

Original Article

The Effectiveness of Hedges and Boosters in the Writing of Freshmen Education Students

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Abstract: Writing is considered one of the essential skills in the English language, alongside speaking, reading, and listening. It is widely acknowledged that writing is a multifaceted and intricate process. Writing plays a crucial role in academic success and is an essential skill that students need to develop. Hence, the study focused on the effectiveness of Hedges and Boosters in the writing skills of the Freshmen Education Students. The study employed a quantitative - quasi-experimental design specifically one- Group Pretest-Posttest Design. In the study, pre-test and post-test assessments were used to determine the level of writing skills of freshmen education students on hedges and boosters. The findings imply that prior to instruction; students had not received sufficient exposure to Meta discourse elements, which are essential for nuanced and persuasive academic writing. The post-test results indicated a substantial improvement in students' ability to use hedges and boosters following targeted instruction. The statistical analysis comparing pre-test and post-test scores revealed a significant difference in students' writing performance. The results support the notion that even within a relatively short instructional period, students can acquire complex language strategies when taught systematically and through practical application; and the level of effectiveness of the teaching intervention was determined to be high. Students did not merely memorize the functions of hedges and boosters; rather, they were able to integrate these features meaningfully into their writing. It indicates that the instruction led to internalization and practical application, fostering critical language awareness and empowering students to make strategic linguistic choices. These findings underscore the importance of incorporating academic discourse strategies into writing instruction, particularly for students transitioning to higher education. Overall, the study reinforces the role of Meta discourse instruction in cultivating confident and competent academic writers.

Keywords: effectiveness, hedges and boosters, writing, freshmen education, students

1. INTRODUCTION

Writing is considered one of the essential skills in the English language, alongside speaking, reading, and listening. It is widely acknowledged that writing is a multifaceted and intricate process [1]. Writing plays a crucial role in academic success and is an essential skill that students need to develop. However, in the study of [2] he argues that writing skills are declining among young people. He points out that students are not engaging in the kind of deep reading and writing that develops strong literacy skills, leading to deterioration in their ability to think critically and express themselves in writing. Similarly, in the study of [3] it revealed that Filipino college students often exhibit weak writing skills and possess negative attitudes toward writing. Moreover, [4] in her study "Stanford Study of Writing" she found out that students' academic writing skills were not improving, despite the

large amount of writing they did on digital platforms. She noted a decline in skills such as organization, coherence, and depth, even as students became more prolific in their writing. Furthermore, in the study of [5] it highlighted that despite educational efforts, many students continued to struggle with writing due to various factors such as exposure to broadcast media (movies, MP3, TV, internet) and seldom read print media (news, novels, commentaries, essays). They were highly motivated to learn from references and read stories while slightly motivated with book gifts and quizzes after reading. Such findings indicate that improving students' writing skills requires more engagement with deep reading and structured writing practice. Encouraging students to read more print materials and providing motivation through interactive learning strategies could help address these challenges. The relevance of the study lies in its focus on the need to develop effective strategies for enhancing students' writing skills, particularly in academic contexts. One promising approach involves examining the rhetorical devices commonly used in academic writing, specifically hedges and boosters. Writing serves as a medium of communication, wherein language is expressed through written symbols. It is recognized as a productive skill that enables writers to articulate their original viewpoints and ideas through written forms [6]. Writing skills are a critical aspect of language learning, and students must develop their writing abilities along with reading and experiencing the language. It is not possible to claim that one has learned a language if one cannot write effectively in it. Writing, like all the other skills, is taught and practiced from the very beginning levels and it must be rated and assessed. Analysing students' writing skills can be particularly instructive as it clearly indicates their creativity, comprehension, and situational analysis [7]. Developing strong writing skills is essential for academic success, as writing serves as a crucial tool for communication, self-expression, and critical thinking. The highlights the importance of continuous practice, engagement with reading materials, and the application of structured writing techniques. Additionally, writing should not be viewed as an isolated skill but as an integral part of language learning, requiring consistent refinement and assessment. By honing their writing abilities, students can enhance their academic performance, develop analytical skills, and prepare for future professional and study endeavours. Writing should not be seen merely as a requirement but as a tool for intellectual and personal growth. Its role extends beyond academics, influencing professional success and self-expression. Thus, developing strong writing skills is essential for lifelong learning and effective communication. Writing is an essential component of language acquisition, as it forms the foundation for academic success and effective communication. The ability to write proficiently is critical for academic achievement and professional development, as it is a skill required across various disciplines and career paths. However, language learners, particularly those who are non-native speakers, often face challenges in developing their writing skills [8]. Writing proficiency is a crucial skill that extends beyond academic settings and into professional life, making it an essential area of focus for students. Mastering writing not only enhances communication but also strengthens critical thinking and analytical abilities. However, non-native speakers often encounter challenges in developing their writing skills, highlighting the need for consistent practice, exposure to well-structured texts, and targeted instructional support. From the late 1980s, there has been a continuing and increasing interest in genre-based approach to specialized language teaching and in the development of professional communication skills [9]. One of the important professional communication skills is the expression of doubt and certainty in academic writing. Hedges and boosters are communicative strategies for increasing or reducing the force of statements [10] as cited [11]. They convey both epistemic and affective meaning in academic discourse. That is, they not only carry the writer's degree of confidence in the truth of a proposition, but also an attitude to the audience. In a study conducted in Europe by [12] hedges and boosters are examined how they are employed in academic writing across various European languages. The study highlights significant cross-cultural differences, noting that while English academic discourse often balances hedging and boosting to present

