

**Speculative Language in Drama:**  
**A Pragmatic Perspective of Lexical Hedges in**  
***Shaw's Arms and the Man and Man and Superman***

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## اللغة التخمينية في الدراما: منظور تداولي للتحوط المعجمي

في مسرحيتي شو "الأسلحة والإنسان" و "الإنسان والسوبرمان"

### مستخلص

تتناول الدراسة اللغة التخمينية في الدراما. كما تهدف إلى التعرف على أدوات وأساليب ووظائف وأغراض التحوط المُستخدمة في مسرحيتي الأسلحة والإنسان، والإنسان والسوبرمان للكاتب شو. ومن أجل تحقيق هذا الهدف، تتبع الدراسة نموذجًا انتقائيًا يجمع بين ثلاثة تصنيفات، وهي تصنيفات سالاچر ماير (١٩٩٧)، فارتالا (٢٠٠١)، وفريزر (٢٠١٠). وقد أظهر تحليل البيانات الذي تم إجرائه باتباع كلا المنهجين النوعي والكمي وجود تسعة أشكال من التحوطات المعجمية في كل مسرحية على حدة، وأنّ الأفعال المساعدة الشرطيّة هي أكثر أدوات التحوط استخدامًا. واستُخدمت هذه الأدوات كأساليب للتجنب، وتبديد الشخصية، وتخفيف الحدة، وعدم الجزم، والسخرية، والإقناع، والكياسة، والذاتية. كما أوضح التحليل وظائفهم المختلفة بالإضافة إلى الأغراض الوصفية والدرامية والموضوعية التي تكمن وراء استخدامهم. وأشارت النتائج إلى أنّ التحوط يبين إلى حدٍ كبير موثوقية شو في صياغة أعماله الدرامية، وكذلك يوضح كيف يتمكن من دعوة القراء للمشاركة في مناظراته الفلسفية، مما يقودهم للدخول في دائرة لا نهائية من التردد.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** اللغة التخمينية، التحوط المعجمي، أساليب التحوط، الإنسان

والسوبرمان، الأسلحة والإنسان.

## **Speculative Language in Drama:**

### **A Pragmatic Perspective of Lexical Hedges in**

#### **Shaw's *Arms and the Man* and *Man and Superman***

#### **Abstract**

This study addresses speculative language in drama. It identifies the devices, strategies, functions and purposes of lexical hedging employed in Shaw's *Arms and the Man* and *Man and Superman*. To achieve this aim, it adopts an eclectic model integrating three taxonomies, namely those of Salager-Meyer (1997), Varttala (2001) and Fraser (2010). Through blending qualitative and quantitative methods, the data analysis shows that nine lexical forms of hedges are found in each play, and the most frequently employed device is the modal auxiliary. These devices are used as strategies of avoidance, depersonalization, downtoning, indetermination, irony, persuasion, politeness, and subjectivization. The analysis highlights their different functions as well as their descriptive, dramatic and thematic purposes. The results indicate that hedging reflects, to a great extent, Shaw's reliability in creating his drama, and reveals how he invites readers to take part in his philosophical debates, leading them into an endless loop of tentativeness.

**Keywords:** Speculative language, lexical hedges, hedging strategies, *Man and Superman*, *Arms and the Man*.

## 1. Introduction

Communicating uncertainty around a certain proposition is, one way or another, recognition of its entity. Language, being the medium of communication, can then be manipulated to instill some ideas into addressees either by being fully or partially committed to the truth of the proposition. Through incorporating certain words and grammatical constructions in their discourse, speakers can express vagueness and possibility. This linguistic phenomenon has come to be termed “hedging”.

The term “hedge”, in its literal sense, refers to the idea of a barrier, shield or fence, i.e. a means used for protection. Authors often communicate their own beliefs through the characters and incidents taking place in their works. Hence, they would resort to the use of hedging devices to protect themselves and establish their reliability. Shedding light on some of these ingeniously crafted works, this study intends to explore lexical hedging in two selected plays by George Bernard Shaw: *Arms and the Man* (1894) and *Man and Superman* (1903).

Shaw is considered the pioneer of “drama of ideas”, which he has also developed into “comedy of ideas”. The drama of ideas, broadly, refers to dramas that “provoke thought on the part of the audience” (Nethercot, 1941, p. 372).

This modern drama “sought to endow theater with a new sense of intellectual ambition” (Puncher, 2010, p. 7). This type of drama is characterized by being imbued with discussion, debates, paradoxes, and ironic tones. Other playwrights who wrote drama of ideas include Oscar Wilde, Luigi Pirandello, August Strindberg, Georg Kaiser, Tom Stoppard and Bertolt Brecht. However, Shaw’s dramas, particularly his comedies, were outstanding in their themes and long controversial debate that were thought-provoking. Due to Shaw’s idiosyncratic approach to drama, the term “Shavian drama” originated to describe the ideas and style of Shaw.

In *Arms and the Man*, Shaw lets his characters squabble over ingrained social notions. He reflects the realities of love, war and gender roles. Concerning love, the play shows it could happen regardless of one’s social stratum. Characters defy the social conventions. Some want to be more than they are such as Louka, and others settle for less like Sergius. As regards war, Shaw mirrors how people involved truly think about it: for some of them, it is just a trade. As for gender roles, he criticizes patriarchy and brings into light the role of woman. He portrays how women can be superior to men. In so doing, Shaw inspires the audience to reconsider these issues.

Shaw's *Man and Superman*, one of his most outstanding philosophical plays, is a comedy of ideas that principally explores the morality of relationships between man and woman. It primarily tells the story of two rivals: John Tanner and Ann Whitefield. John is a highly intellectual and politically-minded person that deeply values his freedom, whereas Ann is a scheming hypocritical girl that wants John to be her husband. When John learns that he is the target of Ann, he flees away from her. However, she hunts him, and eventually he realizes that he is attracted to her and agrees to the marriage. Within their story, the play bristles with prolonged debates about highly complex philosophical notions including life force and superman.

In such comedies of ideas, speculation is an inherent feature. Speculative language, in essence, is referred to as hedging. Hedging, simply put, is a vehicle for the transmission of opinions without imposition. At bottom, it signals the dramatist's "anticipation of the possibility of opposition to his or her statements" (Hyland, 1995, p. 34). To avoid the occurrence of such opposition and gain reliability, dramatists would resort to the employment of hedging in their works. This would help them to create a convivial atmosphere for debating. Shaw, being a comedy of ideas fanatic, employs speculative language to impart certain themes and notions,

while distancing himself as a reliable figure.

### **1.1. Aim of the Study**

The objective of this study is to identify the frequency and types of lexical hedging devices employed in the two plays. It also attempts to identify the different strategies, functions and purposes of the hedges found. Moreover, it seeks to reflect whether or not reliability of Shaw along with his characters is established through the use of these hedges.

### **1.2. Research Questions**

In order to fulfill the aim of the study, the researcher seeks to find answers to the following questions:

- 1- What are the most dominant types of lexical hedging devices employed in the selected plays?
- 2- What kind of hedging strategies are found in the selected plays? What functions do they serve?

## **2. Literature Review**

A number of pragmatic studies have been conducted on speculative language in scientific discourse (e.g. Kilicoglub & Bergler, 2008; Vlachos & Craven, 2010). Other pragmatic studies on hedging language are also carried out in different fields including political discourse (e.g. Hassan & Said, 2020), academic discourse (e.g. Jalilifar, 2007), and literary works (e.g. Liu, 2020; Hassan, 2024). Researchers

have been using different frameworks in their studies to approach hedging. These studies have mostly discussed the types of hedging devices and strategies used in the data collected and their frequency.

Besides, lexical hedges have been examined in different forms of discourse including academic writing (Demir, 2018), spoken language (Rosanti & Jaelani, 2016), and movie dialogues (Putri, Malini & Saientisna, 2022). Unlike these previous studies, this study elaborates on the pragmatic functions of hedging, pinpoints the hedging strategies employed in the plays under study, and relates these functions and strategies to the theme of the selected plays and the author's views. This, in turn, gives a better understanding of the literary work and highlights the significance of using hedging in literature.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

The concept of hedges was first introduced by Lakoff (1973). He defines hedges as “words whose job is to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy” (p. 471). Yule (1996, p. 130) redefines hedges as “cautious notes expressed about how an utterance is to be taken”.

