

HEDGES IN INTERFAITH DISCOURSE: A CASE STUDY OF INDONESIAN RELIGIOUS FIGURES IN A PODCAST DIALOGUE

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Abstract

This study investigates the use of hedges in an interfaith podcast dialogue featuring six religious figures representing Indonesia's officially recognized religions. Specifically, it examines the types and functions of hedging in spoken religious discourse using data collected from an episode of the LOGIN podcast. All utterances containing hedging devices were identified and categorized into structural types, and their pragmatic roles were analyzed through qualitative descriptive methods grounded in pragmatic theory. The findings reveal that there are three major types of hedges that are actively used to manage interpersonal dynamics and negotiate meaning in a pluralistic context. Shields were the most frequent type (38.89%), followed by attribution markers (33.33%) and approximators (27.78%). Functionally, hedges performed epistemic, affective, and discourse-management role, which allow speakers to express uncertainty, soften claims, and maintain dialogic openness. These strategies helped speakers express their convictions while respecting differing beliefs for fostering mutual understanding. It is expected that this study contributes to the understanding of how hedging operates in religiously diverse, media-mediated interactions, and highlights its pragmatic value in maintaining a tolerant interfaith dialogue.

Keywords: hedge, interfaith discourse, religious figures, pragmatics, podcast

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji penggunaan pembentengan dalam sebuah dialog siniar lintas iman yang menampilkan enam tokoh agama yang mewakili agama-agama yang diakui di Indonesia. Secara khusus, penelitian ini menelaah jenis dan fungsi pembentengan dalam wacana keagamaan lisan dengan menggunakan data dari sebuah episode siniar LOGIN. Seluruh ujaran yang mengandung perangkat pembentengan diidentifikasi dan dikategorikan berdasarkan jenis strukturalnya. Peran pragmatiknya dianalisis melalui metode deskriptif kualitatif berlandaskan teori pragmatik. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa ada tiga jenis pembentengan yang digunakan secara aktif untuk mengelola dinamika interpersonal dan merundingkan makna dalam konteks yang pluralistik. Shields adalah strategi yang paling sering digunakan (38,89%), diikuti oleh attribution markers (33,33%) dan approximators (27,78%). Secara fungsional, pembentengan berperan dalam aspek epistemik, afektif, dan pengelolaan wacana, yang memungkinkan penutur menyatakan ketidakpastian, melembutkan klaim, dan mempertahankan keterbukaan dialogis. Strategi-strategi tersebut memungkinkan penuturnya untuk menegaskan keyakinan mereka tanpa menutup ruang bagi pandangan yang berbeda, sehingga berkontribusi pada terciptanya komunikasi yang toleran dalam konteks keberagaman agama. Penelitian ini diharapkan dapat berkontribusi pada pemahaman mengenai bagaimana pembentengan bermanfaat dalam interaksi berlatar belakang keberagaman agama melalui media, serta bagaimana nilai pragmatik dari strategi ini dapat menjaga dialog lintas iman yang penuh toleransi.

Kata kunci: pembentengan, wacana lintas iman, tokoh agama, pragmatik, siniar

INTRODUCTION

As a country with a highly diverse religious population, Indonesia frequently engages in public discussions on religious tolerance. These discussions are basically intended to foster empathy among its citizens, encourage mutual respect for individual beliefs, and promote peace among diverse faith communities. In recent years, many of these discussions have been facilitated by religious figures not only through traditional channels such as sermons or community gatherings, but also via digital platforms. This form of media-mediated communication is often considered more effective, as it allows information to reach a wider and more diverse audience.

However, communicating religious ideas in online settings sometimes presents its own challenges. Unlike conventional gatherings where participants often share similar backgrounds, digital platforms will be faced with highly heterogeneous audiences with diverse sensitivities. Messages delivered in this space tend to be more prone to misinterpretation or offense, especially when they involve controversial issues of faith and identity. For this reason, speakers need to carefully manage their language to maintain clarity as well as to avoid unnecessary conflict at the same time. In such sensitive context, therefore, the speakers often rely on specific linguistic strategies to navigate potentially face-threatening topics. One important strategy is the use of hedges.

