CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL REVIEW

This chapter explains the theories supporting the research. It covers the description of hedges, evasiveness, speaker-oriented hedges, hearer-oriented hedges, and content-oriented hedges.

2.1 Hedges

As mentioned in chapter one, *"a hedge is an expression used to make things more or less fuzzy for what the utterance stated may not be totally accurate or not really what the speaker means"* (Lakoff 1972; Yule 1996). Here is the example taken from Heng and Tan (2002):

> *I believe that we need to further explore the causes behind this child abuse.*

The expression *I believe* in the sentence above is used to mitigate the propositions of what the speaker actually means which is the need for further exploration of the causes behind a child abuse. The accuracy of the proposition, however, becomes fuzzy for it may be the speaker's belief only. Thus, the expression *I believe* may be identified as a hedge.

As mentioned above, a hedge gives fuzziness to things. Fuzziness is synonymous with uncertainty as Sandova (2010) suggested; which is the term used in this research. Therefore, it may be defined that hedges are expressions used to make things become uncertain in terms of the meaning of utterance. By

making things uncertain, hedges may be used for several things. Thus, it leads to the functions of hedges which will be discussed in the next sub chapter.

2.2 Functions of Hedges

According to Sandova (2010), there are nine functions of hedges. They, from the most often used to the least, are attenuation, assumption, hearer-oriented uncertainty, unspecified reference, hesitation, content-oriented uncertainty, negative politeness, detachment, and evasiveness.

Attenuation serves, *"the function of attenuating the forthcoming part of the utterance and thus, the illocutionary force of the proposition is weakened,"* Sandova (2010:138). According to Sandova (2010), assumption serves the function of not making a firm assertion, and not interested in taking full responsibility to the claims. Hearer-oriented uncertainty, *"relates to the speaker's uncertainty concerning the addressee's attitudes or likely response in the interaction,"* Holmes (1990:189) as stated in Sandova's research (2010:143); the definition may be interpreted as the speaker being unsure about hearer's reaction towards the conversation. Unspecified reference relates to the vagueness of the expression used by the speaker. However, the expression that represents unspecified reference does not carry any semantic meaning, thus, it does not, *"contribute to the factual meaning of utterances,"* as stated by Sandova (2010:145). Hesitation is used as the first immediate reaction for the speaker may find difficulties in conveying an answer. Content-oriented uncertainty serves the function as *"an attempt of the speaker to disclaim the responsibility for his/her*

words and thus to protect his/her face," Sandova (2010:150). *"Negative politeness [...] may be considered as a face-saving strategy of the speaker,"* Sandova (2010:152). Detachment expresses speaker's less involvement with the utterances. Evasiveness may be used in order to avoid things.

Even though the evasiveness is the least hedges used, it leads to the further research for suggesting a new finding proposed by Sandova. The form of evasiveness is different from the others. The evasiveness' form takes not only word, expression, or short phrase, but also the whole sentence. Thus, the writer is interested in analyzing this particular function of hedges.

"Evasiveness relates to the tendency to avoid commitment to the speaker's statements," Sandova (2010:156) argues. It means that evasiveness may be used to avoid things by making the proposition (message) conveyed uncertain in terms of avoidance, covering, disagreement, and refusal. Thus, evasiveness may be performed in a non-straightforward answer or indirect answer as suggested by Sandova (2010:156).

The following is the example of a hedge functioning as evasiveness taken from Sandova's research.

> ***JON SOPEL****: Wouldn't it be catastrophic for you not to win it, in the sense that you haven't won a by-election for twenty six years.*
> *You know, Labour were piling up big majorities in places like Wirral and mid Staffordshire in the 1990s, which was the sign that actually, it looked like they were on course to win the next General Election in '97. Don't you need to be doing exactly the same thing and Crewe and Nantwich should be a plum ripe for picking.*
> ***MICHAEL GOVE****: **Well Jon, that's exactly the sort of thing that you and other commentators enjoy talking about.***
> ***JON SOPEL****: I'm just asking you.*
> ***MICHAEL GOVE****: But as far as I'm concerned, the important thing to do is to concentrate on acknowledging yes, that the public want to know more*

> *about the Conservative Party. Harriet Harman quite rightly pointed out earlier, that we're now entering that stage in the life time of this parliament, when people are going to ask about Conservative ideas and they want to know how Conservative ideas will make a difference.*

The interviewer, John Sopel, mentions a sensitive issue on election result for the interviewee, Michael Gove, who has not won the election for twenty-six years. Michael Gove's answer, "***Well Jon, that's exactly the sort of thing that you and other commentators enjoy talking about,"*** avoids the interviewer's question, which concerns on the issue about election result and not the thing that commentators enjoy talking about. Thus, by avoiding the question, his answer is uncertain in terms of its relevancy towards the interviewer's utterance because it does not answer the question asked by the interviewer. Moreover, Michael Gove conveys the utterance to mean that he does not want to discuss the election result; however, this proposition (message) is not conveyed directly. Therefore, Michael Gove's answer may be identified as evasiveness.

2.3 Orientations of Hedges Relating to their Uncertainty

There are many classifications of hedges. However, based on the definition of hedges mentioned above, it is appropriate to apply the classifications of hedges based on their uncertainty. Sandova (2010) proposes such classifications of hedges concerning on their uncertainty which refer to the classifications by Holmes (1984). They are speaker-oriented hedges, hearer-oriented hedges, and content-oriented hedges.

