

Hedging Devices in ‘Monavie Juice’ Testimony

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Abstract

Culture has a significant influence on how people treat illnesses. Indonesians, for example, believe that traditional healing can help them cure their illnesses. One of the traditional or alternative healing booming in Indonesia is a drink made of fruit or vegetables. This kind of drink is called juice. To convince people that juice is effective enough to cure an illness and to persuade people to buy the product, persuasive testimony is needed. Linguistically, when discussing persuasive texts, we can relate them to powerful and powerless language. According to Blankenship and Holtgraves (2005: 4), powerless language refers to the use of linguistic features such as tag questions, hesitations, disclaimers, hedges, polite forms, etc. in a text, while powerful language does not denote these features. Hedges can be words like *probably*, *kind of*, *sort of*, and *possibly* (Carli, 1990; Gibbons, Busch, & Bradac, 1991; Holtgraves & Lasky, 1999; Hosman, 1989; Hosman, Huebner, & Siltamen, 2002 cited in Durik, Britt, Reynolds, and Storey, 2008: 218). Hedges can also be words like *approximately*, *roughly*, *somewhat*, *quite*, *often*, or *occasionally* (Salager-Meyer, 1994: 154). This paper shall discuss what hedges appear in ‘Monavie or Acai Active Blend Juice’ testimony as there are many types of hedges used in different discourse.

Keywords:

Culture, persuasive testimony, hedging device

1. Background

Culture influences the way people treat illness. WHO (<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs134/en/>) says that 80% population in some Asian and African countries depend on traditional medicine for primary health care. In Indonesia, for instance, there is plenty of traditional medicine produced and used by Indonesians. One of them is juice. Juice is a drink which is usually made of some fruit, such as apples, oranges, mangoes, guava, etc. Over the past few years, many articles regarding the advantages of having juice have been written and published in mass media. They say that besides containing

healthy vitamins and minerals, juice can help people cure some illness if they consume it regularly.

One of the juice distributed in Indonesia is 'Tahitian Noni Juice'. It is made of *Morinda Citrifolia* (*buah murni noni/mengkudu*), grapes, and blue berry. Another one is called 'Monavie or Acai Active Blend Juice'. This juice is not only distributed in Indonesia, but also in Malaysia, Australia, and the United States. It is made of 19 fruit enriched by antioxidants. Thus it is believed that it can help people to cure some illness.

To convince people that the juice is effective enough to cure illness and to persuade people to buy the product, persuasive testimony is needed. Researchers have shown that 'certain linguistic aspects of persuasive messages can affect how they are received by an audience' (Durik, Britt, Reynolds, and Storey, 2008: 218). Thus, in terms of testimony, it should be powerful in order to be able to attract people to buy the juice. Powerful in this context means persuasive. Hence, to convince people to buy the juice, the testimony should be persuasive.

Linguistically, when discussing persuasive texts, we can relate them to powerful and powerless language. According to Blankenship and Holtgraves (2005: 4), powerless language refers to the use of linguistic features such as tag questions, hesitations, disclaimers, hedges, polite forms, etc. in a text, while powerful language does not denote these features. Hedges can be words like *probably*, *kind of*, *sort of*, and *possibly* (Carli, 1990; Gibbons, Busch, & Bradac, 1991; Holtgraves & Lasky, 1999; Hosman, 1989; Hosman, Huebner, & Siltamen, 2002 cited in Durik, Britt, Reynolds, and Storey, 2008: 218). Hedges can also be words like *approximately*, *roughly*, *somewhat*, *quite*, *often*, or *occasionally* (Salager-Meyer, 1994: 154).

This small research aims to find out what hedges appear in 'Monavie or Acai Active Blend Juice' testimony as there are many types of hedges used in different discourse.

2. Research Questions

In this research I propose the following questions:

- 1) Are there any hedges used in this testimony?
- 2) If yes, what are they?

3. Research Scope and Objectives

The objectives of this research are to discuss the hedges that appear in the testimony. As there are many types of hedges, I will just focus on the ones which are proposed by Salager-Meyer and Kreutz and Harres.