In general, hedges are linguistic devices, such as the use of *might*, *perhaps*, and *likely*, that soften statements, express uncertainty, or reduce the force of utterances. Originally introduced by Lakoff (1973), hedges in both written and spoken interaction have been widely studied in several fields. For instance, in academic discourse, scholars such as Suratno & Aydawati (2025), Budiarti & Faris (2018), Budiarti et al. (2023), and Hardjanto (2016) demonstrate that hedges are crucial rhetorical devices which allow authors to present their arguments with caution, avoid overgeneralization, and create space for alternative interpretations. Through the use of expressions such as modal verbs, tentative adverbs, or attribution markers, writers are able to signal epistemic uncertainty while at the same time maintaining an appropriate academic tone. In the context of political speech, studies by Raza et al. (2025), Kadhim & Mewad (2024), and Caffi (1999) demonstrate that hedging is strategically employed by politicians to balance persuasive force with diplomatic politeness, which often allows them to express uncertainty or avoid committing themselves fully in sensitive contexts. Similarly, in medical consultations, research conducted by Chen & Guo (2024), Alby et al. (2024), and the foundational work of Prince et al. (1982) illustrates how doctors use hedging expressions to soften diagnostic statements, reduce patient anxiety, and maintain a cooperative communicative atmosphere.

Particularly in spoken discourse involving sensitive matters such as religion, hedges play an important role in managing interpersonal relations. They would allow speakers to express their viewpoints without asserting absolute claims, thereby respecting different perspectives and minimizing potential offense. This pragmatic function of hedging becomes more essential especially in interfaith or interreligious settings where participants from various belief systems engage in dialogue that discusses personal values and identities. Such functions are evident in several interfaith conversations that take place in digital media platforms such as podcasts.

In Indonesia, one of the podcasts that consistently explores interfaith issues is *LOGIN*, which has been featured on Deddy Corbuzier's YouTube channel since 2023. This podcast is

originally introduced as part of a special Ramadan series, and has gained widespread public attention because of its fresh and inclusive approach to discussing religious topics, which not only presents the point of view of a single religion, but also features at least two parties from different religious backgrounds. Thus, the conversations are not merely theological or doctrinal exchanges; they are also deeply pragmatic interactions that involve subtle strategies including hedges to manage meaning, mitigate disagreement, and preserve social harmony.

The present study focuses on one particular episode of *LOGIN* that features six religious figures from six officially recognized religions in Indonesia: Islam, Protestant Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. This episode was published on April 9, 2024, during the celebration of Eid al-Fitr, and the discussion focuses on themes of spirituality, unity, and interreligious understanding. This episode provides rich data for examining how participants manage sensitive topics through linguistic choices, particularly through the use of hedges in media-mediated spoken interaction.

Although the *LOGIN* podcast has gained popularity for encouraging open and respectful interfaith conversations in public spaces, little scholarly attention has been paid to the linguistic strategies that support the effectiveness of such discourse. Existing studies on religious communication have largely focused on formal settings, such as sermons (Eisenlohr, 2006), institutional discourse (Fairclough, 1992), and religious debates (Wodak, 2011), which could have different context as found in media formats like podcasts involving spontaneous, dialogic exchanges. Moreover, research on hedging in interreligious settings, especially in informal, internet-mediated environments, remain limited despite their growing relevance in today's digital and pluralistic society. Therefore, this study addresses that gap by examining the use of hedges in an interfaith dialogue featured in *LOGIN*. It generally investigates how hedging operates pragmatically in an interreligious setting and highlights its role in promoting tolerance, mitigating face-threatening acts, and enabling mutual understanding across religious differences.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Hedges in Pragmatic and Discourse Studies

The term *hedge* was first introduced by Lakoff (1973), who described hedges as words or phrases that make utterances less categorical or “fuzzier.” These expressions allow speakers to weaken the force of their statements for reflecting uncertainty, reducing commitment to truth claims, or leaving room for negotiation and alternative interpretations. While Lakoff's original focus was on semantic gradience, later research expanded the notion to include pragmatic and interpersonal functions.

From a pragmatic perspective, hedging is related to the speaker's management of social relations and face needs. Brown and Levinson (1987), in their theory of politeness, identify hedges as part of negative politeness strategies, which are designed to reduce the imposition on the hearer. Hedges, in this view, help minimize face-threatening acts (FTAs) by making utterances appear less direct, less certain, or less forceful.

Prince, Frader, and Bosk (1982) proposed a typology of hedges that includes the following.

