
HESITATION AND TURN-TAKING IN SCIENTIFIC WRITING: IMPLICIT STRATEGIES IN ACADEMIC

Gofurova Mukhlisa

2nd year student of Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages

*Scientific supervisor: **Shamuradova Naima Muxtarovna***

Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages

Associate professor

MAQOLA MALUMOTI

MAQOLA TARIXI:

Received: 12.12.2025

Revised: 13.12.2025

Accepted: 14.12.2025

KALIT SO'ZLAR:

*Academic writing,
scientific
communication,
hesitation, turn-taking,
hedging, cautious
language, modal verbs,
intertextuality,
discourse analysis,
IMRaD format,
citations, rhetorical
strategy, objectivity.*

ANNOTATSIYA:

Scientific writing is primarily characterized by its pursuit of clarity, objectivity, and precision. Overt markers of spontaneous spoken communication, such as hesitation (filled pauses, silent pauses) and rapid turn-taking, are absent in formal written discourse.

However, the functions of these phenomena are transformed into complex rhetorical strategies. "Hesitation" in writing manifests as academic caution, or hedging, which involves the use of modality to mitigate the assertiveness of claims. "Turn-taking" is realized through intertextuality—a structured dialogue with existing literature via citation practices and the use of discourse markers within formats like the IMRaD structure. This paper explores how these implicit mechanisms govern communication in the scientific arena, ensuring the ongoing nature of scientific dialogue while maintaining the required levels of objectivity and precision.

Introduction

Scientific writing is a technical form of writing that communicates scientific information to other scientists. It requires careful planning and a formal style, avoiding contractions or

informal jargon. Its core function is the effective transmission of knowledge within a specialized community, fundamentally differing from spontaneous spoken language, where phenomena like hesitation markers and dynamic turn-taking are natural parts of interaction.

In written scientific discourse, overt markers of spontaneous hesitation are meticulously edited out. Yet, the underlying functions of these conversational mechanisms persist, transformed into sophisticated rhetorical strategies. "Hesitation" is reframed as academic caution and modesty (known as hedging), while "turn-taking" manifests as the structured engagement in the broader, ongoing scientific dialogue via intertextuality and citation practices.

Hesitation: The Transformation into Academic Caution (Hedging)

In spontaneous speech, hesitation markers buy time for cognitive processing and signal that the speaker intends to hold the floor. In scientific writing, disfluencies are removed to project competence and authority. Yet, a degree of tentativeness is crucial for scientific integrity, as absolute certainty in knowledge claims is rare. The judicious use of cautious language allows authors to position their claims appropriately and avoid overconfident assertions that might face valid opposition.

This need for measured assertion is managed through the pervasive use of hedging (or cautious language). Hedging devices are linguistic tools that modulate the strength of a claim, allowing the author to express appropriate levels of certainty and acknowledge the limitations of the evidence.

- **Modal Verbs:** The most common form of hedging involves modal auxiliary verbs: can, could, may, might, should, would. For example, instead of a definitive statement like: "These results prove the hypothesis," an author will write: "These results may suggest a potential link," or "The findings could be associated with..."

- **Adverbs and Adjectives:** Probability and frequency are often softened using adverbs (likely, probably, partially, somewhat) and adjectives (possible, probable, tentative).

- **Impersonal Language:** The use of impersonal constructions (e.g., "It was observed that...") serves to distance the author's personal involvement and present findings as objective facts. This style inherently reduces the perceived 'personal risk' of a direct, assertive claim.

- **Limiting Scope:** Authors explicitly define the boundaries of their research, often in the discussion section. Phrases like "This study is limited to..." or "Future

research should address..." function as a controlled form of 'hesitation', acknowledging alternative perspectives and preventing overgeneralization.

Hedging is not a sign of a writer's weakness; rather, it is a sophisticated rhetorical strategy that enhances credibility. The seminal work of Hyland established that hedging is central to the social accreditation of knowledge within academic communities.

Turn-Taking: Structure and Dialogue with Literature

Turn-taking in conversation relies on a system, first described by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974), where participants coordinate speaking roles to ensure smooth interaction with minimal gaps or overlaps. In written scientific communication, this dynamic is internalized within the text's structure and its engagement with the existing body of knowledge. The entire academic ecosystem functions as a continuous, albeit asynchronous, dialogue.

- **Rhetorical Structure (IMRaD):** The standardized structure of a scientific paper (Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion) provides a rigid framework for an orderly presentation of information. Each section is a carefully planned "turn" in the communication process, leading the reader through the author's argument in a predictable manner.

- **Citations as "Responses":** The most direct analogue to turn-taking in scientific writing is the use of citations and references. Every citation is a nod to a previous "speaker's" contribution in the academic conversation.

- Confirming a turn: "Previous studies have shown that..."

- Challenging a turn: "However, our findings contradict the conclusions of Smith and Jones".

- Building on a turn: "Expanding on the methodology developed by [Author X], we propose a new approach..."

- **Discourse Markers:** Connective words and phrases (e.g., therefore, in contrast, additionally, consequently, thus) act as transitional cues, guiding the reader through the author's argument and signaling the relationship between the current "move" and previous statements or literature.

Scientific writing does not involve the spontaneous "interruption" or "self-selection" for a turn as observed in spoken dialogue. Instead, authors engage in a highly formal, pre-planned polemic, where their unique contribution is justified by identifying gaps in the existing literature, which then creates a "transition relevance place" (a concept borrowed from

conversational analysis) for their own study to take the floor. This relates closely to intertextuality, where texts build upon and refer to one another in a dialogic fashion.

Conclusion

"Hesitation" and "turn-taking", as understood in conversational analysis, are absent in their explicit forms in formal scientific writing. They are, however, central to the underlying communicative strategies of the genre. Hesitation is transformed into essential academic modesty and hedging, ensuring credibility and precision. Turn-taking evolves into the structured rhetorical dialogue with established literature, allowing a new piece of research to find its place and make its contribution to the collective body of scientific knowledge. Mastering these implicit strategies is fundamental to effective scientific communication.

References

1. Hyland, K. (1998). Hedging in Scientific Research Articles. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
2. Hyland, K. (2005). Stance and engagement: A model of interaction in academic discourse. *Discourse Studies*, 7(2), 173–192.
3. Lakoff, G. (1973). Hedges: A study in meaning criteria and the logic of fuzzy concepts. *Journal of Philosophical Logic*, 2(4), 458–508.
4. Sacks, H., Schegloff, E. A., & Jefferson, G. (1974). A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation. *Language*, 50(4), 696–735.
5. Salager-Meyer, F. (1994). Hedges and textual communicative function in medical English written discourse. *English for Specific Purposes*, 13(2), 149–170.
6. Swales, J. M. (1990). *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.