Unlike “boosters” that assert the truth of the proposition, hedges express uncertainty towards the truth expressed in discourse. They are referred to through a number



of terms including the following: a mitigator (Labov & Fanshel, 1977) a type of downgraders (House & Kasper, 1981), “understatements” (Hübler, 1983), “downtoners” (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech & Svartvik, 1985), and “stance markers” (Atkinson, 1999). As their labels indicate, hedges are used to mitigate, downgrade, understate and downtone propositions.

The different functions of hedges can be identified by realizing a number of strategies. Authors, writers and speakers use hedges for certain purposes. By so doing, they assign certain functions to hedges. Linguists and researchers have set to group and examine these somehow concealed strategies and functions, as indicated in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1.** Hedging Functions



Figure 1 above shows ten hedging strategies. These strategies are as follows: avoidance (Taweel, Al-Saidat, Rafayah, & Saidat, 2011), concealment (Odebunmi, 2011), depersonalization (Martin-Martin, 2008), downtoning (Williamova, 2005; Hinkel, 2005), indetermination (Namsaraev, 1997; Martin-Martin, 2008), intimacy (Namsaraev, 1997), irony (Al Arief, 2023; Kholis, Sugaryamah, & Listiani, 2024), persuasion (Zhang & Chen, 2020; Jovic, Kurtishi, & AlAfnan, 2023), politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987), and subjectivization (Namsaraev, 1997; Williamova, 2005).

Above all, Namsaraev (1997) pinpoints the main

functions served through these hedging strategies as follows: the prevention of a negative reaction of an addressee, the protection of face of both addresser and addressee, the softening of the illocutionary force of a given utterance, and the protection of the propositional components of a certain utterance. Hedging also helps the addresser to avoid his direct involvement, and express modesty in certain cases (Taweel et al., 2011).

This study adopts an eclectic approach in classifying hedging devices and strategies. The following model is adapted from the integration of three taxonomies, namely those of Salager-Meyer (1997), Varttala (2001) and Fraser (2010). Table 1 below presents the model to follow in the present study. A number of these lexical items can prompt hedging in sentences. These items are termed “lexical hedges”. Lexically, hedges may take the form of verbs, modal items, approximators and impersonal pronouns. The sections to follow tackle these four lexical categories.

**Table 1.** Lexical Hedging Devices

Lexical Hedging Devices			Examples
Verbs	Modal Auxiliaries		May, might, can, would, should
	Certain Lexical Verbs	Non-factive Reporting	Argue, propose, suggest
		Tentative cognition	Believe, think, assume

		Tentative linking	Seem, look, sound
Approximators			Quite, often, a lot of, about
Modal Items	Modal Adjectives		Possible, probable, unlikely
	Modal Adverbs		Perhaps, possibly, presumably
	Modal Nouns		Assumption, suggestion, claim
Impersonal Pronouns			One, they

### 3.1. Verbs

Verbs that act as hedging devices, according to the proposed model in Table 1, are categorized into two main types: modal auxiliaries and certain lexical verbs.

#### 3.1.1. Modal Auxiliaries

Crystal (2008) defines an auxiliary verb as a verb that is “subordinate to the main lexical verb, which help[s] to make distinction in mood, aspect, [and] voice” (p. 46). On that basis, auxiliary verbs are also known as “helping verbs” (Finch, 2000, p. 130). Modal auxiliaries, in particular, are the ones that help to express the modality of the proposition.

Above all, there is a line of distinction between mood and modality. Modality is a semantic concept that expresses the relation of the proposition to reality, whereas mood is a morphological means used to express modality (Khomutova,

2014). Modality, as Quirk et al. (1985, p. 219) put it, is “the manner in which the manner in which the meaning of a clause is qualified so as to reflect the speaker's judgment of the likelihood of the proposition it expresses being true”. Hence, modal auxiliaries centrally express the meanings of possibility, volition and obligation (Quirk et al., 1985; Carter & McCarthy, 2006).

Coates (1983) categorizes modality into two types: epistemic and root. Epistemic modality, on the one hand, is concerned with the addresser's knowledge represented in assumptions, assessment of possibilities and degree of confidence. Root modality, on the other hand, is concerned with the possibility of acts performed to be performed. Coates further covers a wide range of meanings that are associated with modal auxiliaries as demonstrated in Table 2 below.

**Table 2.** Meanings of Modal Auxiliaries (Coates,1983)

Modal Auxiliary	Meaning
<b>Can</b>	Root possibility, ability, permission
<b>Could</b>	Hypothesis, past root possibility, epistemic possibility, past ability, permission
<b>May</b>	Root possibility, epistemic possibility, permission
<b>Might</b>	Root possibility, epistemic possibility, hypothesis, permission
<b>Must</b>	Strong obligation, confident inference
<b>Ought</b>	Weak obligation, tentative inference
<b>Shall</b>	Prediction, strong obligation, volition

<b>Should</b>	Weak obligation, hypothesis, tentative inference
<b>Will</b>	Prediction, volition
<b>Would</b>	Hypothetical prediction, past volition, past prediction

Table 2 shows that all modal auxiliaries at least express one of the following interrelated notions: possibility, degree of confidence, tentativeness, and prediction. Since such meaning is closely related to the notion of hedging, modal auxiliaries are used as a realization of hedging. Instances can be seen in [1a.] and [1b.] below.

[1] a. Benjamin *may* run for election.

b. Love *can* happen anytime.

The auxiliary verbs “may” and “can” are used as hedging devices. The verbs “may” and “can” are used to tone down the degree of the addresser’s confidence. They also denote the possibility of the event given in the proposition. The addresser in [3a.] expresses the possibility of Benjamin’s running for election, and the addresser in [1b.] delivers a degree of likelihood of the occurrence of love anytime.

### 3.1.2. Certain Lexical Verbs

Varttala (2001) classifies full verbs that function as hedges into three categories: non-factive reporting verbs, tentative cognition verbs and tentative linking verbs. Table 3

below provides a succinct representation of Vartalla's (2001) sets of lexical verbs according to the type of activity expressed through the verb.

**Table 3.** Vartalla's (2001) Classification of Full Verbs according to the Expressed Activity

Full Verbs	Type of Activity	Examples
<b>Non-factive reporting verbs</b>	Discourse/linguistic activity	Argue, imply, predict, propose, suggest
<b>Tentative cognition verbs</b>	Mental/cognitive activity	Assume, expect, speculate, suppose, think
<b>Tentative linking verbs</b>	Descriptive/comparative activity	Appear, look, seem, sound, tend

Vartalla (2001) sets up the category of “non-factive reporting verbs” based on Thomas and Hawes' (1994) category of “discourse verbs” that is mainly consistent with Thompson and Ye's (1991) “textual verbs”. The verbs included in these categories refer to “activities that are linguistic in nature” (Thomas & Hawes, 1994, p.137) “in which verbal expression is an obligatory component” (Thompson & Ye, 1991, p. 369) whether it be speech or writing. Moreover, Hyland (2005) refers to “reporting verbs” as a linguistic device that benefits writers in expressing their stance and engaging their readers. Thompson and Ye (1991) contend that a writer's stance can be factive, counter-factive

or non-factive. In the non-factive stance, the writer does not reveal his/her attitude towards the reported information. Accordingly, the non-factive reporting verbs can be defined as verbs that one uses to express discourse activities without revealing one's stance towards them. An example of non-factive reporting verbs can be seen in [2] below:

[2] Coronavirus is *predicted* to strike again this fall.

The reporting verb “predicted” is used as a hedging device that the writer employs in order to report the prediction process without revealing his/her stance towards it.

Tentative cognition verbs, as Vartalla (2001) defines, are verbs that “refer to the mental status or mental processes of those whose views are reported rather than to linguistic activity” (p. 122). For instance, the verbs “suppose” and “think” in [3] are used as hedging devices that express the mental activities of supposing and thinking, and reduce the assertiveness of the fact that the addressee is funny.

[3] I *suppose* that you *think* you're funny.

Tentative linking verbs are verbs that denote “tentativeness concerning either the ideas put forth by the author or those expressed in the sources referred to” (Vartalla, 2001, p. 123). Linking verbs, in general, are verbs that connect the subject of the sentence with the subject



complement, hence describing, likening, or comparing the subject to the subject complement. Quirk et al. (1985) state that linking verbs are also referred to as “copular verbs”, “equative verbs”, or “intensive verbs” (p. 54). They further subdivide copular verbs into “verbs of seeming”, “verbs of remaining”, and “verbs of becoming” (p. 1174). The verbs that Vartalla adopts in his category of “tentative linking verbs” are the copular verbs of seeming. Subsequently, tentative linking verbs are those verbs that express a descriptive activity with a tentative stance towards the information presented as in the given example in [4].