arguments cautiously yet assertively, other languages may exhibit distinct preferences. For instance, some cultures might favor a more direct approach, utilizing fewer hedges and more boosters, or vice versa. These variations underscore the influence of cultural norms on academic writing styles. Moreover, A report from the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) they acknowledged that despite English being a medium of instruction, students' English writing proficiency has declined over the years. The study revealed that students, particularly in the K-12 system, struggle with both basic and advanced writing tasks. Many students perform poorly in written compositions and essays, showing a lack of depth and organization in their writing. The report from the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) highlights a concerning decline in students' English writing proficiency, despite English being the primary medium of instruction. The decline, particularly among K-12 students, suggests challenges in both foundational and advanced writing skills, including organization, coherence, and critical thinking in written compositions. Furthermore, in the study of [13] in the Philippines examined the use of hedges and boosters in essays written by AB-English and BS-Information Technology students. The findings revealed that female students employed hedges more frequently than their male counterparts, while both genders used boosters at comparable rates. It suggests that female students may be more inclined to present their arguments cautiously, whereas male students tend to assert their claims more directly. The study underscores the importance of teaching students the strategic use of these linguistic devices to enhance the effectiveness and credibility of their academic writing. Hence, the study is focused on the effectiveness of Hedges and Boosters in the writing skills of the Freshmen Education Students.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study employed a quantitative - quasi-experimental design specifically one- Group Pretest-Posttest Design. In the study, pre-test and post-test assessments were used to determine the level of writing skills of freshmen education students on hedges and boosters. The quasi-experimental design is useful in educational study, where it is often difficult to randomly assign students to different conditions. The study involves administering a pre-test to the respondents to measure their level of the writing skills on hedges and boosters. The respondents' then received teaching session that aims to improve their level on writing. The population of the study consisted of freshman students who are enrolled in the Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSED) major in English programs of King's College of the Philippines, located in La Trinidad, Benguet, during one academic year. They are the focus of the study because they are the ones who are expected to have an advanced level of writing skills in English, given their academic programs. Specifically, the study includes all freshmen education students with a total number of 23. To collect data for the study, it utilized an adapted analytical rubric. The analytical rubric that was utilized was adapted by the study from the REEP Writing Rubric of the Arlington Virginia Public Schools (2009) by Carey Reid the Jamaica Plain Adult Learning Program, Boston, Massachusetts to assess students' writing skills, ensuring that key aspects such as organization, coherence, grammar, vocabulary, and overall writing quality are measured objectively. The main instrument that used was adapted rubric that evaluate the effectiveness of hedges and boosters in improving the writing skills of the freshmen education students. A rubric is a multi-purpose scoring guide for assessing student products and performances. For problem 1 which aimed to determine the level of the writing skills on hedges and boosters of Freshmen education students in terms of grammar, organization, sentence structure, vocabulary, and content; and to find out the level of effectiveness of hedges and boosters in the writing skills of Freshmen education students in terms of grammar, organization, sentence structure, vocabulary, and content which stated in problem 2, the following analytical rubrics were utilized. Table 01 is the rubric of essay evaluation for grammar, table 02 is the rubric of essay evaluation for organization, table 03 is the rubric of essay evaluation for

sentence structure, table 04 is the rubric of essay evaluation for vocabulary and table 05 is the rubric of essay evaluation for content.

Table 01: Rubrics of Essay Evaluation for Grammar

Scale	Descriptive Equivalent	Interpretation
4	Excellent	Demonstrates a strong command of grammar with no or minimal errors. Uses complex sentence structures effectively. Uses hedges and booster appropriately.
3	Good	Contains 1 or 2 minor grammar errors that do not hinder comprehension. Shows variety in sentence structures. Uses hedges and boosters, but with occasional misuse and overuse
2	Excellent	4 grammatical errors are present that interfere with understanding. Lacks control of sentence structures. Shows limited and inappropriate use of hedges and boosters.
1	Poor	More than 5 grammatical errors are present that make comprehension difficult. Sentence structures are mostly incorrect. Shows no awareness or incorrect use of hedges and boosters.

