A CORPUS-BASED ANALYSIS OF HEDGES IN THE JUDGMENTS OF THE SUPREME COURT OF PAKISTAN

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Abstract
The present research aims to look at the use of hedges in the judgments of the Supreme Court of Pakistan. This study is two-fold; on one side, it locates the kinds of hedges in the judgments, and on the other, it explores the functions of these hedges. For this purpose, 113 judgments made by the Supreme Court of Pakistan comprising a corpus of 770532 tokens are taken up for the analysis. The corpus linguistic methodology is employed in this study, and a corpus software, LancsBox, is used to analyze the collected corpus. It is found after the data analysis that Pakistani judges use different types of hedges in their judgments, which shows that they try to be more precise in their decisions instead of being uncertain or ambiguous. The data also reveals that hedges serve different functions in the judgments as these can increase or mitigate the impacts of the intensity of the judgments.
Keywords: Hedges, Legal system, court judgments, frequently occurring words, Supreme Court of Pakistan, judges, Corpus-based analysis.

INTRODUCTION

The language of the law has remained an important subject of analysis for more than two decades. Mellinkoff (1963) views the law as a profession of words and is willing to emphasize the linguistic patterns found in the language of law. Atkinson (2002) defines court judgment as a written document made by the courts to resolve disputes and also to preserve the rights of the citizens. Cheng & Lianzhen (2016) state that judgments are a type of legal discourse that contains different linguistic devices employed to convey legal meaning. Kastellec (2010) highlights one of the biggest challenges in classifying the results of court judgments which is sifting through huge amounts of legal documents to find recurring patterns because according to him, judges employ different linguistic techniques in their judgments. One of the linguistic techniques used by the judges is hedging, which is employed to increase or mitigate the force of their statements.

Looking at the history of hedging, we find that this term was first used by George Lakoff in 1972 in an article named 'Hedges: A Study in Meaning and the Fussy Concept'. According to him, hedges are the words that make things fuzzier or less fuzzy. Up to now, the most influential and authoritative classification of hedges is that of Prince and his colleagues Frader and Bosk, who classified hedges into approximators and shields from the pragmatic perspective (Prince et al, 1982). Hedging is a discursive and communicative strategy that is used to increase or reduce the force of statements and the importance lies in their proper rhetoric and interactive tenor (Hyland, 1998). It can be said that hedges show the confidence of a speaker or a writer towards the degree of confidence in the truth of the statement.

This paper investigates the hedging phenomenon in the judgments of the Supreme Court of Pakistan (from here on SCP). The researcher intends to look at the different functions of hedges and their context in these judgments. The researcher tries to see whether the judges of the SCP employ the hedges strategy more or less in their judgments and what is the reason behind such employment in the overall perspective of judgment/s. This research employs corpus linguistics methodology for the analysis of 113 court judgments made by the SCP. The corpus data is analyzed using the corpus software LancsBox.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Corpus Linguistics

In the proliferation of empirical studies on virtually all aspects, Corpus Linguistics has revolutionized the way language is understood and explored today. A corpus is simply a body or collection of texts stored according to specific criteria and which can be processed using specialist corpus software. Corpus linguistic criteria routinely involve issues such as sampling, representativeness, finite size, machine-readable form, and the authenticity of the data and the results. Laviosa (2002) says that as a new research area corpus linguistics has great potential, and this is because it allows for a consistent and reliable linguistic study, which is carried out with a computer that allows for the storing of large amounts of data and the subsequent analysis by linguists. Therefore, we consider that it is entirely appropriate to make use of corpus linguistics as the tool that allows us to analyze the linguistic characteristics and peculiarities of the particular genre of judgments.

Biber (1993) states that the main objectives of corpus linguistics are the documentation and generalization of the patterns of language by assessing the extent to which a specific pattern is found in a corpus. He argues that it is an empirical approach that analyzes, through extensive use of computers, patterns of language, using as the basis for the study a large collection of natural texts, and depending on both quantitative and qualitative analytical techniques.

Teubert & Krishnamurthy (2007) think that a corpus-based approach looks at the tangible evidence of the corpus and analyzes the evidence to find out the possibilities, trends, patterns, and co-occurrences of elements, features, and certain other features. Biber (1988) studied the linguistic variation in spoken and written English texts. In this study, he identified 67 linguistic features for the classification of these texts using two corpora i.e., the Lancaster-Oslo-Bergen Corpus of British English (500 samples) and the London-Lund Corpus of Spoken English (87 samples).