[4] Jackline told me that everything *appeared* just fine.

The linking verb “appeared” expresses tentativeness concerning either the idea communicated that everything is fine or the fact that Jackline expresses that everything is fine. It thus functions as a hedging device that reduces assertiveness of the state of being fine and implies limits to the accuracy of the stated proposition.

### 3.2. Approximators

Approximators are expressions that indicate the speaker’s full commitment to the truth of the proposition. Salager-Meyer (1997) classifies approximators into four categories: approximators of degree, quantity, frequency, and time as illustrated in [6a.], [6b.], [6c.] and [6d.] respectively.

- [6] a. The final project model was *slightly* different.
- b. Coronavirus spread to *about* two-thirds of the world's population.
- c. Rachel *often* drinks coffee.
- d. The teacher *occasionally* forgets students' names.

### 3.3. Modal Items

Modality, as previously interpreted, is the speaker or writer's attitude towards the proposition expressed. The term "modality" comprises devices that express degrees of commitment to a proposition (Saeed, 2003, p. 135). Certain modal devices can be used as hedges including verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and nouns. Some of these items are associated with each other (e.g. probable, probably and probability), and others have only one form of each (e.g. maybe, perhaps and idea). Examples of modal items are provided in [5].

- [5] a. The *probable* cause of death is poisoning.
- b. *Presumably* they will move out next month.
- c. There is a greater *possibility* that he will be nominated this year.

The adjective "probable" in [5a.] above expresses the uncertainty of the noun "cause" it modifies. The adverb

“presumably” functions as an adverbial in [5b.] that reveals the fact that the writer is not fully committed to his/her proposition. The noun “possibility” in [5c.] communicates the indetermination of the writer. In the three previous examples, the modal adjective, adverb and noun are employed as hedging devices.

### 3.4. Impersonal Pronouns

Impersonal pronouns are pronouns that do not refer to a specific individual or thing. These pronouns are used to make general propositions without referring to a certain entity. Examples of impersonal pronouns include one, it and they. They function as hedging devices as exemplified below.

[7] a. *one* should always be careful when crossing the street.

b. *It* is raining in New York today.

c. *They* say that life is unfair.

These pronouns serve as a strategy of depersonalization where the addresser kind of retreats in the conversation so as not to bear the responsibility of the information.

All in all, certain words can be used as hedges. These words be single verbs, adjectives, adverbs, nouns and even pronouns. They are used in different positions in utterance: initial, middle and end.

#### 4. Methodology

The data of this research is collected and analyzed through adopting a blend of qualitative and quantitative approaches. The researcher first identifies the types of lexical hedging devices employed in the plays under study. Then, the frequency of the occurrences of these devices is detected. Afterwards, the researcher tackles the strategy, function and purpose behind such employment of hedging.

#### 5. Data Analysis

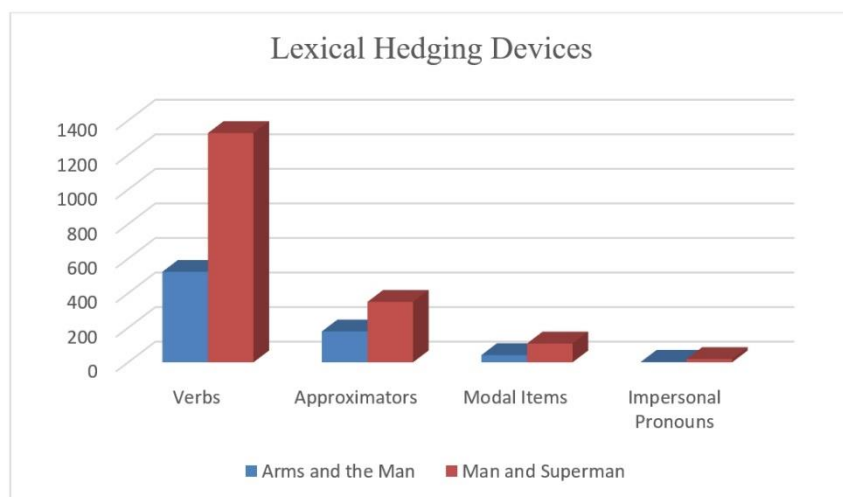
The total number of lexical hedging devices is 2553. These 2553 hedges include 1851 (72.5%) verbs, 529 (20.7%) approximators, 151 (5.9%) modal items, and 22 (0.9%) impersonal pronouns as indicated in Table 4 below that displays theses four lexical sub-categories. Following the table, Figure 2 also provides a clearer view of the proportions of these lexical hedging devices found in *Arms and the Man* and *Man and Superman*.

**Table 4.** Distribution of Lexical Hedging Devices in *Arms and the Man* and *Man and Superman*

Lexical Hedging Devices	<i>Arms and the Man</i>		<i>Man and Superman</i>		Total
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
Verbs	524	28.3	1327	71.7	1851
Approximators	179	33.8	350	66.2	529
Modal Items	42	27.8	109	72.2	151

<b>Imperonal Pronouns</b>	3	13.6	19	86.4	22
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**Figure 2.** Distribution of Lexical Hedging Devices in *Arms and the Man* and *Man and Superman*



According to Table 4 and Figure 2 above, the most frequently used lexical hedging devices are verbs, whereas the least frequently used ones are impersonal pronouns. They also indicate that *Man and Superman* has the highest proportion of verbs, approximators, modal items, and impersonal pronouns: 1327 (71.7%), 350 (66.2%), 109 (72.2%), and 19 (68.4%) respectively. *Arms and the Man*, on the one hand, has the lowest proportion of each category as follows: 524 (28.3%) verbs, 179 (33.8%) approximators, 42 (27.8) modal items, and 3 (13.6%) impersonal pronouns.

Each lexical sub-category is broken down and analyzed in greater detail in the sections to follow.

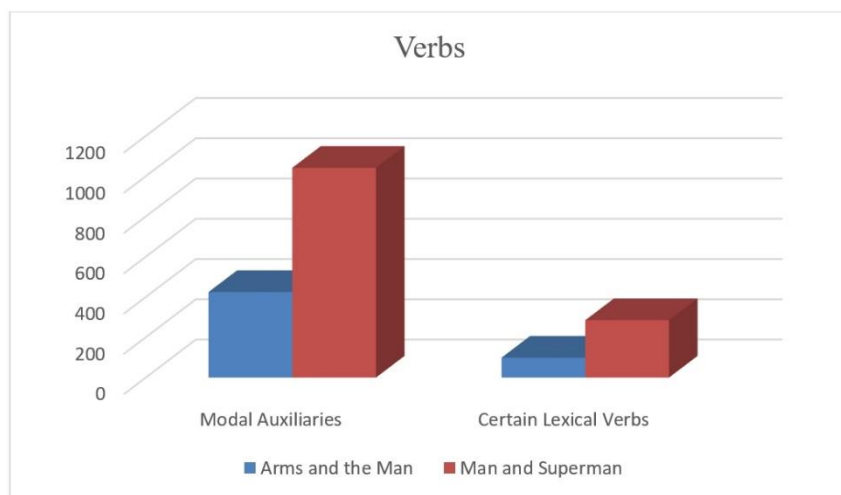
### 5.1. Verbs

Verbs are used as hedging devices 1851 times. Table 5 and Figure 3 below demonstrate the distribution of these 1851 verbs as follows: 1467 (79.3%) modal auxiliaries and 384 (20.7%) certain lexical verbs. The 1467 modal auxiliaries include 425 (29%) found in *Arms and the Man*, and 1042 (71%) in *Man and Superman*.

**Table 5.** Distribution of Verbs in *Man and Superman* and *Arms and the Man*

Verbs	<i>Arms and the Man</i>		<i>Man and Superman</i>		Total
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
<b>Modal Auxiliaries</b>	425	29	1042	71	1467
<b>Certain Lexical Verbs</b>	99	25.8	285	74.2	384

**Figure 3.** Distribution of Verbs in *Arms and the Man* and *Man and Superman*



As indicated in the figure and table above, the 384 lexical verbs include 99 (25.8%) extracted from *Arms and the Man*, and 285 (74.2%) from *Man and Superman*. The highest proportion of each type of verb, once more, occur in *Man and Superman*, while the lowest in *Arms and the Man*. Overall, the most frequently used type of verbs is the modal auxiliary, amounting to more than three times the lexical verbs found in the plays. This result is consistent with the fact that modal auxiliaries are commonly viewed as the principle means of producing modal meaning in everyday interactions and in various disciplines. The two types of verbs, however, are thoroughly discussed and analysed in the following two sections.