- **Approximators**
Approximators are linguistic expressions used to adjust or moderate the degree of certainty, accuracy, or intensity of a statement. By using words such as *kind of*, *sort of*, or *more or less*, speakers signal that the information presented is not absolute or exact; they soften the impact of their claim. These expressions allow for flexibility in meaning and help the speaker avoid overgeneralization or overstatement.
- **Shields**
Shields function as devices that explicitly mark the speaker's partial or reduced commitment to the truth value of a proposition. Common examples include phrases like *I think*, *probably*, and *seems*, which indicate epistemic uncertainty or subjectivity. The use of shields allows the speaker to maintain politeness, hedge their claims, and leave space for alternative perspectives without directly asserting something as fact.
- **Attribution markers**
This type serves to detach the speaker from full responsibility for a statement by assigning the content to an external source. Phrases such as *people say that...*, *it is believed that...*, or *according to X...* allow speakers to report information while minimizing personal accountability. This strategy is particularly useful in sensitive contexts, as it enables the speaker to convey a point without appearing confrontational or overly assertive.

Meanwhile, Hyland (1996, 1998) focused on hedging in academic writing, where writers often hedge their claims to avoid overstatement and allow room for alternative interpretations. He identifies hedging as a key rhetorical device that serves several functions: conveying tentativeness, mitigating personal responsibility, and engaging readers in an ongoing dialogue. Therefore, in general, the functions of hedges across various contexts include the following three types.

- **Epistemic hedging:** expressing doubt, uncertainty, or probability (e.g., *might*, *could*, *possibly*, *apparently*),
- **Affective hedging:** managing politeness, deference, and interpersonal rapport (e.g., *I suppose*, *maybe*, *I'm not sure*),
- **Discourse-management hedging:** maintaining alignment, avoiding confrontation, and showing openness (e.g., *sort of*, *in a way*, *to some extent*).

Hedges in Religious and Sensitive Contexts

Religious communication often involves high-stakes interpersonal dynamics, as speakers express deeply held beliefs while also maintaining respect for divergent views. In such contexts, hedging can serve a vital interpersonal and ideological function, mitigating strong claims, softening potential disagreements, and maintaining social cohesion (Holmes, 1988).

Fetzer (2011) points out the role of hedging in emotionally and ideologically loaded discourse. Hedges in these settings act as discursive buffers, allowing speakers to present perspectives without asserting them too strongly. Particularly in interfaith settings, hedging can

be seen as a tool for maintaining neutrality, inviting inclusivity, and opening discursive space for plural interpretations.

However, despite the relevance of hedging in managing sensitive dialogue, relatively few studies have directly investigated its role in interreligious or multi-faith conversations. Given the potential for conflict or misunderstanding in such discourse, hedging may play a strategic role in promoting understanding and preventing face-threatening breakdowns.

Spoken Interaction and the Role of Podcasts

The emergence of podcasts as a platform for public and semi-public conversations has opened new avenues for the study of pragmatic phenomena such as hedging. Compared to scripted religious speeches or institutional discourse, podcast interactions tend to be more spontaneous, dialogic, and informal. It makes them ideal for examining naturally occurring hedging behavior.

Tolson (2006) and Hutchby (2006) argue that podcasts provide an environment for interpersonal negotiation, stance-taking, and identity construction. This environment encourages the use of hedges as part of real-time meaning management, particularly in sensitive or ideologically plural discussions.

In interfaith podcasts, speakers are often faced with the challenge of articulating strong convictions while remaining inclusive and respectful. Hedges may thus serve both linguistic and social functions. As mentioned earlier, the use of hedges enables speakers to soften the presentation of doctrinal claims, signal openness to alternative viewpoints, and maintain a dialogic rather than confrontational tone. This study builds upon the intersection of hedging, pragmatics, and digital religious discourse, focusing specifically on how hedges function in interfaith podcast dialogues.

METHODS

To identify and interpret the types and functions of hedges used by religious figures in an interfaith podcast dialogue, this study employed a qualitative descriptive approach, specifically grounded in pragmatic analysis. The focus is on understanding how linguistic mitigation is employed to maintain politeness, avoid conflict, and construct interreligious harmony.

