle of genres, including the scientific review, which imitates the dialogue between the opponent and the dissertator. In addition, the use of the pronoun in first person singular in example 10 changes the illocutionary force of

the evaluative statement – softens categoricalness and indicates its subjective-personal nature.

Finally, verbs of alethic modality, indicating the possibility/impossibility of action, are the fewest verb group in the studied texts of reviews.

(12) *These circumstances **may** indicate the unreliability of the conclusions.*

The aim of the hedge is to show, against the background of criticism, that not necessarily the qualification of the event offered by the opponent is the only correct one: under certain conditions, the thesis conclusions can be credible. Thus, hedging with its modality of possibility makes it possible to convey information about the non-categoricalness of the opponent's proposed qualification of the conclusions made in the dissertation.

Particles

Functional parts of speech mitigating negative evaluation include in the texts analyzed particles of epistemic modality with the semantics of doubt.

(13) *We can **hardly** agree with the dissertator that this phenomenon has not been scientifically described at present.*

(14) *This interpretation is **scarcely** correct.*

In the beginning of the statement, the particles *hardly* and *scarcely* have the qualificative meaning 'doubt', influence the semantics of the predicate and indicate that the addressee does not have sufficient objective data to assert the fact and operates only with his own opinion, not based on knowledge of all the conditions relevant to the qualifying conclusions. These particles, located on the modal scale of credibility closer to negation, are an effective means of polite non-categorical contestation of the dissenter's opinion and serve as a communicative means of the addressee's qualifying reactions, which at the speech level reflect a pragmatically determined worldview through specific speech means (Nagornyy, 2019).

Introductory constructions

Among the introductory constructions weakening the illocutionary force of the negative evaluation the most frequent are those that express an emotional assessment or point out the subjective nature of the addressee's position:

(15) ***Unfortunately**, the paper does not present fundamental works on this topic.*

(16) ***In our opinion**, the thesis solves more problems than stated by the dissertator.*

(17) ***It seems to us** that a more detailed description of the rationale for the selection of authors and texts for the analysis should have been given.*

The hedging strategy, actualized with the help of introductory constructions, allows softening the interactive parameters of the statement by shifting the com-

municative focus from the errors of the reviewed work to the addressee (15, 16) or his emotional state (14). Pointing out one's own point of view deprives categoricalness. It is important that in (16) the hedging strategy is implemented with the help of two different-level means – the introductory construction, indicating that the addressee is the source of information, and the verb of deontic modality in the subjunctive mood. This combination allows minimizing the negative evaluation and highlights the opponent's intention to construct a harmonious dialogue with the thesis author.

Negative constructions

The next group of syntactic means of mitigating criticism are negative constructions that reduce the unambiguity of a negative characteristic:

(18) ***It is not entirely clear*** *whether the results obtained are applicable to the conditions of other models drag.*

(19) *The titles of the paper chapters* ***do not fully correspond*** *to their content.*

(20) *It* ***remains not quite clear*** *why only in chapter 4 the author turns to a theoretical discussion of the concepts ...*

(21) *...analytical increment and critical revision of points of view* ***is not always clearly expressed*** *by the dissertator.*

Constructions with the negative particle *not* allow opponents to present the shortcomings of the thesis as less noticeable and significant, reduce the intensity of the evaluative feature and indicate the non-absolute nature of the evaluation.

Oppositional and concessive constructions

The contrast between praise and criticism is a less productive rhetorical strategy in the studied corpus. It is actualized with the help of contradictory constructions with the conjunctions "however" and "but" and concessive constructions with the conjunctions "despite" and "though":

(22) *On pp. 96–97, the author offers a distinction between an artistic image as a bearer of aesthetic and emotional principles and a symbol as a bearer of existential and cognitive principles.* ***However****, the artistic image also has a cognitive nature.*

In this example, the adversative conjunction marks the transition from a positive assessment to a remark – the incomplete characteristics of the artistic image offered by the author. The juxtaposition of disadvantages and advantages helps to implicate criticism and present the negative assessment as less categorical.

(23) ***Despite the general correct use of terminological units in the work****, the author's interpretation of two concepts, significant for the main idea of the research, remains not quite clear...*

Combining in one sentence positive evaluation and criticism makes the latter less rigid, creates a favorable emotional background for a harmonious dialogue

with the dissertator. In this case, the dominant in the combination of polar assessments will be the positive one: weaknesses are emphasized against the background of a significant result.

Interrogative constructions

Among hedging syntactic means there are also interrogative constructions neutralizing the negative connotation by involving the addressee in the discussion and contributing to a more friendly atmosphere.

As the analysis showed, the most productive interrogative constructions were questions-recommendations, question-answer complexes, interrogative-affirmative and interrogative-negative constructions.

All questions-recommendations in the analyzed texts included verbs of deontic modality with the interrogative particle, which expresses a connotation of doubt. By incorporating such questions into critical discourse, the opponent suggests that the dissertator should look at the problem in a different way or pay attention to a different aspect of the phenomenon under study. An expression of doubt involving the modal verb and the particle deprives the statement of its categoricalness and imperativee nature.