### 5.1.1. Modal Auxiliaries

The data from the three selected plays included ten different modal auxiliaries that could be interpreted as hedging devices. Modal auxiliaries, as aforementioned, are used to hedge propositions 1467 times (see Table 5). Table 6 below shows the distribution of these 1467 auxiliaries put in descending order of frequency.

**Table 6.** Frequency of Modal Auxiliaries in *Arms and the Man* and *Man and Superman*

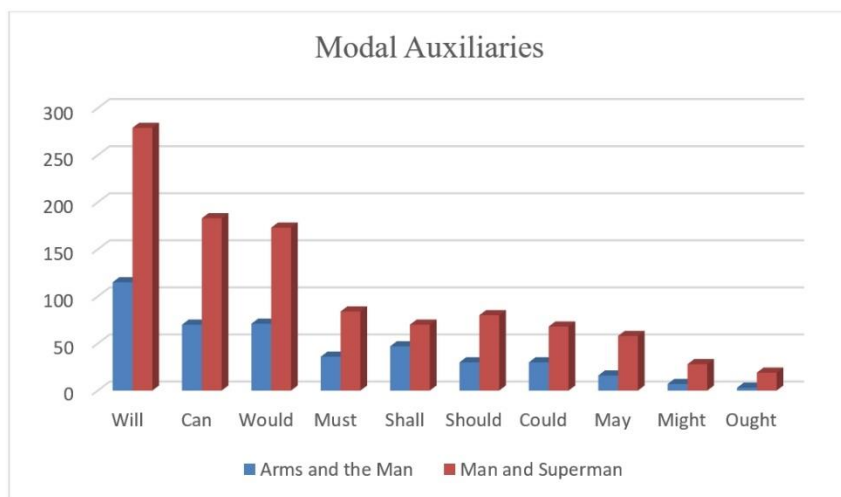
Modal Auxiliaries	<i>Arms and the Man</i>		<i>Man and Superman</i>		Total
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
<b>Will</b>	115	29.2	279	70.8	394
<b>Can</b>	70	27.7	183	72.3	253
<b>Would</b>	71	29.1	173	70.9	244
<b>Must</b>	36	30	84	70	120
<b>Shall</b>	47	40.2	70	59.8	117
<b>Should</b>	30	27.3	80	72.7	110
<b>Could</b>	30	30.6	68	69.4	98
<b>May</b>	16	21.6	58	78.4	74
<b>Might</b>	7	20	28	80	35
<b>ought</b>	3	13.6	19	86.4	22

According to Table 6, the 1467 modal auxiliaries occurring in the data include 394 (26.9%) instances of will, 253 (17.2%) can, 244 (16.6%) would, 120 (8.2%) must, 117 (8%) shall, 110 (7.5%) should, 98 (6.7%) could, 74 (5%) may, 35 (2.4%) might, and 22 (1.5%) ought. Overall, the most frequently employed modal auxiliary is will, while the least



frequently employed one is ought as clearly indicated in Figure 4 below.

**Figure 4.** Frequency of Modal Auxiliaries in *Arms and the Man* and *Man and Superman*



The figure further reveals that *Man and Superman* has the highest proportions of each of the modal auxiliaries. In what follows, the researcher looks closely at each one of these ten modal auxiliaries, provides examples from the two plays, pinpoints the proposition hedged, and interprets the different strategies and functions that these modals serve in drama.

**a. Will.** The most frequently used modal auxiliary is “will”. It occurs 394 times: 115 (29.2%) in *Arms and the Man*, and 279 (70.8%) in *Man and Superman*. Examples of the occurrence of “will” with hedging potential in each play can be seen in [8a.] and [8b.].

[8] a. SERGIUS. “I will prove that that, at least, is a calumny”  
(Shaw, 1913, p. 71).

b. TANNER. “The young men will scorn me as one who  
has sold out” (Shaw, 1919, p. 169).

**b. Can.** The second frequently used type of modal auxiliaries is “can”. It occurs 253 times: 70 (27.7%) in *Arms and the Man* and 183 (72.3%) in *Man and Superman*. Instances of these occurrences are given in [9a.] and [9b.] from each play as follows:

[9] a. LOUKA. “Then you can come to me; and I will refuse  
you” (Shaw, 1913, p. 64).

b. VIOLET. “I can make allowances for you, Miss  
Ramsden” (Shaw, 1919, p. 46).

**c. Would.** The third frequently used type of modal auxiliaries is “would”. It occurs 244 times: 71 (29.1%) in *Arms and the Man* and 173 (70.9%) in *Man and Superman*. Examples from the two plays are provided below.

[10] a. LOUKA. “I believe you would rather be my servant  
than my husband” (Shaw, 1913, p. 1).

b. TANNER. “Everybody would call me a brute if I told  
Ann the truth about herself in terms of her own moral  
code” (Shaw, 1919, p. 165).

**d. Must.** The fourth frequently used type of modal auxiliaries

is “must”. It occurs 120 times: 36 (30%) in *Arms and the Man* and 84 (70%) in *Man and Superman*. The following two examples show the hedging potential of “must” in each play.

[11] a. CATHERINE. “It must be hanging in the blue closet where you left it” (Shaw, 1913, p. 51)

b. ANN. “Thats self-sacrifice, I suppose; but there must be some satisfaction in it” (Shaw, 1919, p. 161).

e. **Shall.** The fifth frequently used type of modal auxiliaries is “shall”. It occurs 117 times: 47 (40.2%) in *Arms and the Man* and 70 (59.8%) in *Man and Superman*. The propositions in [12a.] and [12b.] are representative of the occurrence of “shall” with hedging potential in the plays.

[12] a. CATHERINE. “I suppose we shall have them call every day to pay their compliments” (Shaw, 1913, p.43).

b. TANNER. “It seems to me that I shall presently be married to Ann whether I like it myself or not” (Shaw, 1919, p. 164).

f. **Should.** The sixth frequently used type of modal auxiliaries is “should”. It occurs 110 times: 30 (27.3%) in *Arms and the Man* and 80 (72.7%) in *Man and Superman*. Examples of the occurrence of “should” with hedging potential in each play can be seen in [13a.] and [13b.].

[13] a. SERGIUS. “I should have been a field-marshal now”  
(Shaw, 1913, p. 33).

b. ANN. “I should like to make a man of you somehow”  
(Shaw, 1919, p. 161).

**g. Could.** The seventh frequently used type of modal auxiliaries is “could”. It occurs 98 times: 30 (30.6%) in *Arms and the Man* and 68 (69.4%) in *Man and Superman*. Instances of these occurrences are given in [14a.] and [14b.] from each play as follows:

[14] a. NICOLA. “She is so grand that she never dreams that any servant could dare to be disrespectful to her”  
(Shaw, 1913, p. 25).

b. THE DEVIL. “A mere physical gulf they could bridge; or at least I could bridge it for them” (Shaw, 1919, p. 102).

**h. May.** The eighth frequently used type of modal auxiliaries is “may”. It occurs 74 times: 16 (21.6%) in *Arms and the Man*, and 58 (78.4%) in *Man and Superman*. Examples from the two plays are provided below.

[15] a. SERGIUS. “You may now call me a coward as well”  
(Shaw, 1913, p. 68).

b. OCTAVIUS. “Arnt we forgetting that Ann herself may have some wishes in this matter?” (Shaw, 1919,

p. 12).

**i. *Might*.** The ninth frequently used type of modal auxiliaries is “might”. It occurs 35 times: 7 (20%) in *Arms and the Man* and 28 (80%) in *Man and Superman*. The propositions in [16a.] and [16b.] are representative of the occurrence of “might” with hedging potential in the plays.

[16] a. NICOLA. “I thought it might be something like that”  
(Shaw, 1913, p. 26).

b. TANNER. “I might as well be her husband” (Shaw, 1919, p. 10).

**j. *Ought*.** The least frequently used type of modal auxiliaries is “ought”. It occurs 22 times: 3 (13.6%) in *Arms and the Man* and 19 (86.4%) in *Man and Superman*. The following two examples show the hedging potential of “ought” in each play.

[17] a. MAN. “he ought to be courtmartialled for it” (Shaw, 1913, p. 16).

b. MRS WHITEFIELD. “And when it’s been put into my head that Ann ought to marry you, what can I say except that it would serve her right?” (Shaw, 1919, p. 167).