In accordance with the objective, the primary data were propositions containing hedging devices in the form of words, phrases, clauses, or even full sentences taken from a publicly available *LOGIN* podcast episode published on Deddy Corbuzier's YouTube channel, entitled "*LOE LIAT NIH LOGIN!! INI INDONESIA BUNG!! 6 PEMUKA AGAMA JADI SATU DI LEBARAN!! - JAFAR*" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ACmPpEPWks>). The episode features six religious figures representing six major religions in Indonesia—*Habib* Ja'far (Islam), *Pendeta* Brian Siawarta (Protestant Christianity), *Romo* Aan (Catholicism), Yan Mitha Dyaksana (Hinduism), *Bhante* Dhirapunno (Buddhism), and JS Kristan (Confucianism)—engaging in a dialogue during the Eid al-Fitr celebration on April 9, 2024. This episode was chosen due to its richness in belief-based discussions, personal reflections, and theological comparisons, which provided relevant linguistic data for examining the use of hedges in interreligious discourse. More specifically, the podcast episode has a total duration of 1 hour and 41 minutes, featuring spontaneous and unscripted dialogue. The conversation is conducted primarily in Indonesian language, with occasional use of English and Arabic terms. However, to

facilitate analysis and presentation, all relevant excerpts containing hedges were translated into English, with special attention to retaining their original pragmatic functions.

After being manually transcribed and cross-verified using an automatic transcription tool (TurboScribe.ai), the data were collected and subjected to qualitative analysis through a series of steps. First, each identified hedging device was marked and categorized according to the structural types proposed by Prince, Frader, & Bosk (1982). Second, the pragmatic functions of the hedging expressions were further analyzed using the framework outlined by Hyland (1996, 1998). Finally, the results were interpreted to reveal how hedging strategies function within the interfaith discourse.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After analyzing all the collected data, it is found that all of the forms of hedging devices proposed by Prince, Frader, & Bosk (1982) were identified in the podcast dialogue among the religious figures. The types and distribution of these hedges are displayed in the following table.

Table 1. Distribution of Hedge Types by the Religious Figures

Hedge Type	Percentage
Approximators	27.78%
Shields	38.89%
Attribution Markers	33.33%
Total	100%

Table 1 shows the distribution of hedge types employed by the religious figures in the podcast dialogue. It can be seen that the data reveal a clear preference for certain hedge types. This may indicate the communicative strategies adopted in interreligious dialogue. Each of these hedge types and their specific patterns of use as well as their functions will be discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

Shields

Based on Table 1, the most frequently used hedge type was shields (38.89%). These include phrases such as *I think*, *I feel*, *seems*, or *maybe*, which signal the speaker's reduced commitment to the truth of a statement. In the context of interfaith dialogue, such expressions appear to function as face-saving devices so that the speakers are able to present their views without asserting them as absolute truths. This strategy likely promotes a tone of openness and mutual respect, which is crucial in conversations involving differing religious perspectives. Observe following.

Excerpt 1

Kasih bentuknya itu apa sih? Keadilan, kesejahteraan, kehidupan untuk orang-orang. Gue rasa sesederhana itu.

‘What does love look like? Justice, well-being, and life for people. **I think** it’s as simple as that.

This utterance occurs during a discussion of the meaning of love in Christian theology. The speaker, *Pendeta* Brian Siawarta, uses *gue rasa* ‘I think’ to frame a doctrinal summary as a personal interpretation rather than a definitive truth claim. This hedge allows the speaker to

contribute to the dialogue without sounding dogmatic and invite others to share their understanding. It reflects a discursive style that prioritizes personal reflection and relational humility, both of which are key to interreligious communication.

Excerpt 2

Tapi saya ingin menunjukkan bahwa Buddhis itu seperti ini yang saya ketahui jadi bukan pandangan real dari Buddhis semua...

‘But I want to point out that this is how Buddhism is **as far as I know**, so it’s not a general representation of all Buddhists...

Here, the speaker qualifies a statement about Buddhist teachings by invoking their limited epistemic authority. The phrase *yang saya ketahui* ‘as far as I know’ functions as a shield. It indicates that the speaker does not claim to speak for all Buddhists. In doing so, they anticipate potential disagreement and position themselves as a partial, situated voice within a larger tradition. This usage aligns with the principle of epistemic humility often observed in inclusive religious discourse.

Excerpt 3

... anak-anak sekarang remaja itu sudah kayaknya udah gak butuh Tuhan gitu.

‘...nowadays it **seems** like teenagers don’t really feel the need for God anymore.’