(24) *Shouldn't attention have been paid to the functioning of Christian religious names, touching upon the peculiarities of their use?*

An indirect negative evaluation does not qualify the statement as an unobjectionable judgment, nor does it suggest that the opponent's position is categorical. In suggesting that the dissertator should address the specifics of the use of religious names, the opponent does not elevate his personal opinion to the rank of an absolute, deploying a critical assessment of the study results in a concessive mode, which proposes several solutions to a single problem.

We should also pay attention to question-answer complexes, which eliminate the excessive categoricalness of an evaluative statement.

(25) *How justified is the use of a large number of terms in the work, which, **in our opinion**, are not well-established in domestic linguistics? We **believe** that the author **should** have used more appropriate Russian equivalents.*

To mitigate the criticism, the opponent uses the interrogative construction as a syntactic means of demonstrating interest, which allows to implicate a remark about the excessive terminological nature of the work. The question is followed by a statement containing an answer to the question posed, framed as a subjective opinion-recommendation. Subjectivity is marked with an epistemic verb in the first person, and recommendation is expressed with a deontic verb in the subjunctive mood.

The authors of the texts under analysis also used interrogative-negative and interrogative-affirmative constructions as regulators of the illocutionary force

of the utterance and means of softening categoricalness. Here is an example of the first type:

(26) *On the whole, the dissertator has successfully selected examples, the number of which allows us to speak about the representativeness of the sample. But quite a large corpus belongs to the middle of the twentieth century, when the traditions of scientific discussion were quite different, and the text often passed into propaganda discourse. In the 1960s these features began fading away, as can also be seen in the dissertator's examples. So was it worth taking them?*

The question posed by the opponent is almost equal to the negative construction "you shouldn't have". This form of criticism helps to implicate disagreement with the dissertator's choice and soften the negative evaluation. The opponent's intention to create a favorable emotional background is also indicated by the positive evaluation preceding the indirect criticism. The antithesis of praise and criticism is marked by the antithetical conjunction *but*.

Conclusion

The article shows that hedging is an integral component of the evaluative genre of academic discourse. It performs the functions of weakening the illocutionary force of the critical statement and establishing a constructive, harmonious dialogue with the dissertator.

As the analysis demonstrated, in opponents' reviews hedging implements the following communicative purposes: (1) shifting the focus of the statement; (2) modus mitigating criticism; (3) deintensification (semantic restriction of negative evaluation, pointing out the irregularity or incompleteness of the feature).

The study revealed that hedging is expressed with the help of a system of lexical and syntactic means, among which the most productive were verbs, adverbs and introductory constructions.

We must admit that the conclusions about the frequency, varieties and functions of the lexical and syntactic means of the Russian language, which actualize the hedging strategy, were formulated on the basis of the analysis of 90 reviews. So these conclusions should not be interpreted as final because of the limited corpus. More extensive material can confirm or refute the results obtained and identify other linguistic means of mitigating the negative evaluation used by the opponents.

As a research prospect, we can point out the need for a comparative analysis of hedging means in Russian-language reviews, compiled by representatives of different branches of knowledge. The specific cliches in reviews, the influence of stereotypes and formal prescriptions on the author's desire for individual self-expression and creativity is also of interest. Despite its stereotypical nature, the genre of review does not exclude the individuality of the author's style, which is also manifested in attempts to implicate a negative evaluation.

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Научная статья

Лексико-синтаксические актуализаторы хеджирования в русском языке: опыт анализа отзывов о диссертации

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Аннотация. Анализируются русские лексико-синтаксические актуализаторы хеджирования как риторической стратегии смягчения негативной оценки результатов рецензируемого исследования. Актуальность работы обусловлена переосмыслением природы академического дискурса, который рассматривается не только как информационная среда, но и как интерактивное пространство. Данный подход детерминирует потреб-

ность изучения языковых средств конструирования гармоничного диалога с адресатом. Цель исследования – количественный и интерпретативный анализ лексико-синтаксических средств русского языка, актуализирующих стратегию хеджирования в корпусе исследуемых текстов. Материалом послужили 90 отзывов официальных оппонентов о диссертациях, опубликованных на сайтах диссертационных советов в 2019–2022 гг. Научную новизну определяет использование в качестве объекта исследования жанра отзыва о диссертации, в котором впервые изучаются языковые средства смягчения негативной оценки, функционирующие на двух языковых уровнях. Для анализа лексико-синтаксических средств, актуализирующих стратегию хеджирования, применялись методы количественного и интерпретативного анализа. Результаты количественного анализа показали, что в текстах отзывов стратегия хеджирования преимущественно актуализируется с помощью глаголов, наречий и вводных конструкций. Интерпретативный анализ выявил, что хеджи реализуют несколько коммуникативных функций: смещение фокуса высказывания, модусная митигация критики и деинтенсификация негативной оценки. Исследование вносит вклад в изучение академического дискурса, а также в такие разделы лингвистики, как прагмалингвистика, теория текста и дискурса. Перспективным направлением может стать анализ лексико-грамматических средств русского языка, участвующих в актуализации других метадискурсивных стратегий.

Ключевые слова: академический дискурс, негативная оценка, смягчение, русские синтаксические конструкции, русские лексические единицы, модальность