So far, the research has presented the proportions of each modal auxiliary in each play. In the following part, the research provides an indicative example of each play showing

the occurrence of modal auxiliaries with hedging potential. Besides, the researcher interprets the meaning of hedging contained in the proposition, relates it to the themes and plot of the drama, and pinpoints the different strategies, functions and purposes realized through the use of these modal auxiliaries. Hedges 1 and 2 are representatives of modal auxiliaries in *Arms and the Man* and *Man and Superman* respectively.

**Hedge 1. LOUKA. “I wish I could believe a man could be so unlike a woman as that” (Shaw, 1913, p. 63).**

In her dialogue with Sergius, Louka uses the modal “could” as a strategy of indetermination as well as irony. The proposition above contains two occurrences of “could”: the former expresses ability and so is not considered a hedge, and the latter expresses possibility and thus have a hedging potential. It also contains other hedges such as “wish” and “believe”. Louka hedges her proposition to avoid the negative reaction of Sergius.

This hedge takes place in Act III. Sergius asks Louka if he can cure the bruise on her arm, but she rejects his offer. She further asks him if he feels sorry, but he replies that he is never sorry. Louka responds to him that she wishes she could believe a man can be never sorry.

Shaw employs these hedges, through Louka’s voice,

as a vehicle for his critique of the arbitrary nature of man and woman in society. He satirizes the traditional gender role and view that men never feel sorry, for they think they are superior to women. Shaw here makes use of this hedge as a means of subversion of the patriarchal values, reducing the force of his statement so as to protect his proposition, and invite the audience to react freely to his cause. Accordingly, this hedge serves a thematic purpose in *Arms and the Man*.

**Hedge 2. TANNER. "She'll commit every crime a respectable woman can, and she'll justify every one of them [...] She'll put everything on us; and we shall have no more control over her" (Shaw, 1919, p. 9).**

Jack Tanner uses the modal auxiliaries “will” and “shall” as a strategy of indetermination, and Shaw in turn makes use of it as a strategy of irony. Referring to the future, these modals involve some uncertainty. Through the use of them, Tanner prevents the negative reactions of Ramsden and Octavius who idealize Ann, and Shaw satirizes the relationship between man and woman through the reversal of its nature.

This hedge occurs at the beginning of Act I in the presence of Ramsden and Octavius. Tanner informs Ramsden that they both have been appointed as Ann's guardians according to her father's will. He then desperately pleads to

Ramsden to “get [him] out of it somehow” (Shaw, 1919, p. 9). Unlike Ramsden and Octavius who think highly of Ann, Tanner sees her as a young lady who will probably commit wrongful actions and let them face the consequences.

Shaw cleverly employs these hedges to produce a comic effect. That is, Tanner’s interpretation of Ann “demonstrates the comic reversal of a man of mental and physical strength being afraid of a young and inexperienced woman” (Crane, 1971, p. 14). Throughout the course of the play, Ann greatly fulfils Tanner’s expectation of her as manifested in her manipulation of him, her mother and Octavius. Besides, the irony also lies in making the audience anticipate the possibility—whether or not Ann will behave in such a way—that is not in conformity with the society. In this way, Shaw uses these hedges to foreshadow Ann’s behaviours, depict possible traits of her character so as to prepare the audience to meet this rebellious woman, and mock the reversal of roles between man and woman. Subsequently, Hedge 2 serves both dramatic and thematic purposes in *Man and Superman*.

### 5.1.2. Certain Lexical Verbs

Lexical verbs, as mentioned earlier, are used to hedge propositions 510 times. Table 7 and Figure 5 below show the distribution of these 384 verbs as follows: 306 (79.7%)

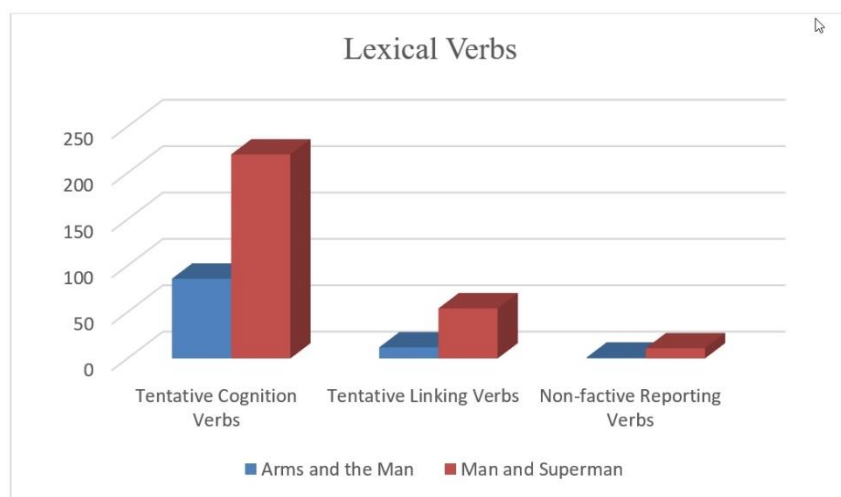


tentative cognition verbs, 66 (17.2%) tentative linking verbs, and 12 (3.1%) non-factive reporting verbs. Overall, the most frequently used type of lexical verbs is the tentative cognition verb, whereas the least frequently used one is the non-factive reporting verb.

**Table 7.** Distribution of Lexical Verbs in *Arms and the Man* and *Man and Superman*

Lexical Verbs	<i>Arms and the Man</i>		<i>Man and Superman</i>		Total
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
<b>Tentative cognition verbs</b>	86	28.1	220	71.9	306
<b>Tentative linking verbs</b>	12	18.2	54	81.8	66
<b>Non-factive reporting verbs</b>	1	8.3	11	91.7	12

**Figure 5.** Distribution of Lexical Verbs in *Arms and the Man* and *Man and Superman*



**a. Tentative cognition verbs.** The most frequently used type of lexical verbs is the tentative cognition verb that takes place 306 times constituting 79.7% of all lexical verbs studied. Of these 306 verbs, 86 (28.1%) are found in *Arms and the Man* and 220 (71.9%) in *Man and Superman*. The highest proportion of tentative cognition verbs occur in *Man and Superman*, whereas the lowest proportion in *Arms and the Man*. The verbs “think” and “suppose” make up the top two in terms of frequency in each of the two plays. Typical examples of the occurrences of these verbs in the plays are provided in [18] below.

[18] a. Rania. “I think we two have found the higher love”  
(Shaw, 1913, p. 36).

b. VIOLET. “I suppose there’s no use our playing at cross purposes, Mr Malone” (Shaw, 1919, p. 148).

First, there are altogether 13 different tentative cognition verbs identified in *Arms and the Man*, with a total of 86 occurrences. Out of the 86 occurrences of these verbs, there are 37 (43%) occurrences of “think”, 13 (15.1%) occurrences of “suppose”, and 9 (10.5%) occurrences of “hope”. Other tentative verbs are also identified in the play such as “daresay”, “doubt” and “wonder” (see Appendix A). Hedge 3 is illustrative of these cognition verbs in the play.

Second, there are altogether 22 different tentative

cognition verbs identified in *Man and Superman*, with a total of 220 occurrences. In the play, the verb “think” has the highest proportion of tentative cognition verbs, followed by “suppose”, “hope” and “wish” with frequencies distributed as follows: 87 (39.6%), 33 (15%), 17 (7.7%) and 17 (7.7%) respectively. Other tentative cognition verbs that are found in the text of the drama include “assume”, “fear” and “surmise” (see Appendix B). An instance of these verbs can be seen in Hedge 4.

**Hedge 3. “PETKOFF. [...] However, I suppose soldiering has to be a trade like any other trade” (Shaw, 1913, p. 33).**

Petkoff uses the cognition verb “suppose” after the first-person pronoun “I” as a strategy of subjectivization as well as irony. Using this cognition verb, Shaw prevents the negative reaction of audience who has long idealized war in terms of virtue and peace. He softens the force of his claim while acquainting the audience with the realities of war.

This hedge takes place in Act II during a conversation between Catherine, Petkoff, Sergius, and Rania. Sergius claims he is no longer a soldier as soldiering is “is the coward’s art of attacking mercilessly when you are strong, and keeping out of harm’s way when you are weak” (Shaw, 1913, pp. 32-33). In response to Sergius, Petkoff comments that it is war has become largely a trade.