The rubric for grammar evaluation focuses on the correct usage of grammar and the usage of hedges and boosters effectively. A four-point scale is employed to assess the level of proficiency demonstrated by the students. The scale ranges from Excellent (4) to poor (1) and serves as a structured guide to determine the extent of grammatical correctness and sentence structure control in academic writing.

Table 02: Rubrics of Essay Evaluation for Organization

Scale	Descriptive Equivalent	Interpretation
4	Excellent	Clear and logical organization throughout. Ideas are well-developed and effectively supported. Smooth and coherent transitions between ideas. Strong introduction, body, and conclusion. Demonstrate appropriate and strategic use of hedges and boosters to enhance clarity, coherence, and persuasiveness of argument.
3	Good	Logical structure with minor inconsistencies. Ideas are mostly developed with some gaps in support. Transitions are present but may not always be smooth. Introduction, body, and conclusion are present but may need improvement. Uses hedges and boosters, but may occasionally lack balance or consistency in their application.
2	Average	Some organization, but ideas are not always connected. Limited development of ideas; lacks clarity. Transitions are weak or inconsistent. Introduction and conclusion may be unclear or ineffective. Inappropriate or limited use of hedges and boosters, affecting the flow and strength of the arguments.
1	Poor	Lacks clear organization; ideas appear scattered. Little to no development of ideas or logical progression. Transitions are missing or ineffective. Introduction and conclusion are absent or unclear. Shows little to no awareness of hedges and boosters; misuse or absence of these devices weakens the overall organization and argumentative impact.

The rubric assesses the organization of a written work based on four levels of performance. Excellent (4): The writing demonstrated a clear and logical structure, where ideas are fully developed and effectively supported. Transitions are used smoothly, ensuring coherence between sentences and paragraphs. The introduction, body, and conclusion are well-structured and contribute to the overall clarity of the work. Demonstrated appropriate and strategic use of hedges and boosters to enhance clarity, coherence, and persuasiveness of argument. Good (3): The writing follows a logical order but may contain minor inconsistencies. Ideas are mostly developed, though some parts may lack depth or clarity. Transitions are presented but may not always be smooth. The introduction, body, and conclusion are included but may require refinement. Uses hedges and boosters, but may occasionally lack balance or consistency in their application. Average (2): The writing showed some sense of organization, but the ideas are not consistently connected. Development of thoughts is limited, making the message less clear. Transitions are weak or inconsistent, and the introduction and conclusion may lack effectiveness. Inappropriate or limited use of hedges and boosters, affecting the flow and strength of the arguments. Poor (1): The writing lacks clear organization, making it difficult to follow. Ideas appear scattered with little or no logical progression. Transitions are missing or ineffective, and the introduction and conclusion are unclear or absent. Showed little to no awareness of hedges and boosters; misuse or absence of these devices weakens the overall organization and argumentative impact.

Table 03: Rubric of Essay Evaluation for Sentence Structure

Level	Descriptive Analysis	Interpretation
4	Excellent	Uses a variety of sentence structures fluently, including complex, compound, and sophisticated forms (e.g., passive, conditional). Effectively incorporates hedges and boosters within varied sentence structure
3	Good	Uses a variety of sentence structures with some control (e.g., simple, compound, and some complex structures). Attempts to use hedges and boosters but may lack consistency or appropriateness.
2	Average	Control of basic sentence structures are evident, using primarily simple or compound sentences with limited complexity. Limited use of hedges and boosters; devices may appear forced or inaccurate.
1	Poor	Sentences are basic, usually in simple present or past tense, with minimal variation in structure. Hedges and boosters are either absent or misused.

The rubrics for Sentence structure evaluation focus on the arrangement and order of the sentence. When evaluating sentence structure, look for how different types of sentences are used, such as simple, compound, and complex sentences.

Table 04: Rubric of Essay Evaluation on Vocabulary

Scale	Descriptive Equivalent	Interpretation
4	Excellent	Demonstrates a rich and varied vocabulary, using precise and appropriate words effectively in context. Shows strong

		understanding of word meanings and nuances. Employs hedges and boosters strategically to strengthen arguments and maintain the meaning.
3	Good	Uses a good range of vocabulary with mostly appropriate word choices. Occasionally misuses words but demonstrates overall comprehension. Some use of hedges and booster but may lack precision.
2	Average	Uses basic vocabulary with some repetitive or imprecise word choices. May have noticeable errors in word usage that affect clarity. Attempts to use hedges and boosters, but usage may be awkward or ineffective.
1	Poor	Limited vocabulary with frequent misuse or incorrect word choices. Lacks variety, making communication unclear or ineffective. Hedges and boosters are absent or used incorrectly, affecting meaning.