4. Literature Review

Lakoff (1972 cited in Salager-Meyer, 1994: 150) states that hedges denote words or phrases which make things more or less uncertain. From sociolinguistic point of view, hedges, in reference to adverbials, are categorized as lexical items which downgrade and qualify precise propositions. Thus, hedges like *sort of, kind of, you know, I mean* could be seen as primary lexical devices whose functions as a text pragmatic function, particularly as part of politeness strategies. (House-Kaspar 1981 cited in Kreutz and Harres 1997 and Safnil, 2003: 199).

Safnil (2003: 199) underscores that hedges are commonly found in casual and informal speech; however, they are sometimes found in written texts and academic discourse. Salager-Meyer (1994: 154) adopted the following hedges in his study regarding hedges in medical English written discourse:

- 1) **Shields:** *to appear, to seem, probably, likely, to suggest, to speculate*
- 2) **Approximators:** *roughly, somewhat, quite, often, occasionally*
- 3) **Author's personal doubt and direct involvement:** *I believe, to our knowledge, it is our view that.....*
- 4) **Emotionally-charged intensifiers:** *extremely difficult/interesting, dishearteningly weak, of particular importance, particularly encouraging, unexpectedly, surprisingly*
- 5) **Compound hedges:** *It may suggest that.... It could be suggested that....it would seem likely that....it seems reasonable to assume, It would seem somewhat unlikely that.....*

Kreutz and Harres (1997 cited in Safnil 2003: 200) propose hedges used in academic discourse: *one would, perhaps, possibly, might, should, probably, surely, I think, I suspect, we, it seems, certainly, it suggest, generally, perhaps, chiefly, indeed, of course, I believe, must be avoided, must be made, can be clarified, one must attempt, one must deal with, is considered, can be explained, can be seen, should be mentioned, must be preceded, letus....quite, appears to be, andwould probably have*. Though these hedges are used in academic discourse, I think we still can use them in any kind of discourse.

5. Research Method

To answer the research questions, I analyze a text consisting of the testimonies stated by the 'Monavie Juice' users. The hedging devices used to study the testimonies are the ones proposed by Salager-Meyer and Kreutz and Harres. However, I only use some hedges because I think they seem to be more suitable to use to examine the testimonies. They are *to appear, to seem, probably, likely, to suggest, quite, often, occasionally, I believe, unexpectedly, surprisingly, perhaps, extremely (difficult/interesting), possibly, might, should, surely, I think, certainly, and generally*. In addition, I use *unbelievable, I can't believe, I don't/didn't believe* to analyze the testimony as I think, based on the context, they actually have similar meaning with *I believe*.

6. Results and Discussion

Out of 36 testimonies I have observed, I found some hedges used like *seems* (3), *possibly* (2), *perhaps* (1), *extremely* (6), *quite* (1), *probably* (2), *believe* and its 'modification' (5), and *might* (1). However, most of the hedges are used before the users or the consumers try the juice; instead, they use them when describing their complaints. Indeed, most of traditional medicine begins the testimony with the users' complaints. Then it is followed by the positive effects or the advantages of consuming the traditional medicine.

Table 1. Hedging Devices Used in the Testimony

Hedging devices	Number of hedges found
<i>seems</i>	3
<i>possibly</i>	2
<i>perhaps</i>	1
<i>extremely</i>	6
<i>quite</i>	1
<i>probably</i>	2
<i>I (can't/don't/didn't) believe</i>	4
<i>might</i>	1
<i>unbelievable</i>	1

Table 2. Hedges Found in “The Users’ Complaints” / Before Trying the Juice

Hedging devices	The testimonies
<i>seems</i>	1. ‘Arthritis <i>seems</i> to run in my family.....’
<i>possibly</i> <i>didn't believe</i>	2. ‘My son persuaded me to try the 'Acai Active Blend' juice, even though <i>I didn't believe</i> for a moment it could <i>possibly</i> help.’
<i>extremely</i>	3. ‘Whatever the cause, it was <i>extremely</i> painful, and then led to bone spurs on both heels.’
<i>extremely</i>	4. ‘I'm a 52-year-old Alaskan woman who's lived with pain ranging from moderate to <i>extremely</i> severe for much of my life, starting with sore joints and migraines even as a youngster. In the past when I got hungry, my blood sugar levels dropped so low that I turned <i>extremely</i> grouchy.’
<i>extremely</i>	5. ‘I'm <i>extremely</i> active--into skydiving, skiing, and other sports, plus have been a work-out and weight-lifting zealot all my life.’