In addition, Hyland (1996) proposes similar classifications; however, he uses different terms. They are accuracy-oriented (content-oriented), writer-oriented (speaker-oriented), and reader-oriented (hearer-oriented).

2.3.1 Speaker-oriented Hedges

Speaker-oriented hedges are the ones that the uncertainty orientation relates to the speaker. They are "*to express speaker's doubts and uncertainty in relation to the validity of particular proposition,*" Holmes (1984:359). This type of hedges shows the speaker's lack of commitment to the truth of the proposition conveyed.

These hedges are marked usually by expressions consisting of subject (*I*) + cognitive verb, for example, *I suppose, I guess, I don't think, I mean*. Here is an example taken from Sandova's research (2010:127):

> ***JON SOPEL****: Do you see any similarities between yourself and Barack Obama.*
> ***DAVID CAMERON****: Not really no because I think American politics and British politics are quite different. He's a Democrat, I'm a Conservative.* ***I mean I suppose we're both trying to, you know, kind of overturn the government and win.*** *I enjoy watching him and he's a great speaker.*
> *But I'm also a big John McCain fan. I think the plain speaking of this man who just, you know, he goes to Michigan and says look, I know we've lost a lot of jobs here but I've got to tell you they're not coming back. You know, it's so frank and refreshing to see somebody who really tells it how it is.*

The proposition (message) that is hedged in the example above is "*we're both trying to overturn the government and win.*" It is hedged by the expression "***I mean I suppose.****"* The expression gives an uncertainty to the proposition because, by adding the expression, the proposition may not be taken as a valid fact or the

truth. The fact that David Cameron and Barack Obama is trying to overturn the government and win may not be confirmed as a valid fact because David Cameron only (without Barack Obama) conveys the utterance. Thus, the proposition may represent the speaker's opinion only and the expression may represent the speaker's doubt about the validity of the proposition. Therefore, the expression may be identified as a speaker-oriented hedge.

2.3.2 Hearer-oriented Hedges

These hedges expresses, "*uncertainty or hesitation relating to the hearer,*" as stated by Sandova (2010:128). They represent hearer's uncertainty of the proposition conveyed by the speaker. It means that the speaker may have hesitation whether the hearer understands/knows the proposition conveyed or not. These hedges may also suggest speaker's expectation of the hearer to understand/know the proposition conveyed.

Hearer-oriented hedges may be marked by expression, *you know,* or other expressions that express proposition-expected known by the hearer. For example taken from Sandova's research (2010:129-130):

> ***JON SOPEL****: Do you see any similarities between yourself and Barack Obama.*
> ***DAVID CAMERON****: Not really no because I think American politics and British politics are quite different. He's a Democrat, I'm a Conservative. I mean I suppose we're both trying to, you know, kind of overturn the government and win. I enjoy watching him and he's a great speaker.*
> *But I'm also a big John McCain fan. I think the plain speaking of this man who just,* ***you know****, he goes to Michigan and says look, I know we've lost a lot of jobs here but I've got to tell you they're not coming back. You know, it's so frank and refreshing to see somebody who really tells it how it is.*

The expression, "***you know,***" in the example above suggests uncertainty towards the hearer's knowledge. The expression may represent speaker's expectation of the hearer to know about John McCain. However, the speaker is not really certain if the hearer knows, therefore, the expression is followed by the explanation about John McCain. Thus, this uncertainty of the speaker that relates to the hearer may be identified the expression as a hearer-oriented hedge.

2.3.3 Content-oriented Hedges

This category of hedges relate to the content of the proposition conveyed. These hedges may weaken the content of the proposition. Thus, they may reduce the responsibility of the speaker towards the proposition as Hyland (1996:443) states *"personal commitment is either not involved or is subordinate to this function [of content-oriented hedges]."*

Expressions that mark these hedges may namely be epistemic adverbs *probably, possibly,* and *maybe,* modal verbs *may, might, could*, and other expressions such as *well, sort of, kind of, more or less, in fact, quite, simply, relatively, just, actually*, or other expressions suggesting approximation. Here is the example of content-oriented hedges taken from Sandova's research (2010:132):

> ***JON SOPEL****: So is the American example wrong, where there are tax cuts being introduced to help kickstart the American economy (interjection)*
> ***BOTH TOGETHER***
> ***DAVID CAMERON****: No. Listen. Let me try and explain. The reason they can do that in America is they have not got as big a budget deficit, as a share of national income as we've got. Because our deficit is* ***basically*** *3% of GDP, there's nothing left in the locker. If the government had*

> *announced some big tax cut on budget day, I think actually the markets would have taken fright.*

In David Cameron's utterance, there is the use of a hedge. It is marked by the expression "***basically***." The expression represents an uncertainty of the content of the proposition which is about the exact number of GDP. The expression makes the exact number of GDP become vague because it suggests that the number 3% is only an approximation concluded by the speaker. Therefore, the 3% of GDP may not be indicated as the exact number. It only gives an impression that it is 3% but it is not really 3%. Thus, it may be identified as a content-oriented hedge.