The student's vocabulary proficiency varies across four levels. Excellent students demonstrated an extensive and sophisticated vocabulary, using precise and advanced words effectively to enhance clarity and depth of expression. Their confident and fluent communication reflects a strong grasp of meaning, tone, and context. Employs hedges and boosters strategically to strengthen arguments and maintain the meaning. Good students have a solid vocabulary, utilizing a variety of words appropriately, though minor imprecision or occasional misuses may occur. They attempted to use more complex vocabulary with moderate success, ensuring clear communication with some room for improvement. Occasionally misuses words but demonstrated overall comprehension. Some use of hedges and booster but may lack precision. Average students relied on basic vocabulary, often repeating words and making imprecise choices. Errors in word usage may affect clarity, and the lack of synonyms or descriptive words results in limited depth. Their communication remained understandable but lacks richness. Attempts to use hedges and boosters, but usage may be awkward or ineffective. Poor students exhibit a very limited vocabulary, frequently misusing words and struggling to express ideas clearly. Repetitive and incorrect word choices lead to unclear communication, requiring significant improvement in vocabulary expansion and application. Hedges and boosters are absent or used incorrectly, affecting meaning.

Table 05: Rubrics of Essay Evaluation on Content

Scale	Descriptive Equivalent	Interpretation
4	Excellent	Demonstrates a deep understanding of the topic with well-developed ideas. Provides strong supporting details, relevant examples, and clear organization. Content is engaging and insightful. Effectively uses hedges to show limitations and boosters to emphasize key points.
3	Good	Addresses the entire task with a sufficient amount of content. The meaning is clear, with only minor errors that do not interfere with comprehension. Attempts to balance caution and emphasis through hedges and boosters though may need refinement.
2	Average	Covers only part of the task with minimal content. The meaning is generally clear despite some errors that may affect understanding. Limited use of hedges and boosters;

		ideas may lack nuance.
1	Poor	Covers only part of the task with very little relevant content. Includes irrelevant information, and meaning is unclear due to errors in word choice or usage. Lack of awareness of hedges and boosters, leading to weak and exaggerated claims.

The content evaluation rubric provides a structured framework for assessing the depth, clarity, and relevance of a student's work. Using a four-point scale, it measures how well the content aligns with the given task, ranging from Excellent (4) to Poor (1). To accomplish the test the participants was instructed to write 350 words and were given 30 minutes to complete the task. The respondents were task to write about the following topic: "Some people think that students in High Schools should not waste their time studying literature, such as poems and novels. Do you agree?" Moreover, the participants were instructed to give their reason for their answer and include any relevant example from their own knowledge and experiences. The question was administered for both the pre-test and post-test of the participants. The study is initiated by composing a letter to the Dean of intent to conduct study within the College of Teacher Education and Liberal Arts (CTELA) at Kings College of the Philippines (KCP). Upon receiving approval, the study distributed an informed consent letter to the respondents. The purpose of the study was explained, and participants were assured that their responses would remain confidential and used solely for academic purposes. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of their right to withdraw at any time. The data collection procedure for the study involves administering essay writing before and after the teaching session. An essay is an important tool for expressing ideas, opinions, and arguments. It is also a great way to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of a given topic. The purpose of the study was understandably and clearly explained to the respondents. The respondents were given assurance that all data collected were kept in the highest level of confidentiality and for study purposes only. Also, anonymity of the respondents was observed and the results of the study were extended to the respondents. Before the teaching session, the study administers the pretest to the respondents to determine their level of writing skills on hedges and boosters. It provides a baseline of the respondents' level, which was compared to the level of the writing skill on hedges and boosters after the teaching session. After the teaching session, the study administers the post test to the respondents to evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching session on hedges and boosters in increasing the respondents' level on their writing skills. The teaching session was a three-hour discussion on hedges and boosters, focusing on their types and appropriate usage in formal academic writing. The session covers introductory verbs, specific lexical verbs, modal verbs, and that-clauses to enhance precision and nuance in study writing. The data collected from the tests was analyzed to determine the level of the students on writing skills before and after the intervention. The analysis was done using statistical methods to identify any significant changes in the students' writing skills level after the intervention. The analysis helped the study to determine whether the teaching session on hedges and boosters is effective in increasing the level of the respondents on writing skills. Furthermore, the pre-test and post-test essay of the respondents was be evaluated by 3-language experts who holds a masteral degree in language education and is a language expert with years of experience. For ethical study considerations, before the study was conducted, the respondents received a detail briefing and key information about the purpose of the study. Through informed consent, the respondents shall willingly decide to take part in the study. In order to guarantee anonymity, secrecy, and the avoidance of potential harm, all information was held and handled with the utmost confidentiality by not disclosing the names and identity of the study participants. The

treatment of data for the study involves several steps to ensure that the data collected are reliable, accurate, and relevant to the study questions. For problem 1 which aims to determine the level of writing skills on the use of hedges and boosters of Freshmen education students as revealed by the pre-test with respect to grammar, organization, sentence structure, vocabulary, and content; and to examine problem 2 which aims to find out the level of the writing skills on hedges and boosters in the writing skills of Freshmen education students as revealed by the post-test with respect to grammar, organization, sentence structure, vocabulary, and content, the following analytical rubrics was utilized; to analyze the data weighted mean was used. Weighted mean is a type of mean that is calculated by multiplying the weight (or probability) associated with a particular event or outcome with its associated quantitative outcome and then summing all the products together. It is very useful when calculating a theoretically expected outcome where each outcome has a different probability of occurring, which is the key feature that distinguishes the weighted mean from the arithmetic mean [14].