Hedges

Hedging has been a subject of interest to many linguists for many years who conducted different studies on this aspect of language. Initially, Lakoff (1972) proposed the concept of hedging mainly focusing on the membership degree instead of the truth value of the statement. Lakoff's perspective of hedges is that these are words that make meaning fuzzier or less fuzzy. Since then, many scholars have begun to research hedges. Much research has been carried out on hedging in the field of linguistics since Lakoff's important research. The use of hedges in different genres was looked at by the researchers.

Several studies show different results regarding the stereotypical nature of the use of hedges associated with men and women. Women, for instance, are said to use more hedges and tag questions than men, but researchers have various views about whether these express uncertainty or not (Holmes, 1990). Holmes found in her study that hedges are multifunctional depending on the situation, context, and intonation and they could signal uncertainty in some cases, but they are also used to signal politeness and a positive attitude toward the other speaker in conversation, for example: "He has got a *sort of* bad behavior," or "Maybe I could *sort of* ask you out sometime?"

Bradac, Mulac, & Thompson (1995) found in their study that women used hedges when they wanted to signal certainty about something, while on the other hand, men used hedges to signal uncertainty. Eventually, their study analyzed hedges in problem-solving interaction and found that men tended to hedge more than women did in this type of interaction.

Fraser (1975) conducted a study on the modal verbs in hedges with the speech-act theory as its theoretical framework and pointed out that when some performative verbs like *apologize, promise,* and *request* were modified by certain modal verbs or semi-modals like *can, must,* and *should,* their illocutionary acts would reduce. He called such phenomenon as hedged performative and the proposed concept of hedged performative enriched the connotation of hedges.

Zimmerman & West (1975) in a study propose the idea that hedges like um, hmm, uh, etc., are usually used to show that a listener is an active hearer and shows active participation in the utterances of the speaker. He says that these hedges resultantly overlap with the on-gong talk or occur just after the occurrences by the speaker and such sort of occurrences.

Hyland (1996), divides hedges into two major pragmatic functions, which are content-motivated and reader-motivated. According to him, content-oriented hedges are further divided into two types, namely accuracy-based and writer-based hedges. He argues that accuracy-based hedges are used by writers when they try to express propositions with enhanced precision and caution, particularly in domains where interpretations may be subject to change and they serve to differentiate between what is known as factual or actual and what is inferred or speculative. Hyland states that by using these hedges, the writers indicate that a proposition is based on plausible reasoning rather than on established or reliable facts. To him, this

type of function is canonically realized by epistemic modal verbs, epistemic adverbs, and epistemic adjectives which is a sign of the limited knowledge of the writers and the writer-based hedges enable writers to avoid full personal responsibility for their statements and mitigate the potential consequences that may arise from making bald propositions.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
The present research aims to answer the following two questions:
- What categories of hedges are used by the judges of SCP in their judgments?
- What are the functions of the use of hedges in the judgments of SCP?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
This research study that analyzes the use of hedges in the judgments of the SCP adopts the following process of research methodology.

Data collection
The data of this study which is comprised of 113 judgments made by the SCP has a total word count of 770532 tokens. The judgments that were made by the different judges of SCP during six years from 2017 to 2023 have been downloaded from the official website of the SCP i.e., https://www.supremecourt.gov.pk/judgement-search/. These judgments are available for open access on this official website in PDF format.

Research procedure
After downloading the judgments from the official website of SCP, the PDF judgments were converted into plain text and later tagged using the online tagger CLAWS (the Constituent Likelihood Automatic Word-tagging System). After tagging the corpus data, the data was further analyzed to look for Hedges, using the software LancsBox, a corpus linguistic tool prepared by the experts of Lancaster University that can analyze billions of words in a few minutes.

Data Analysis Procedure
As the main purpose of this study was to look for the use of hedges in the judgments of SCP, the researcher used the following classification of hedges given by Namasaraev (1997, p.153) for the analysis of this corpus data. Namasaraev (1997) states that "There are nine types of lexical hedges according to its classification". The table below shows the kinds of language used in hedging according to its classification.