In *Arms and the Man*, Shaw depicts war as “a trade like business having the calculation of profit and loss” (Khalil, 2021, p. 181). In one sense, soldiers are the capital put in the battlefield to win or lose—to live or die. In another sense, most soldiers, as represented by Sergius, consider war as a profession they join and try to do their best to get a promotion. In these respects, Shaw shows the realities and hollowness of the concept of war. Using this hedge, he cautiously introduces this view through the voice of Petkoff. This hedge thus serves a thematic purpose.

**Hedge 4. “OCTAVIUS. [rising and coming from his refuge by the wall] Mr. Ramsden: I think you are prejudiced against Jack” (Shaw, 1919, p. 11).**

Octavius addressing Mr. Ramsden uses the verb “think”. By using the subject personal pronoun “I” accompanied by this tentative cognition verb, Octavius resorts to the strategy of subjectivization. In so doing, Octavius softens the force of his statement, prevents the occurrence of negative reaction of Mr. Ramsden, and protects their faces.

The abovementioned hedge takes place at the beginning of Act I. In this part of the act, Octavius, Mr. Tanner and Mr. Ramsden are talking about Mr. Whitefield’s will. It is worth mentioning that at the beginning of the act

Mr. Ramsden, in his private conversation with Octavius, did confess that he does not approve of Mr. Tanner and criticized him. Octavius is therefore positive that Mr. Ramsden is prejudiced against Jack. However, he uses this hedging device in order to conceal his commitment to the truth of the proposition.

Shaw here employs hedging to signal that this is just Octavius' opinion which may or may not be mistaken, and to make readers believe that they have the freedom to think differently. He nevertheless instills the idea of Mr. Ramsden's prejudice into the readers' mind. In this way, Shaw uses hedging to intrigue the audience and establish reliability of both characters: Octavius who does not want to impose his opinion as a fact, and Mr. Ramsden who may not be prejudiced. Accordingly, hedging serves a dramatic purpose in the play.

**b. Tentative linking verbs.** The second frequently employed type of lexical verbs is the tentative linking verb taking place 66 times and representing 17.2% of all extracted lexical verbs in the study. These 66 verbs are distributed as follows: 12 (18.2%) in *Arms and the Man* and 54 (81.8%) in *Man and Superman*. The highest proportion of tentative linking verbs occur in *Man and Superman*, while the lowest proportion in *Arms and the Man*. Examples of these verbs' occurrences in

the two plays are given in [19] below.

[19] a. RANIA. “When I buckled on Sergius's sword he looked so noble” (Shaw, 1913, p. 5).

b. TANNER. “You seem to me to have absolutely no conscience—only hypocrisy” (Shaw, 1919, p. 31).

In *Arms and the Man*, there are 3 different tentative linking verbs identified, with a total of 12 occurrences. These verbs are “look”, “seem” and “appear” distributed as follows: 6 (50%), 4 (33.3%) and 2 (16.7%) respectively. The verb “look” is the most frequently used verb in the play. Hedge 5 is illustrative of these tentative linking verbs in the play.

In *Man and Superman*, there are 3 different tentative linking verbs identified, with a total of 54 occurrences. These verbs are “seem”, “sound” and “look” distributed as follows: 37 (%), 6 (%) and 11 (%) respectively. The verb “seem” is the most frequently used verb in the play, and an indicative instance of its occurrence is provided in Hedge 6.

**Hedge 5. LOUKA. “Men never seem to me to grow up” (Shaw, 1913, p. 63).**

Louka addressing Sergius uses the tentative linking verb “seem” to hedge her proposition as a strategy of politeness and subjectivization. She resorts to these strategies to mitigate the force of her claim. She also adds the

prepositional phrase “to me”, which acts as a hedge, to further assert her subjective attitude. This, in turn results in saving her face and that of Sergius.

This hedge occurs in Act III. In a dialogue between Louka and Sergius, Louka expresses her view that men never seem to grow up. This is mainly because Sergius does not admit his mistake or feel sorry for causing her a bruise on her arm, and speaks to her in a degrading way. She doubts that he is a brave man, and concludes that all men never seem to her to become actual adults.

Shaw, through this hedge, mocks and challenges the romanticized view of men as responsible adult figures who dictate women’s life. In addition, he shows the realities of men, and instills the idea that women, in some ways, can be more grown up, responsible and brave than men. At bottom, Shaw gently derides the perception of patriarchy. In this respect, this hedge serves a thematic purpose in the drama.

**Hedge 6. ANA. “It seems that Woman taught you something, too, with all her defects” (Shaw, 1919, p. 118).**

Addressing Don Juan, Ana uses the verb “seem” as a strategy of indetermination and avoidance. She is indetermined whether Woman has really taught Don something, so she avoids stating her proposition strongly. In so doing, she protects herself, and gains reliability in the

ongoing debate.

This hedge takes place in the scene in Act III. Ana and Don argue about the status of woman in relationships. Don pictures woman as a pursuer, whom he shuns in his pursuit of higher wisdom and self-consciousness.

In satirizing the relationship between man and woman, Shaw uses a number of hedges. One would actually get to the point of wondering which one seeks the other, which one teaches the other, and which one betters the other. On a similar note to that of Hedge 5, Shaw degrades the superiority of men. Through the speculative means of the verb “seem”, he casts light on the issue. However, he does not impose his notions on the audience, but rather presents them in an indecisive way so as to allow them to react freely. Hence, hedging is a means for developing themes in the drama.

**c. *Non-factive reporting verbs.*** The least frequently used type of lexical verbs is the non-factive reporting verb that occurs 12 times constituting 3.1% of all lexical verbs studied. Of these 12 verbs, 1 (8.3%) is extracted from *Arms and the Man* and 11 (91.7%) are extracted from *Man and Superman*. The highest proportion of non-factive reporting verbs occur in *Man and Superman*, while the lowest proportion in *Arms and the Man*. Examples from the three dramas are shown in [20] below.



[20] a. CATHERINE. “Imagine their meeting that Swiss and hearing the whole story!” (Shaw, 1913, p. 41).

b. TANNER. “We propose to furnish our own house according to our own taste” (Shaw, 1919, p. 175).

Concerning *Arms and the Man*, only the verb “imagine” is identified as non-factive reporting verb. It occurs only one time in the play as given in [20a.]. Hedge 7 provides further interpretation of the verb’s occurrence.

As for *Man and Superman*, there are altogether 3 different non-factive reporting verbs identified, with a total of 11 occurrences. These verbs are “suggest”, “propose” and “profess”: 7 (63.6%), 3 (27.3%) and 1 (9.2%) respectively. The verb “suggest” is the most frequently used verb in the play. Hedge 8 is a typical example of the functions served through the use of non-factive reporting verbs.

**Hedge 7. CATHERINE. “Imagine their meeting that Swiss and hearing the whole story!” (Shaw, 1913, p. 41).**

Catherine, Rania’s mother, uses the verb “imagine” as a strategy of indetermination. She raises the possibility that Petkoff and Sergius may meet the Swiss Bluntschli. This hedge allows Catherine to report her claim and make her statement less direct, as well as saving her face and not risking her reliability in case the incident does not eventually take

place.

Hedge 7 takes place in Act II. Bluntschli, at the beginning of the play, climbs into Rania's room so as to hide from Bulgarian troops. Rania and Catherine help him escape capture that night, and then he leaves. He later tells the story of two women who has helped a fugitive, and the story reaches Petkoff and Sergius.

In the dialogue between Catherine and Rania in which Hedge 7 is uttered, Catherine imagines that Bluntschli will meet them himself, and then they will discover that these two women are Rania and Catherine. Ironically, they do eventually meet him and discover all the facts about that night. Using this hedge, Catherine leaves the audience speculating on the occurrence of this meeting. This hedge thus serves a dramatic purpose in the play.

**Hedge 8. RAMSDEN. “Mr Tanner has, I understand, some objection also; but I do not profess to understand its nature” (Shaw, 1919, p. 16).**

Ramsden addressing Ann uses the verb “profess” as a strategy of politeness and depersonalization. Tanner has already told him the reasons behind his objection. However, Ramsden hedges his proposition to avoid stating Tanner's views directly and threatening Ann's face, as well as preventing her negative reaction.