Table 06: 4 - point Likert scale with descriptive analysis to interpret the weighted mean of test Scores in SOP 1 and SOP 2.

Point Value	of	Statistical Limit	Descriptive Equivalent	Symbol	Description
4		3.25-4.00	Advance	A	Writing is clear, concise, and highly organized; ideas are fully developed, with strong coherence and sophistication in style.
3		2.50-3.24	Proficient	P	Writing is mostly clear and well-organized, with ideas that are well-developed and coherent.
2		1.75-2.49	Developing	D	Writing demonstrates some understanding of conventions, but ideas are occasionally unclear or not fully developed, and organization could be improved.
1		1.00-1.74	Beginner	B	Writing is unclear and difficult to follow, with weak organization and underdeveloped ideas.

After the teaching session being conducted to the respondents, post-test essay writing was administered to answer problem 2 which targets to define the level of the writing skills on hedges and boosters of Freshmen education students as revealed by the post-test with respect to grammar, organization, sentence structure, vocabulary and content. For problem 3 paired t-tests was utilized to determine if there is a significant difference on the writing skills of freshmen education student based on the pre-test and post-test with respect to grammar, organization, sentence structure, vocabulary and content. According to [15], the paired t-test is a statistical technique used to determine whether there is a significant mean difference between two related groups, often applied in pre-test and post-test designs to assess the impact of an intervention. For problem 4 weighted mean was used to determine the level of effectiveness of teaching hedges and boosters in the writing skills of freshmen education students. Weighted mean is a type of mean that is calculated by multiplying the weight (or probability) associated with a particular event or outcome with its associated quantitative outcome and then summing all the products together. It is very useful when calculating a theoretically expected outcome where each outcome has a different probability of occurring, which is the key feature that distinguishes the weighted mean from the arithmetic mean.

Table 07: A 4 - point Likert scale with descriptive analysis to interpret the weighted mean of the test score.

Point Value	of	Statistical Limit	Descriptive Equivalent	Symbol	Description
4		3.26-4.00	Very Effective	VE	The instructional intervention on hedges and boosters is highly effective. It produces a substantial positive impact on the writing skills of freshmen education students, indicating that the teaching strategies employed were appropriate and well-executed.
3		2.51-3.25	Moderately Effective	ME	The intervention shows a reasonable level of effectiveness. It contributes to noticeable improvement in students' writing skills, although further enhancement of instructional methods may be beneficial.
2		1.76-2.50	Slightly Effective	SE	The intervention has a minimal effect on students' writing skills. The instructional approach may need to be revised or supplemented to achieve stronger learning outcomes.
1		1.00-1.75	Not Effective	NE	The instructional intervention does not produce significant improvement. It suggests the need for a comprehensive reassessment of teaching strategies and content delivery.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 08: Level of writing skills on the use of hedges and boosters of freshmen education students as revealed by the pre-test with respect to: grammar, organization, sentence structure, vocabulary, and content.

Element	Weighted Mean	Level
Grammar	2.39	Developing
Organization	2.61	Proficient
Sentence Structure	2.44	Developing
Vocabulary	2.24	Developing
Content	2.42	Developing
Overall	2.38	Developing

Table 08 reveals the level of writing skills among freshman education students based on the pre-test results. In terms of grammar, the mean score is 2.39, which falls under the Developing level. Organization, on the other hand, has a mean score of 2.61, indicating a Proficient level. Sentence structure registers a mean of 2.44, also categorized as Developing. Similarly, vocabulary and content show mean scores of 2.24 and 2.42 respectively, both of which are likewise classified as Developing. The result signifies that the writing of first-year students demonstrates some understanding of writing conventions, but ideas are occasionally unclear or not fully developed, and could be improved with regards to grammar, sentence structure, vocabulary, and content. In contrast, the organization