Table 1: Classification of Hedges by Namasaraev (1997)

Classification	Words
Modal auxiliary verb	will, must, might, can, should, could, would, may
Lexical verb	appear, believe, assume, tend, suggest, estimate, think, argue, speculate, indicate, seem, propose, uppose
Probability adjective	possible, likely, unlikely, clear, definite, certain, probable
Noun	assumption, claim, probability. possibility, estimate, suggestion,
Adverb	Practically, presumably, clearly, probably, conversely, possibly, perhaps, certainly, virtually, completely
Adverb of frequency	often, occasionally, generally, usually, sometimes, normally, frequently, always, rarely, never, seldom
"If" clause	if true, if anything
Compound hedges	seems reasonable, looks probable, may be suggested
Fillers	you know, you see, by the way, sort of, well, hmm, all I know, I mean, yeah, like

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS
The following corpus data was analyzed:

Table 2: Total Corpus Analysed

Name	Language	Texts	Tokens	Additional information
Corpus 1	English	113	770,532	Types: 29,916 Lemmas: 24,125

In the study, 1 corpus was used with a total size of 770,532 running words (tokens) in 113 texts.

The use of Hedges in SCP Judgments

The data analysis reveals the following frequency of the use of hedges in the SCP judgments.

Model Auxiliary

The table in the following shows the frequency of the model verbs used by the judges of SCP as hedges in their judgments.

Table 3 shows the frequency of the first category of hedges, auxiliary verbs in the judgments of SCP. The analysis shows that *shall* is a hedge which is used most 1890 times in 113 judgments and *might* is the least used auxiliary only 55 times in all judgments. All the auxiliaries are interestingly used with less or more frequency which indicates the judges referring to different situations in different contexts. In the judgments of the SCP, modal verbs such as *may*, *might*, *could*, and *would* are often used as hedges to express caution or flexibility in legal reasoning. These models allow justices to avoid making absolute statements, reflecting the nuanced and interpretative nature of the law. Further, by hedging, the SCP maintains a tone of judicial restraint, leaving room for future interpretation and adaptation of legal principles.

Table 3: Frequency of Model Auxiliary verbs

Model Auxiliary Verbs	Frequency in Total Corpus	Frequency per Million
Can	833 Times	(1081.1)
Could	590 Times	(765.7)
Shall	1890 Times	(2452.9)
Should	652 Times	(846.2)
Will	632 Times	(820.2)
Would	1171 Times	(1519.7)
May	1649 Times	(2140.1)
Might	55 Times	(71.4)
Must	444 Times	(576.2)

Lexical Verbs

The table in the following shows the use of lexical verbs in the judgments of the SCP. These lexical verbs are employed by the judges to avoid uncertainty and ambiguity in their judgments.

Table 4: Frequency of Lexical Verbs

Lexical Verbs	Frequency in Total Corpus	Frequency per Million
Appear	112Times	(145.4)
Believe	35 Times	(45.4)
Assume	27 Times	(35.0)
Tend	00 Times	(00)
Suggest	32 Times	(41.5)
Estimate	09 Times	(11.7)
Think	13 Times	(16.9)
Argue	25 Times	(32.4)
Speculate	01 Times	(1.3)
Indicate	17 Times	(22.1)
Seem	10 Times	(13.0)
Propose	13 Times	(16.9)
Suppose	01 Times	(1.3)

Table 4 shows the occurrences of the lexical verbs in the judgments of SCP and this analysis shows that lexical verbs are used in less frequency as compared to the auxiliary verbs given in table 03. The most used lexical verb is *appear* used 112 times in the total corpus while the least used is *tend* which appears zero times in the selected corpus. In the judgments of SCP, lexical verbs such as *suggest*, *indicate*, *appear*, and *seem* are frequently used as hedges to soften assertions and introduce a degree of caution or tentativeness. These verbs allow judges to present arguments or interpretations without making definitive or absolute claims, reflecting the court's careful and measured approach to legal reasoning. For instance, a phrase like "the evidence *suggests* that the law may be unconstitutional" avoids overstatement and acknowledges the

possibility of alternative interpretations. By using these lexical verbs, the court maintains a tone of judicial prudence, ensuring that its rulings remain open to future reconsideration and adaptation in light of new evidence or evolving legal contexts.

Probability Adjectives

Table 5 shows the frequency of probability adjectives that are used as hedges in the selected court judgments. The analysis of the data reveals that only two probability adjectives i.e. *clear* and *certain* have the maximum number of occurrences in the selected corpus, *clear* being the most 273 times and *certain* the second most used 214. The use of these two hedges indicates that judges try to be more clear and certain in their judgments instead of being ambiguous or uncertain.