<i>probably</i>	6. 'The doctor told me I had Type II diabetes and had <i>probably</i> had it for 5-6 years.'
<i>Extremely(difficult)</i>	7. 'I could barely lift myself from a chair, and the hip pain made walking <i>extremelydifficult</i> as well as embarrassing.'
<i>probably</i>	8. 'I also had a bad shoulder, <i>probably</i> arthritis or other damage, and could lift my arm only about as high as my ear.'
<i>extremely</i>	9. 'My range of motion was <i>extremely</i> limited, and the pain was at times unbearable.'
<i>might</i>	10. 'Each time this happened, the pain was intense, and my fingers locked in a crooked position, like you <i>might</i> see with severe rheumatoid arthritis.....'

Table 3. Hedges Found After Consuming the Juice

Hedging devices	The testimonies
<i>perhaps</i>	1. 'The craving for coffee was substantially diminished almost immediately, <i>perhaps</i> because of having more natural energy and no longer needing the ongoing "pick-up."
<i>seem</i>	2. 'She said she didn't understand why, but she was feeling better and the pain <i>seemed</i> to be going away.'
<i>possibly</i>	3. 'You can't <i>possibly</i> know how grateful I am for this amazing product.'
<i>quite</i>	4. 'The pain was excruciating for <i>quite</i> some time, then gradually improved.'
<i>(could hardly) believe</i>	5. 'I <i>could hardly believe</i> I wasn't even tired when we got there.'
<i>seem</i>	6. 'She <i>seemed</i> to have a new sense of well being and serenity about her and was thinking things through

	before just acting on them as she'd done in the past.'
<i>can't believe</i>	7. I <i>can't believe</i> this juice! I drank Monavie with the acai fruit on Friday morning and I felt better the next day.
<i>(really cannot) believe unbelievable</i>	8. I <i>really cannot believe</i> what MonaVie Active juice has done for me "it's like magic I feel re born". This miracle juice is <i>unbelievable</i> and has also given me a tremendous boost of energy.

Based on the results, shown in the table 1, 2, and 3, the most hedges (the ones that I adopted and used in this research) found in the testimonies are *extremely*, *believe* and its 'modification' such as *unbelievable*, *I didn't believe*, *(could hardly) believe*, *can't believe*, and *(really cannot) believe*. The hedge *extremely* is only found in "the users' complaints"/before trying the juice. The hedge *believe* and its *modification* are mostly found in "after consuming the juice". The discussion on these findings could focus on the most hedges found *extremely* and *believe*, such as why these two hedges are mostly found in the testimonies. 'Are they commonly used in traditional medicine testimony?' 'Do these two hedges make the testimony less powerless?' 'Why is *extremely* only found in the users' complaints?' However, I need to conduct further investigation regarding *extremely* and *believe* as the aim of this research is only to find out the hedging devices which appear in the testimony.

The discussion on the other hedges, *might* and *perhaps*, could be related to what Fraser (1975) says regarding these two hedges. He states that *might* along with other modal verbs like *would*, *should*, and *could* are considered as the hedged performative while *perhaps* is an example of force idioms. (Fraser, 1996). He explains that 'when *perhaps* occurs before an imperative, it narrows the force of the utterance to a suggestion.' Nevertheless, he does not explore these two hedges in a very specific context, such as testimony.

7. Conclusion

Results of the data analysis show that the hedges which are mostly found in 'Monavie Juice' testimony are *extremely* and *believe* and *its modification*. However, I need to conduct further study in order to find out why these two hedges appear most compared to the others. Moreover, further investigation should be conducted as the hedge *extremely* is only found in the "the users' complaints"/before trying the juice while the hedge *believe* is mostly found in "after consuming the juice."

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