component shows that students' writing is mostly clear and well-organized, with ideas that are well-developed and coherent. The result was supported by [15] findings in her cross-cultural study, which emphasized that effective academic discourse in English typically balances hedging and boosting to reflect both caution and confidence. The absence of such features in the students' writing suggests that, although they are developing in structural aspects, they are not yet attuned to these deeper academic conventions likely due to limited exposure or insufficient instruction in rhetorical strategies. A study by [16] reveals that the majority of students' writing skills fall under the developing stage, particularly in terms of grammatical accuracy. Common errors identified in students' outputs include incorrect subject-verb agreement, inconsistent verb tenses, including misplaced modifiers, and the overuse or omission of prepositions. These grammatical lapses often affected the clarity and coherence of their writing, indicating a need for more structured instruction and feedback in grammar. For instance, one of the respondents wrote "Studying literature such as poems and novels should learn by the high school" which shows that there are inconsistent verb tenses, misplaced modifiers, and prepositional errors. These issues often led to reduced clarity and coherence. The phrase "should learn" is incorrectly used with the gerund phrase "Studying literature" as the subject. Since gerunds function as nouns and cannot perform actions, the correct construction should be in the passive voice, such as "should be learned," to ensure proper subject-verb alignment and grammatical accuracy. The prepositional phrase "by the high school" is carelessly placed, resulting in ambiguity. It seems to suggest that the high school itself is the one performing the act of learning, which is illogical and not the intended meaning. The sentence also reflects prepositional inaccuracy. While the phrase "by the high school" may be grammatically possible, it is semantically inappropriate. High schools as institutions do not engage in learning; therefore, the preposition "by" does not fit the context. A more appropriate phrasing would be "by high school students" if the focus is on the learners, or "in high school" if the emphasis is on the educational level. These kinds of errors collectively diminish the overall clarity and coherence of the student's message and point to a need for further instructional support in foundational grammar and sentence construction. On the other hand, under the organization a similar study by [17] revealed that students exhibited proficiency in the organizational aspect of writing. Most outputs demonstrated a clear structure, with well-developed introductions, logical sequencing of ideas, and effective use of cohesive devices. It indicated that while other areas such as grammar may still require improvement, students are already capable of organizing their thoughts coherently and appropriately for academic purposes. One of the respondent's wrote "Literature subjects are significant or plays significant role in developing students' creativity and cognitive development in a way that students emerged their minds within the story, poems, and novels". Having that, they also develop and enhance their skills especially in the different macro skills such as speaking, reading, listening, writing, and even viewing for literature have different form and type. Although the response includes multiple grammatical issues, the ideas are organized in a logical sequence: the student begins with a general claim, supports it with personal experience, and concludes with a forward-looking rationale. It indicates a developing ability to present arguments in a structured way. In terms of sentence structure, the lack of hedging or boosting language may have contributed to awkward or incomplete constructions. For instance, a respondent wrote: "Everyone has a plan on their chosen career it may not connect with the literature but students are knowledgeable about what is literature for incase students will have to change his/ her chosen career and also students may use poems and novels when they are already working" The excerpt exemplifies the absence of hedging or boosting language, resulting in a lack of rhetorical nuance and diminished coherence. The student's statement presents assertions without indicating degrees of certainty or emphasis, which are essential for articulating a well-reasoned argument in academic writing. An author [18] found that EFL learners across ASEAN countries often lean toward booster-heavy writing to assert confidence and authority in their claims. However, in the present case, even boosting is

minimal or altogether absent, suggesting a much earlier stage of rhetorical development. The underdevelopment is also reflected in the lexical choices of the respondents. In the area of vocabulary, the repeated use of generic or vague expressions further illustrates the lack of rhetorical precision. One respondent state: "Studying in advance can help the students in the future for them to have a better understanding on what the literature is all about also for additional reading poems and novels can enhance their reading skills and they may earn a new vocabulary that they can us in the future." The sentence contains several vague or generic expressions such as "help the students in the future", "better understanding on what the literature is all about", and "earn a new vocabulary." These phrases are imprecise and overly broad, lacking the specificity and rhetorical strength expected in academic writing. Instead of using more concrete and impactful vocabulary, the student repeats general ideas about improvement and usefulness without elaboration.

Table 09: Level of writing skills on the use of hedges and booster of the freshmen education students as revealed by the post-test with respect to: grammar, organization, sentence structure, vocabulary, and content.

Element	Weighted Mean	Level
Grammar	2.68	Proficient
Organization	2.90	Proficient
Sentence Structure	2.76	Proficient
Vocabulary	2.65	Proficient
Content	2.88	Proficient
Overall	2.78	Proficient