Table 5: Frequency of Probability Adjectives

Probability Adjective	Frequency in Total Corpus	Frequency per Million
Possible	92 Times	(119.4)
Likely	41 Times	(53.2)
Unlikely	04 Times	(5.2)
Clear	273 Times	(354.3)
Definite	13 Times	(16.9)
Certain	214 Times	(277.7)
Probable	05 Times	(6.5)

Nouns

Table 6: Frequency of Nouns

Nouns	Frequency in Total Corpus	Frequency per Million
Assumption	22 Times	(28.6)
Claim	139 Times	(180.4)
Probability	01 Times	(1.3)
Possibility	24 Times	(31.1)
Estimate	09 Times	(11.7)
Suggestion	08 Times	(10.4)

Table 6 shows the use of nouns as hedges in the target judgments made by the SCP. The analysis shows that *claim* is a hedge used the most i.e. 139 times in the corpus and the least used noun is *probability* that is used only one time in the whole corpus. The use of nouns like *probability* and *possibility* shows that the judges are very careful in becoming absolutely sure in their judgments. Rather, they try to show that although they are trying to give their best but the things can have possibility of improvement.

Adverbs

Table 7: Frequency of Adverbs

Adverbs	Frequency in Total Corpus	Frequency per Million
Practically	10 Times	(13)
Presumably	00 Times	(00)
Clearly	112 Times	(145.4)
Probably	07 Times	(9.1)
Conversely	00 Times	(00)
Possibly	13 Times	(16.9)
Perhaps	13 Times	(16.9)
Certainly	27 Times	(35)
Virtually	16 Times	(20.8)
Completely	25 Times	(32.4)

Table 7, which shows the frequency of adverbs in the judgments, shows that the adverb *clearly* is used most i.e. 112 times and other adverbs are comparatively very less in number. The use of *clearly* indicates an

important fact that judges try to clarify their judgments. Two other adverbs *presumably* and *conversely* are not used by the judges in the selected judgments.

Adverbs of Frequency

Table 8 highlights the use of adverbs of frequency and the analysis shows that *rarely* is an adverb of frequency use most 111 times in 113 judgments of SCP and *occasionally* is another adverb of frequency that is used at least only 06 times in the total corpus.

Table 8: Frequency of Adverbs of Frequency

Adverbs of Frequency	Frequency in Total Corpus	Frequency per Million
Often	34 Times	(44.1)
Occasionally	06 Times	(7.8)
Generally	72 Times	(93.4)
Usually	24 Times	(31.1)
Sometimes	18 Times	(23.4)
Normally	25 Times	(32.4)
Frequently	07 Times	(9.1)
Always	94 Times	(122)
Rarely	111 Times	(144.1)
Sometimes	18 Times	(23.4)

If Clauses

Table 9: Frequency of If Clauses

If Clause	Frequency in Total Corpus	Frequency per Million
If	1336 Times	(1733.9)

The search term *If* occurs 1336 times (1733.9 per million) in 78 out of 113 texts. The formation of If Clauses with collocations is as follows:

65. txt	seems to be that even	**if**	the National Assembly or a
42. txt	mean per ignoratium and ignored	**if**	it is rendered in ignoratium
41. .txt	consideration in the present proceedings.	**If**	we look at this aspect
60. txt	fear can only be overcome	**if**	we stand against it together

Using "if" as a hedge in the judgments of the Supreme Court serves several important purposes, particularly in legal reasoning and decision-making and it helps judges to express uncertainty, caution, or flexibility, which is crucial in the context of complex legal interpretations and rulings.

Compound Hedges

Table 10: Frequency list of Compound Hedges

Compound Hedges	Frequency in Total Corpus	Frequency per Million
Seems reasonable	00 Times	(00)
Looks probable	00 Times	(00)
May be suggested	00 Times	(00)

Table 10 shows that in the whole corpus data i.e. 113 judgments of the SCP, the judges used no compound hedges.

Fillers

Table 11: Frequency list for the Fillers

Adverbs of Frequency	Frequency in Total Corpus	Frequency per Million
You know	01 Times	(1.3)
You see	00 Times	(00)
By the way	00 Times	(00)
Sort of	06 Times	(7.8)

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Well	401 Times	(520.4)
Hmm	00 Times	(00)
All I know	00 Times	(00)
I mean	00 Times	(00)
Yeah	00 Times	(00)
Like	166 Times	(215.4)

Table 11 shows the occurrence of fillers in the selected corpus and the analysis shows that the frequency of fillers is very low in the judgments. Most of the kinds of fillers were avoided by the judges. The fillers that are used are three, *which* being highest in number being used for 401 times, *like* being used for 166 times and *you know* is used for only one time. This shows that judges try to avoid the filler in their judgments.