Hedge 8 occurs in Act I in a dialogue between Ramsden, Ann, Tanner, Mrs. Whitefield and Octavius. Tanner informs Ramsden that he does not want to be Ann's guardian because he cannot handle her. He sees Ann in her true colours: She is a coquette and a hypocrite. He realizes she is not a naïve young woman; on the contrary, she does whatever it takes to get what she has her mind set on, and whatever it takes to get away with her lying. However, Ramsden does not agree with him as he considers Ann “a wonderfully dutiful girl” (Shaw, 1919, p. 5).

Aware of the turbulence that he may create, Ramsden uses the non-factive reporting verb “profess” to hedge his proposition. He eliminates his involvement by expressing his uncertainty of the nature of Tanner's objection. In so doing, he avoids confronting Ann with Tanner's claims. In this light, this hedge serves a dramatic purpose in the play.

## 5.2. Approximators

The second frequently used sub-category of lexical hedges is that of approximators. They are used to hedge propositions 529 times. These 529 approximators include 179 (33.8%) found in *Arms and the Man* and 350 (66.2%) in *Man and Superman* as indicated in Table 4. The highest proportion of approximators occur in *Man and Superman*, while the lowest proportion in *Arms and the Man*. The approximators

“quite”, “more” and “some” make up the top three in terms of frequency in each of the two dramas. Examples of their occurrences in the dramas are as follows:

[21] a. NICOLA. “I should have expected more sense from you, Louka” (Shaw, 1913, p. 25).

b. TANNER. “I quite expect to get married in the course of the afternoon” (Shaw, 1919, p. 168).

Concerning *Arms and the Man*, there are altogether 32 different approximators identified, with a total of 179 occurrences. Out of these 179 occurrences, there are 35 (19.6%) occurrences of “quite”, 21 (11.7%) occurrences of “more”, and 17 (9.5%) occurrences of “some”. Other approximators are also identified in the play such as “a little”, “mostly”, “occasionally”, “seldom”, and “sort of” (see Appendix A). Hedge 9 is illustrative of these approximators in the play.

As for *Man and Superman*, there are altogether 42 different approximators identified, with a total of 350 occurrences. In the play, the approximator “more” has the highest proportion, followed by “some”, and “quite” with frequencies distributed as follows: 54 (15.4%), 43 (12.3%), and 42 (12%) respectively. Other approximators that are found in the text of the drama include “a bit”, “about”, “partly”, “most” and “rather” (see Appendix B). An instance

of these approximators can be seen in Hedge 10.

**Hedge 9. “NICOLA. I’ve often thought that if Rania were out of the way, and you just a little less of a fool and Sergius just a little more of one, you might come to be one of my grandest customers” (Shaw, 1913, p. 61).**

Nicola, addressing Louka, uses the approximators “a little”, “less of” and “more of” as strategies of indetermination, politeness and downtoning. He scales down the intensity of the quality of being fool in order not to insult Louka. He thus protects their faces, and avoids strong criticism through softening his statement.

These hedges take place in Act III, as Nicola criticizes Louka for being a fool. She acts familiar with him, and accordingly people only see her as his fellow servant. He advises her to change her behaviour if she wants to climb the social ladder. He suggests that if Sergius and Louka kind of switch their foolishness, they might end up being together as husband and wife.

To use a somehow friendly tone, Nicola employs other hedges as well in his statement including “often”, “thought”, “if” and “might”. In this way, he attempts to decrease Louka’s defensiveness so that she would react positively. However, Sergius actually falls for Louka and decides to marry her at the end of the play. Shaw cunningly employs these hedges to

foreshadow this turn of events, serving a dramatic purpose.

**Hedge 10. “ANA. It is all nonsense: most marriages are perfectly comfortable” (Shaw, 1919, p. 122).**

Ana addressing Don Juan uses the quantifier “most” as an approximator. This quantifier is used as a determiner that precedes the noun “marriage”, referring to its indefinite quantity. Ana uses this hedge as strategies of avoidance and persuasion. That is, she tries to avoid being unreliable so that she would persuade Don that marriage is likely comfortable and successful.

This hedge takes place in the hell scene in Act III. Don Juan, Ana, the statue, and the devil argue about the institution of marriage. On the one hand, Don describes marriage as “the most licentious of human institutions” (Shaw, 1919, p. 121). On the other hand, Ana supports marriage and seeks “a father for the Superman” (Shaw, 1919, p. 138). Throughout the play, Shaw pictures Ann as a huntress who seeks to marry Tanner, being smart and good-looking, to have children that are mentally and physically better. In this regard, Shaw portrays Ann as a typical Shavian woman.

Using the approximator “most”, Ann refers to the majority of marriages in general to avoid giving certain cases of marriages. She also attempts to persuade Don that marriages are comfortable to secure her prey. This hedge thus

contributes to the portrayal of Ann's character as well as the thematic structure of the drama.

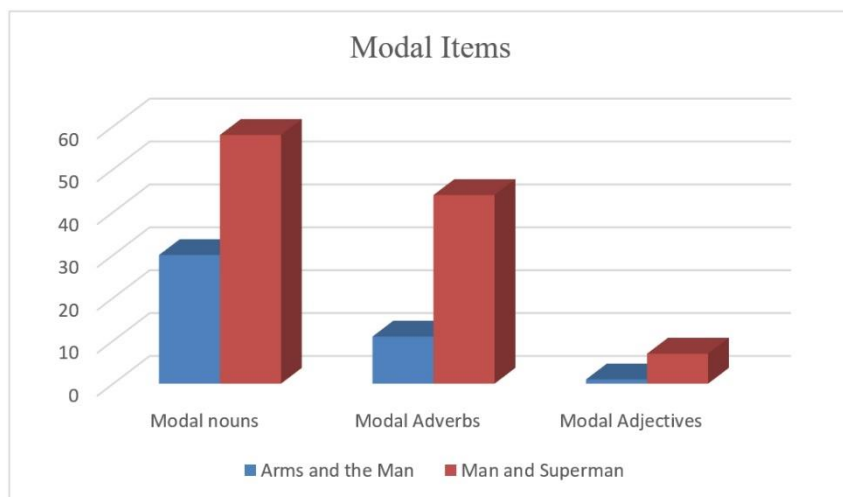
### 5.3. Modal Items

The third frequently used sub-category of lexical hedges is that of modal items. They are used to hedge propositions 151 times. These 151 modal items include 42 (27.8%) found in *Arms and the Man* and 109 (72.2%) in *Man and Superman* as indicated in Table 4. The highest proportion of modal items takes place in *Man and Superman*, while the lowest proportion in *Arms and the Man*. Table 8 and Figure 6 below demonstrate the sub-categories of model items identified in the plays displayed in descending order of frequency as follows: modal nouns, modal adverbs and modal adjectives.

**Table 8.** Distribution of Modal Items in *Arms and the Man* and *Man and Superman*

Modal Items	<i>Arms and the Man</i>		<i>Man and Superman</i>		Total
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
<b>Nouns</b>	30	34.1	58	65.9	88
<b>Adverbs</b>	11	20	44	80	55
<b>Adjectives</b>	1	12.5	7	87.5	8

**Figure 6.** Distribution of Modal Items in *Arms and the Man* and *Man and Superman*



According to Table 4 and Figure 6, the 151 modal items are distributed as follows: 88 (58.3%) modal nouns, 55 (36.4%) modal adverbs, and 8 (5.3%) modal adjectives. The most frequently used modal item is the modal noun, followed by modal adverbs, then modal adjectives. Besides, the highest proportion of each sub-category takes place in *Man and Superman*, while the lowest proportion takes places in *Arms and the Man*. In what follows, the researcher discusses each sub-category of modal items in detail.

**a. Modal nouns.** They are used as hedging devices 88 times: 30 (34.1%) in *Arms and the Man* and 58 (65.9%) in *Man and Superman*. Examples of their occurrences are provided in [22].



[22] a. SERGIUS. “Bluntschli: my one last belief is gone.  
Your sagacity is a fraud, like all the other things”  
(Shaw, 1913, p. 77).

b. THE DEVIL. “There is a notion that I was turned out  
of it” (Shaw, 1919, p. 178).

**b. Modal adverbs.** They are used as hedging devices 55 times:  
11 (20%) in *Arms and the Man* and 44 (80%) in *Man and Superman*. The propositions in [23] are instances of these  
adverbs.

[23] a. RAINA. Well, it came into my head, [...], that perhaps  
we only had our heroic ideas because we are so fond  
of reading Byron and Pushkin” (Shaw, 1913, p. 6).

b. DON JUAN. “Probably they will not admit a mistake  
even if they have made one” (Shaw, 1919, p. 163).