Table 09 reveals the level of writing skills among freshman education students based on the post-test result. In terms of grammar, the mean score is 2.68, which falls under the "Proficient" category. Organization, on the other hand, has a mean score of 2.90, indicating a "Proficient" level. Sentence structure registers a mean of 2.76, also categorized as "Proficient." Similarly, vocabulary and content show mean scores of 2.65 and 2.88 respectively, both of which are likewise classified as "Proficient." The result shows that the first-year education student that their writing is mostly clear and well-organized, with ideas that are well-developed and coherent with regards to grammar, organization, sentence structure, vocabulary, and content. The result implies that after receiving instruction, freshman education students demonstrated significant improvement in their writing skills, as reflected in their 'Proficient' post-test scores across grammar, organization, sentence structure, vocabulary, and content. It indicates that the instructional intervention had a positive effect. In the pre-test, one of the respondents wrote: "For me, I don't agree it's good that students in high schools should learn literature such as poems and novels," a statement that lacks clarity and shows limited use of academic stance markers. After the intervention, the same respondent revised their expression to: "I strongly disagree, because studying literature has its impact and benefit." The post-test response demonstrates a more assertive and structured use of boosting language, particularly through the phrase "I strongly disagree," which signals the student's enhanced ability to express conviction. The shift from a vague and informal expression to a clearer and more purposeful stance suggests that the instructional intervention helped the student adopt more appropriate stance-taking strategies in academic writing. Hedging was also evident in the post-test, indicating the respondent's emerging ability to express ideas with caution and academic nuance. Most of the hedges used by the student appeared in the form of modal verbs such as "may" and "might." For instance, one of the respondents wrote: "Studying literature like poem, novels might give them help in creating their own poem also novels" which shows an awareness of how to moderate claims and avoid

overgeneralizations. The strategic use of hedging reflects a developing understanding of academic writing conventions, allowing the writer to present arguments thoughtfully while acknowledging uncertainty or complexity. The findings of the study align with [19] study, which revealed that the modal verb “should” was the most frequently used booster, while the phrase “the study” served as the most common hedging device in student writing. Although different lexical items were noted in the present study, the purposeful use of metadiscoursal devices was similarly observed. In the post-test essay, the booster “strongly” appeared in the phrase “I strongly disagree,” highlighting the respondent’s ability to assert a firm stance. Likewise, hedging was evident through the use of the modal “might” in statements such as “Literature might help students understand different perspectives,” demonstrating an effort to express caution and academic humility. The result aligns with Constructivist Learning Theory, suggesting that meaningful learning can occur when students are actively engaged and build upon prior knowledge. During the intervention, students were introduced to the use of hedges and boosters through explicit instruction and contextualized examples. Rather than merely memorizing definitions, students explored how these linguistic devices function in real academic texts and were encouraged to apply them in their own writing. The process allowed learners to make sense of the language features by relating them to their communicative goals such as softening claims, showing caution, or emphasizing certainty. As they practiced incorporating hedges and boosters into their drafts, students gradually developed a deeper understanding of how to express stance, certainty, and politeness in academic discourse, reflecting the core principles of constructivist learning. The student’s progress also supports Self-Determination Theory, implying that the learner may have experienced heightened motivation and a sense of competence, autonomy, and connection to the material. Throughout the intervention, students were given the opportunity to make linguistic choices such as when and how to use hedges and boosters based on their intended meaning and audience. The sense of autonomy in decision-making likely contributed to increased engagement. As students began to successfully apply these features in their own writing, they developed a sense of competence, recognizing their ability to communicate more precisely and appropriately in an academic context [20]. Furthermore, the integration of authentic examples and meaningful writing tasks helped students feel a stronger connection or relatedness to the material, as they saw the relevance of language choices in real academic communication. These conditions may have fostered heightened motivation and a more sustained interest in refining their academic writing skills. Furthermore, the presence of well-balanced cognitive challenge and skill mastery suggests the student may have achieved a state of flow, as described in Flow Theory. In that case, the introduction of hedges and boosters posed a manageable linguistic challenge complex enough to require focus and effort, yet accessible enough to allow the student to succeed with practice. As the student gained familiarity with these rhetorical devices and began using them purposefully in their writing, they likely experienced a heightened sense of focus, control, and satisfaction. The balance between task difficulty and perceived skill level may have contributed to a deeper engagement in the writing process, enabling the student to enter a state of flow where learning was both effective and intrinsically rewarding [21].

Table 10: Difference on the writing skills of Freshmen education students based on the pre-test and post-test

Variable	DF	Mean	s	t-value	p-value
Pretest	23	2.38	0.13	2.78*	0.00
Post test	23	2.78	0.11		