FUNCTIONS OF HEDGES IN THE JUDGMENTS OF SCP
The analysis of the data reveals a significant presence of hedges in SCP judgments while highlighting that judges use various linguistic strategies to qualify their statements. The prevalence of hedges within these judgments indicates that judges are usually cautious in their assertions, recognizing the intricacies and nuances inherent in legal discourse. This analysis shows the following functions of hedges in judgments of SCP.

Mitigating the Effects
In the judgments, hedges are used to mitigate the absolute certainty of judgments and judges employ phrases such as "it appears," "likely," or "possibly" to indicate that the decision is not lacking ambiguity. This use of such hedges can be seen as a rhetorical strategy to acknowledge the inherent limitations of the law and also the need for a flexible approach to the interpretation of certain legal aspects. The use of mitigating hedge *likely* is shown as follows:

*'During implementation, it was realized that there was **likely** to be a substantial increase in the overall cost of all the components from their indicated/estimated cost as reflected in the original PC-I.' (TXT. 47)*

The use of hedges in the judgments of the SCP plays a crucial role in mitigating the impact of rulings, ensuring flexibility, and maintaining the Court's credibility and authority. Hedges like, may*, might, could, if, perhaps, it seems etc*, introduce caution, uncertainty, or conditionality into language. In the context of SCP, hedges serve several important functions that help mitigate the effects of rulings.

Setting Precedents for Future Judgments
It is found in this analysis that some hedges are used by judges to establish legal precedents for future judgments and the lower judiciary. By using expressions like *"it may be argued*" or "*it is suggested*," judges leave room for future courts to reconsider or reinterpret the precedent. The use of such hedges reflects the vigorous nature of the law and the recognition that legal principles may evolve. The use of *"argue*" with collocation patterns is as follows:

*'On the other hand, the learned counsel for the respondents **argued** that Mst. Roshnae held the estate as limited owner' under customary law and after the termination of said estate, the property was to devolve upon the legal heirs of the last full owner i.e. Abdul Grafter by Shariah, which included the plaintiffs/respondents as his collaterals.' (TXT. 100)*

In the context of "setting precedents for future judgments," the use of hedges in SCP serves several critical functions. Precedents are foundational to the common law system, as they guide future judicial decisions and ensure consistency in the application of the law, and such hedges which introduce caution, conditionality, or flexibility into language, play a key role in shaping how precedents are established and interpreted.

Showing Judicial Impartiality
The analysis of the data reveals that judges in their judgments use certain types of hedges by which they want to show their impartiality. The hedges like "*clearly, certainly, completely*" are used by the judges to distance themselves from overly definitive statements, emphasizing that their role is to interpret and apply the law rather than make absolute claims. This shows the essential nature of upholding the rule of law and ensuring that the judiciary remains neutral. The use of the hedge "*certainly*" is as follows:

*'It is to be noted that neither of the other two judicial forums were expressly conferred a review jurisdiction, though they were **certainly** courts of last resort. In the relevant judgments, "review" and "rehear" were terms used more or less interchangeably.' (TXT. 33)*

The use of hedges in SCP judgments is essential for demonstrating impartiality, fairness, and neutrality. By

introducing caution, conditionality, and flexibility, hedges allow the Court to avoid absolute statements, acknowledge alternative interpretations, and balance competing interests and also this approach ensures that the Court's decisions are perceived as thoughtful, balanced, and free from bias, which is critical for maintaining public trust in the judiciary and upholding the rule of law.

Qualifying Statements

In the data analysis, it is indicated that sometimes judges use hedges to qualify or modify statements that show they are not intended to be absolute or definitive. By this, judges can make nuanced statements that acknowledge exceptions, limitations, or alternative interpretations. The hedges like *"potential, suggest"* are used for qualifying statements. The use of "*suggest*" is as follows:

*'Of course, I should not be taken to **suggest** that however effective alternative institutional mechanisms or arrangements for judicial review cannot be made by Parliament.' (**TXT. 42**)*

In SCP judgments, hedges in qualifying statements serve to introduce caution, precision, and flexibility in legal reasoning, and the terms like "generally," "it appears that," or "in most cases," the court avoids absolute declarations, acknowledging that legal principles may have exceptions or require future refinement. This helps maintain judicial restraint and ensure that rulings do not overextend beyond the case at hand while allowing room for adaptation as laws and societal contexts evolve. Further, hedges prevent misinterpretation by signaling that the judgment applies under specific conditions rather than universally. Finally, they help balance legal certainty with the need for nuanced and adaptable jurisprudence.