**c. Modal adjectives.** They are used as hedging devices 8  
times: 1 (12.5%) in *Arms and the Man* and 7 (87.5%) in *Man  
and Superman*. [24a.] and [24b.] are examples of modal  
adjectives realized as hedges in the plays.

[24] a. “As far as the candlelight and his unwashed, unkempt  
condition make it possible to judge, he is a man of  
middling stature and undistinguished appearance”  
(Shaw, 1913, p. 9).

b. TANNER. “I have every possible virtue that a man

can have except—” (Shaw, 1919, p. 13).

Hedges 11 and 12 are representative of the functions and purposes of employing modal items in the two plays.

**Hedge 11. RANIA. “You were not surprised to hear me lie. To you it was something I probably did every day—every hour. That is how men think of women.” (Shaw, 1913, p. 55).**

Rania invests the modal adverb “probably” as a strategy of indetermination, and Shaw invests it as a strategy of irony. She proposes that her lying all the time is a possibility, not something certain as Sergius might consider. In this way, she tries to save her own face. Staging this mechanism, Shaw portrays the complex modern gender roles with a hint of irony.

This hedge takes place in Act III in a dialogue between Rania and Sergius. Sergius explains that as a soldier he is used to hearing people lie. Rania feels offended that he thinks her lying for him is something trivial that she may be doing every day. She uses the adverb “probably”, as well as the propositional phrase “to you” that also functions as a hedge, to lower the probability of the truth of his understanding of her. However, she later admits that she tells strategic lies, exclaiming “How did you find me out?” (Shaw, 1913, p. 56).

Above all, Shaw avails of this hedge as a means of mocking the changing gender roles. To illustrate, “Rania attempts to deflect blame for her lies onto [Sergius]”, hence “avert[ing] responsibility for lying from all women and places that responsibility with all men” (Stober, 2011, p. 96). Ironically, Shaw hints at the probability that women, not men, do probably tell lies. Once more, Shaw uses hedging to portray women as strong figures who are capable of finding their ways in that patriarchal society. In this respect, this modal adverb acting as a hedge serves a thematic purpose in *Arms and the Man*.

**Hedge 12. DON JUAN. “it is an attempt on Man’s part to make himself something more than the mere instrument of Woman’s purpose” (Shaw, 1919, p. 194).**

Don Juan uses the tentative noun “attempt” as strategies of indetermination and persuasion. He appeals to reason by presenting the possibility of being more than an instrument. He thus protects his proposition and gains credibility.

This hedge takes place in Act III. Ana, the devil and Don argue about civilization. Don defines civilization as an attempt to be more than women’s puppet. This attempt, logically, as its denotation indicate, may or may not happen.

Shaw, through this hedge, once more presents the

underlying notion of life force: seeking civilization. According to him, the emancipation of men from women is through seeking wisdom and philosophy. He uses this hedge to express his notion in a soft tone, and persuade the audience that it may be their only way out. Accordingly, this hedge contributes to the theme of the drama.

#### 5.4. Impersonal Pronouns

The least frequently used sub-category of lexical hedges is that of impersonal pronouns. They are used to hedge propositions 22 times. These 22 occurrences of impersonal pronouns include 3 (13.6%) found in *Arms and the Man* and 19 (86.4%) in *Man and Superman* as indicated in Table 4. Examples from the two plays are given in [25] below.

[25] a. LOUKA. “They say there may be shooting in the streets” (Shaw, 1913, p. 6).

b. VIOLET. “One never knows what may be wrong with these places. (Shaw, 1919, p. 157).

The impersonal pronouns “one” and “they” are used as a strategy of depersonalization. Louka and Violet in the utterances above in [25a.] and [25b.] relieve themselves from bearing the responsibility for the truth of the information mentioned. Accordingly, they eliminate their presence through the use of impersonal pronouns as hedging devices.

## 6. Conclusion

The phenomenon of hedging is one of the linguistic devices used in discourse for conferring fuzziness on propositions as a strategy that serves particular functions and subsequent purposes, and yields certain effects. First, the data of this study is extracted from the whole text of the three plays *Arms and the Man* and *Man and Superman*, whether from dialogic, descriptive, or narrative tiers. On conducting the data analysis, 2553 lexical hedging devices are found distributed in nine forms. These forms include 1467 (57.4%) modal auxiliaries, 529 (20.7%) approximators, 306 (12%) tentative cognition verbs, 88 (3.4%) modal nouns, 66 (2.6%) tentative linking verbs, 55 (2.2%) modal adverbs, 22 (0.9%) impersonal pronouns, 12 (0.5%) non-factive linking verbs, and 8 (0.3%) modal adjectives. The most frequently employed type of lexical hedging devices is the modal auxiliary, whereas the least frequently employed one is that of modal adjectives. Second, there are different strategies of hedging found in the plays: avoidance, depersonalization, downtoning, indetermination, irony, persuasion, politeness, and subjectivization. These strategies are used to reinforce, in many ways, the dialogues and various underlying notions in the dramas: the complexity of human nature, the relationship between man and woman, the patriarchal society, and the

disillusionment with war. All in all, lexical hedging devices considerably contribute to the readers' perception of the drama.

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## **Appendices**

# Appendix A. Lexical Hedging Devices in *Arms and the Man*

(The items in each sub-category are listed in alphabetical order)

## a. Modal auxiliaries:

*can*  
*could*  
*may*  
*might*  
*must*  
*ought*  
*shall*  
*should*  
*will*  
*would*

## d. Non-factive reporting verbs:

*imagine*

## b. Tentative cognition verbs:

*believe*  
*consider*  
*daresay*  
*doubt*  
*expect*  
*fear*  
*feel*  
*hope*  
*suppose*  
*suspect*  
*think*  
*wish*  
*wonder*

## e. Modal nouns:

*belief*  
*chance*  
*concept*  
*estimate*  
*expectation*  
*fear*  
*hope*  
*idea*  
*imagination*  
*notion*  
*opinion*  
*possibility*  
*suggestion*  
*thought*  
*wish*

## c. Tentative linking verbs:

*appear*  
*look*  
*seem*

## f. Modal adverbs:

*likely*  
*perhaps*  
*probably*

**g. Modal adjectives:**

*possible*

**i. Impersonal pronouns:**

*one*

*they*

**h. Approximators:**

*a bit*

*a little*

*a lot of*

*about*

*almost*

*evidently*

*extremely*

*few*

*greatly*

*half*

*hardly*

*intensively*

*less*

*little*

*many*

*more*

*mostly*

*nearly*

*occasionally*

*often*

*perhaps*

*probably*

## Appendix B. Lexical Hedging Devices in *Man and Superman*

(The items in each sub-category are listed in alphabetical order)

### a. Modal auxiliaries:

*can*  
*could*  
*may*  
*might*  
*must*  
*ought*  
*shall*  
*should*  
*will*  
*would*

### c. Tentative linking verbs:

*look*  
*seem*  
*sound*

### d. Non-factive reporting verbs:

*profess*  
*propose*  
*suggest*

### b. Tentative cognition verbs:

*assume*  
*believe*  
*conclude*  
*consider*  
*count*  
*doubt*  
*expect*  
*fear*  
*find*  
*guess*  
*hope*  
*infer*  
*maintain*  
*presume*  
*reckon*  
*regard as*  
*suppose*  
*surmise*  
*suspect*  
*think*  
*wish*  
*wonder*

### e. Modal nouns:

*attempt*  
*belief*  
*expectation*  
*idea*  
*judgment*  
*notion*  
*opinion*  
*possibility*  
*proposal*  
*suggestion*  
*view*

### f. Modal adverbs:

*likely*  
*maybe*  
*perhaps*  
*possibly*  
*probably*



**g. Modal adjectives:**

*likely*  
*possible*

**h. Approximators:**

*a bit*  
*a few*  
*a good deal*  
*a great deal*  
*a little*  
*about*  
*almost*  
*apparently*  
*considerably*  
*enormously*  
*evidently*  
*fairly*  
*few*  
*for years*  
*greatly*  
*hardly*  
*infrequently*  
*less*  
*little*  
*many*

*more*  
*most*  
*mostly*  
*obviously*  
*occasionally*  
*often*  
*oftenest*  
*partly*  
*perceptibly*  
*pretty*  
*quite*  
*rarely*  
*rather*  
*scarcely*  
*some*  
*somehow*  
*sometimes*  
*somewhat*  
*soon*  
*sort of*  
*usually*  
*virtually*

**i. Impersonal pronouns:**

*one*