The result of the t-test shows a computed t-value of 2.78 and a p-value of 0.00. Since the p-value is lower than the chosen level of significance of 0.05, alternative hypothesis of the study is accepted. It provides strong evidence that there is a significant difference in the freshmen education students' writing skills when comparing their performance on the pre-test and post-test. The result signifies that the intervention or instructional strategy used between the pre-test and post-test had a statistically significant impact on the writing skills of freshmen education students, particularly in their use of hedges and boosters. The acceptance of the alternative hypothesis, supported by the computed t-value of 2.78 and a p-value of 0.00, that students demonstrated measurable improvement after the intervention. The result implies that targeted instruction on hedging and boosting in academic writing can enhance learners' grammar, organization, sentence structure, vocabulary, and content development. It suggests that when students are provided with structured opportunities to learn and practice hedging and boosting strategies, they become more capable of engaging in critical thinking and constructing arguments with appropriate caution or emphasis [22]. The effectiveness of the intervention was also evident in the essay of the respondents. The respondents wrote "Because literature is undoubtedly integrated in most subjects or in their curriculum," the word undoubtedly serves as a booster, emphasizing the student's strong belief in literature's relevance in education. Meanwhile, the respondent also employed hedging devices such as "can possibly" and "there's a possibility" phrases that signal caution and openness to alternative views, as seen in: "Literature such as novels and poems can possibly tend the students' creativity imaginary," and "though there's a possibility that some people think that literature is mostly for leisure..." These examples reflect an attempt to balance assertion with critical distance an important skill in academic writing.

Table 11: Level of effectiveness of teaching hedges and boosters in the writing skills of freshmen education student

Element	Pre-Test		Post-test		Effectiveness	
	Weighted Mean	Level	Weighted Mean	Level	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Grammar	2.39	Developing	2.68	Proficient	SE	ME
Organization	2.61	Proficient	2.90	Proficient	SE	ME
Sentence Structure	2.44	Developing	2.76	Proficient	SE	ME
Vocabulary	2.24	Developing	2.65	Proficient	SE	ME
Content	2.42	Developing	2.88	Proficient	SE	ME
Overall	2.38	Developing	2.78	Proficient	SE	ME

Table 11 reveals the level of effectiveness of teaching hedges and boosters in the writing skills of freshmen education student. In the pre-test which have the overall weighted mean of 2.38 falls under the SE or slightly effective. On the other hand, the post-test reveals a weighted average of 2.78 which falls under the ME or moderately effective. The result means that the intervention shows a reasonable level of effectiveness. It contributes to noticeable improvement in students' writing skills, although further enhancement of instructional methods may be beneficial. These developments suggest that students were not simply applying rhetorical devices mechanically, but were beginning to

internalize their function as tools for effective argumentation. It aligns with the idea that learning was not passively absorbed but actively shaped through interaction, reflection, and feedback. The repeated engagement with hedges and boosters likely helped learners refine how they position their arguments, a process that reflects the gradual construction of knowledge and writing competence over time [23]. The improved use of these devices also points to the students' growing confidence and control over their writing. As they made increasingly deliberate choices in language use—such as qualifying claims or reinforcing a point they demonstrated an evolving sense of purpose and ownership. The sense of competence, along with the freedom to make rhetorical decisions, likely fostered greater motivation. Classroom interactions, especially peer and teacher feedback, may have reinforced a sense of belonging and shared growth, deepening students' investment in the writing task. Furthermore, the balance between instructional guidance and the complexity of the task appears to have been well-calibrated. Students were neither overwhelmed nor under-challenged, which helped sustain their attention and interest. Their focused effort and satisfaction in seeing tangible progress in their writing suggest that many experienced a productive, even enjoyable, engagement with the task. The sustained engagement is not only indicative of increased skill, but of the kind of learning that emerges when cognitive challenge, emotional investment, and autonomy intersect effectively [24].

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the following results the following conclusions were drawn: The pre-test results revealed that the level of writing skills of the students, particularly in the use of hedges and boosters, was generally low to moderate. Many students struggled to apply these linguistic tools appropriately, suggesting a lack of awareness regarding their function in academic writing. The limited usage reflected a gap in students' ability to present claims with the appropriate level of certainty or to strengthen their arguments effectively. The findings imply that prior to instruction, students had not received sufficient exposure to meta discourse elements, which are essential for nuanced and persuasive academic writing; The post-test results indicated a substantial improvement in students' ability to use hedges and boosters following targeted instruction. Students began to demonstrate more deliberate and effective use of hedges and boosters, which enabled them to express ideas with greater precision and rhetorical control. The improvement signifies not only a development in technical skill but also a deeper understanding of how language influences meaning in academic contexts; the statistical analysis comparing pre-test and post-test scores revealed a significant difference in students' writing performance. The outcome confirms the effectiveness of the instructional approach implemented in the study. The observed gains in performance suggest that explicit teaching of hedges and boosters can enhance students' writing competence. The results support the notion that even within a relatively short instructional period, students can acquire complex language strategies when taught systematically and through practical application; and the level of effectiveness of the teaching intervention was determined to be high. Students did not merely memorize the functions of hedges and boosters; rather, they were able to integrate these features meaningfully into their writing. It indicates that the instruction led to internalization and practical application, fostering critical language awareness and empowering students to make strategic linguistic choices. These findings underscore the importance of incorporating academic discourse strategies into writing instruction, particularly for students transitioning to higher education. Overall, the study reinforces the role of Meta discourse instruction in cultivating confident and competent academic writers.

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