Expressing Uncertainty

It is also seen in the data that judges use hedges to convey a sense of uncertainty or lack of absolute conviction about a particular point of law or fact. This use of hedges is essential because judges often need to acknowledge that the legal issues they are addressing may not have clear-cut answers. The use of hedges like "*appears, may have*" shows judges' uncertainty towards some particular fact or law like in the quotation from the corpus below:

*'It **appears**, however, that the learned petitioner has ignored the express direction in para 9 of the Short Order that the Chairman FBR should append with his report the entire record of the proceedings conducted before the CIR, Islamabad for submission to the Secretary of SJC.' (**TXT 101**)*

In SCP judgments, hedges play a crucial role in expressing uncertainty by allowing judges to acknowledge ambiguities, unresolved legal questions, or the evolving nature of jurisprudence. The phrases like "it seems," "there is some indication that," or "it is possible that" help the court indicate areas where definitive conclusions cannot yet be drawn due to limited precedent, conflicting interpretations, or complex factual circumstances. This careful use of hedging prevents overcommitment to a particular stance, leaving space for future courts to refine or clarify the legal position and the expression of such uncertainty in a controlled manner, the court maintains judicial credibility while ensuring that its reasoning remains open to further legal and factual developments.

CONCLUSION

This research aimed to answer two questions: first what types of hedges are used in the judgments of the Supreme Court of Pakistan? and second, what were the functions of the use of these hedges? The researcher employed a corpus-based methodology, using LancsBox (a corpus software) to analyze the data. In conclusion, the corpus analysis of hedges in SCP has shed light on the nuanced and multilayered nature of the use of hedges in the judgments, within the highest tiers of the Pakistani judicial system. The findings have revealed that hedges are not mere linguistic accompaniments but strategic tools employed by judges to navigate the complicated landscape of legal decision-making. The hedges allow for a careful adjustment of the certainty or doubt associated with a particular legal assertion and the judges ensure that their judgments are not overly inflexible but, rather, reflect an understanding of the complexities inherent in the interpretation and application of the law.

The findings of this research show the use of different types of hedges in the judgments of SCP. The different kinds of hedges include Modal auxiliary verbs, Lexical verbs, Probability adjectives, Nouns, Adverbs, Adverbs of frequency, if clauses, Compound hedges, and Fillers. The use of these hedges by the judges is very frequent in their judgments which indicates that while making their decisions judges keep in mind the correct use of vocabulary. They have a good command of the use of language and linguistic devices as they know when some particular aspect of a statement is stressed or where it is used with mitigated force.

This research also shows the functions of the use of hedges in the judgments of SCP. It is found that sometimes judges use hedges like "*maybe, possible*" to mitigate the impacts of the judgments that are made. The hedges like *"it is suggested, it is set"* are used to set examples for future decisions and the lower judiciary. When the judges try to show that they are impartial in their judgments, they support their wordings with hedges like

"complete, certainly" and hedges like *"appear, seems, may have"* are used to show uncertainty in some fact or law. The functions of the hedges indicate the fact that judges use them with some obvious purpose and this use is not accidental.

This research is significant in the sense that it ranges beyond the field of linguistics, reaching into the very heart of the legal system and the prevalence of hedges in SCP judgments highlights the commitment of the judiciary to uphold transparency, clarity, and fairness in its communication with legal professionals, petitioners, and the public in general. This study also serves to increase the accessibility of legal decisions, making them more comprehensible to a wide range of stakeholders.

This study not only adds to the body of knowledge concerning legal discourse especially in the judgments of SCP but also has practical implications for legal education, research, and practice as the researcher in the legal field can utilize these findings to look at the different aspects of legal discourse used in the court decisions and they can also find in hedges a valuable tool for interpreting judgments, identifying potential areas of legal uncertainty, and anticipating the evolution of legal principles over time. This study is also significant for practicing lawyers and judges who can also benefit from this research by enhancing their understanding of court judgments.

To summarize it can be said that, this study underscores the vital role of hedges in judgments of the Supreme Court of Pakistan offering a deeper understanding of the use of hedges in the legal language's intricacies and nuances. Through the use of hedges, the judiciary maintains its commitment to transparency, precision, and the equality principles of justice which ultimately takes them to the establishment of the rule of law.

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