In this instance, the hedge *kayaknya* ‘seems’ is employed when expressing a potentially controversial observation about declining religious sentiment among youth. Rather than asserting this idea as fact, the speaker softens the claim and opens space for alternative views. This hedge serves a protective interpersonal function, minimizing the threat of offense while still raising a sensitive issue for reflection.

Attribution Markers

Attribution markers were also commonly used in the data, representing 33.33% of all hedging devices. These hedges, which attribute statements to another person or source (e.g., *people say, I heard, someone once said*), serve to distance the speaker from the proposition. In religious discourse, this allows the speaker to bring in perspectives or controversial ideas without taking full ownership, so that it can reduce the risk of offense or doctrinal conflict. It reflects an effort to incorporate diverse voices into the discussion while maintaining harmony. The instances can be seen below.

Excerpt 4

Saya mengutip dari sahabat saya. Beliau seorang mantan teroris. Beliau sudah belajar banyak agama dan di setiap agama mengajarkan tentang cinta.

‘I’m quoting a friend of mine. He is a former terrorist. He has studied many religions, and he found that every religion teaches love.’

This utterance precedes a bold assertion that every religion teaches love, spoken by someone identified as a former terrorist who has studied many faiths. By saying *saya mengutip* ‘I’m quoting’ at the beginning, the speaker distances themselves from the statement. This makes

the message sound less like a personal judgment and more balanced. This is especially important because universal statements can be sensitive in conversations between people of different faiths. By attributing the idea to someone else, the speaker protects themselves and comes across more like someone passing on a message than someone making a judgment.

Excerpt 5

*Dan gue ingin nambahin satu kutipan yang justru bukan dari orang Islam. Tapi dari seorang Romo di Timur Leste yang gue kenal. **Beliau bilang** begini, di Timur Leste, Katolik itu memang mayoritas. Lebih 90% itu Katolik. Tapi bagi kami, Muslim dan semua yang minoritas, itu adalah prioritas.*

‘And I want to add a quote that, interestingly, doesn’t come from a Muslim, but from a Catholic priest in East Timor whom I know. **He said** this: In East Timor, Catholics are indeed the majority, more than 90% are Catholic, but for us, Muslims and all minorities are the priority.’

In this case, the speaker uses the words of someone from another religion to highlight the importance of protecting minorities. By quoting a Catholic priest, the speaker builds interfaith trust. It means that it is more meaningful when someone from a different religion supports inclusive values. This way, the speaker sounds more credible and avoids seeming like they are praising themselves. It also suggests that they are listening with respect, which encourages empathy and a positive response from others in the conversation.

Excerpt 6

Bahkan saya dengar kalau istilah Gus Dur ada 1024 nabi lagi tuh Habib di Al-Quran.

‘**I even heard that, according to Gus Dur**, there are 1,024 more prophets mentioned by name in the Qur’an, Habib.’

In this statement, the speaker uses *saya dengar* ‘I heard’ to share a claim that might be controversial, specifically regarding a theological idea about prophecy in Islam. This phrase shows that the speaker is not saying it is completely accurate, just something they heard from someone else. By mentioning Gus Dur, a well-respected Muslim figure, the speaker gives the idea more weight but avoids taking personal responsibility for it. This shows how using attribution can help bring up sensitive or unusual ideas in a careful and respectful way during interfaith conversations.

Approximators

In the present research, approximators accounted for 27.78% of the hedging strategies. These hedges, such as *kind of*, *somewhat*, and *maybe* modify the degree of certainty or precision of a claim. Their use in this setting suggests a rhetorical effort to present ideas tentatively, acknowledging the complexity of theological topics and avoiding dogmatism. This can be seen in the following instances.

Excerpt 7

*Banyak yang gue temukan, **mungkin, jangan-jangan** beberapa dari kita bukan menyembah Tuhan, tapi menyembah Tuhan versi kita, tafsiran kita tentang Tuhan.*

‘What I’ve often found is that, **perhaps**, just **maybe**, some of us are not worshipping God, but rather worshipping our own version of God, our interpretation of God.’

This utterance poses a challenging theological critique that people may be worshipping not God as He truly is, but their own conceptualization of God. By using the approximators *mungkin* ‘perhaps’ and *jangan-jangan* ‘maybe’, the speaker introduces the idea as hypothetical and self-reflective rather than judgmental. This dual hedging construction functions as a compound approximator to reinforce the speaker’s openness to dialogue and invite reflection rather than resistance. It effectively softens the edge of a statement that could otherwise provoke defensiveness.

Excerpt 8

Dalam Confucius berhentilah mengutuk kegelapan nyalain aja lilin kita. Walaupun setitik maka akan mungkin menerangi. Nah bagi Confucius kalau mayoritas minoritas gak menarik.

‘In Confucianism, instead of cursing the darkness, just light our own candle. Even a small flame **might** bring light. For Confucius, the issue of majority and minority is not important.’

In this case, the word *mungkin* ‘might’ helps soften the strength of the metaphor. By saying that even a small action might make a difference, the speaker avoids sounding too certain or making a general rule. This way, the moral or spiritual message can connect with people from different faiths. It shows how approximators like “might” can express hope and possibility without forcing a specific belief.

Excerpt 9

Dan kita harus tahu bahwa kasih itu sifatnya inklusif, bukan eksklusif. Tentunya di server kami, mungkin juga ada di server teman-teman, ada golongan-golongan orang yang merasa eksklusif dengan iman dia.

‘And we must understand that love is inclusive, not exclusive. Of course, in our community, and **perhaps** in others as well, there are certain groups of people who feel exclusive about their faith.’

In this statement, *mungkin* ‘perhaps’ softens a generalization about exclusivist tendencies within faith communities. Instead of suggesting that exclusivism is a widespread or inherent trait, the speaker presents it as a possibility. It is likely to acknowledge that it may or may not apply elsewhere. This helps maintain respect toward other religious communities while still voicing a concern. Again, the hedge invites a non-threatening reflection on shared human tendencies across traditions.

The analysis reveals that hedging in this interfaith podcast serves a range of interpersonal and rhetorical functions, which closely align with Hyland’s (1996, 1998) classification of hedging functions in academic discourse: epistemic, affective, and discourse-management. While Hyland’s research focuses primarily on written academic communication, the present data shows that similar strategies are employed in spoken interreligious interaction, particularly to manage sensitivity and maintain dialogic space.

First, a number of hedges in the data perform an epistemic function, expressing uncertainty, probability, or limited knowledge. This is evident in examples such as *yang saya ketahui* “as far as I know” or *mungkin* “maybe”, which are used to signal the tentativeness of

claims and the speaker's awareness of doctrinal plurality. As Hyland (1998) notes, this type of hedging allows speakers to avoid overstatement and acknowledge alternative perspectives, which is essential in a religiously diverse context.

Second, hedges also serve an affective or politeness function, managing interpersonal relationships and emotional sensitivity. Expressions like *gue rasa* "I think" or "*kayaknya*" "seems" act as affective buffers to soften potentially bold assertions. As observed in previous studies (e.g., Holmes, 1988), such hedging strategies are crucial in maintaining rapport and solidarity, especially when discussing ideologically loaded topics such as faith, identity, or exclusivism.

Third, the use of hedging contributes to discourse-management by promoting a tone of openness, alignment, and deference. Attribution markers such as *saya dengar* "I heard" or *beliau bilang* "he said" allow speakers to introduce perspectives without taking full personal responsibility, creating space for further elaboration or dialogue. These forms support what Caffi (1999) describes as mitigating strategies in emotionally or ideologically sensitive talk, helping participants to navigate disagreement without confrontation.

Overall, the functional roles of hedging in this context demonstrate that religious leaders are not simply communicating theological content, but actively engaging in relational negotiation, face-work, and discursive diplomacy. Hedging, in this light, is not a sign of communicative weakness, but a rhetorically skilful choice that allows speakers to balance conviction with consideration in the pluralistic space of interfaith dialogue.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the use of hedges in an interfaith podcast dialogue among Indonesian religious figures. The results reveal how speakers use linguistic mitigation to navigate sensitive theological discussions. The analysis has identified three main hedge types: shields, attribution markers, and approximators, with shields being the most frequent. Functionally, hedges serve to express epistemic caution, manage interpersonal sensitivity, and maintain dialogic openness, aligning with Hyland's (1996, 1998) framework. These findings highlight hedging as a strategic discourse tool for promoting respect, inclusion, and mutual understanding in interfaith conversations. As podcast dialogues become increasingly influential in shaping public religious discourse, the role of pragmatic strategies like hedging warrants further attention in future research.

NOTE

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