I think this could possibly be... An appreciation of hedging strategies in English, “Nuova Secondaria”, N. 5 gennaio 2014, pp. 106-113.

The notion of hedge has been in the linguistic literature and vocabulary since the term hedge was introduced by Lakoff (1972) to describe a range of lexical units “whose job is to make things more or less fuzzy”. The original definition and interpretation has been recently widened to include more discourse-oriented interpretations. Not surprisingly, the vast majority of publications treat hedges and hedging as phenomena of the English and German language. Yet, its nature and its consequences for foreign language teaching, and English Language Teaching in particular, is not adequately covered in textbooks. This article provides an introductory survey of the notion of hedging and some of the ambiguities and terminological problems that are reflected in the literature, with an eye to the categories and types of hedging strategies in Present-Day English. In the last sections, the article reports on some of the studies on hedging that have been carried out in the field of Applied Linguistics, focussing especially on the EFL/ESL classroom, both in secondary and higher education: the insights they offer represent a discussion of the difficulties learners experience with the phenomenon of hedging and the activities they suggest “may […] enable teachers to make better informed judgements about the communicative usefulness of particular features, assisting them in decisions about what items to teach ad when to teach them” (Hyland 1998: 243).


In quale modo il Blended Learning può permettere un sistema di valutazione diverso rispetto ad un corso tradizionale? In che misura può favorire il monitoraggio continuo dell’apprendimento e una valutazione “personalizzata”? Il presente contributo vuole fare emergere alcune riflessioni di natura qualitativa sull’utilizzo di approcci di Blended-Learning per il monitoraggio del percorso formativo di preparazione alla prova d’esame di Lingua Inglese Livello B1 erogata dal Servizio Linguistico di Ateneo (SeLd’A) dell’Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore. Partendo da alcuni dati preliminari emersi da un progetto di sperimentazione e didattica presso il SeLd’A che vede coinvolti (piccoli) gruppi di studenti delle Sedi di Brescia e di Milano, le riflessioni proposte sono volte a valutare se e in quale misura il Blended-Learning può rivelarsi utile a docenti e studenti nelle diverse fasi di un percorso formativo finalizzato a una prova d’esame comune. Pur condividendo alcuni elementi tecnici, come ad esempio l’utilizzo della medesima piattaforma tecnologica per la gestione dei corsi, ciascuna sede dell’Ateneo ha però adottato soluzioni diverse in merito a tutti gli altri aspetti dell’organizzazione e gestione dei corsi, dettate dalle diverse necessità dei fruitori. Anche di questi aspetti viene data descrizione dettagliata nel presente lavoro.

“Make it meaningful”: tools to make English vocabulary learning a skill, “Nuova Secondaria Ricerca”, N.9, Maggio 2013, pp. 43-52.

The advancements in information-, communication- and computer technology have greatly affected second language instruction, notably in higher education. This article discusses some new trends in ELT methods and methodology, with an eye to a few applied issues in EFL
vocabulary instruction in secondary education. An “idea corner” is presented, where some multimedia tools for teaching vocabulary in the EFL classroom are described. Examples and suggestions of how best to design and exploit corpus-based activities for EFL learners and integrate them with more traditional teaching and learning methods are also provided.


This paper presents the preliminary findings of a study focusing on specific issues concerning the origins and development of the language of mathematical science, especially arithmetic and algebra, in Early Modern English. Special focus is given to Robert Recorde’s (1510ca. 1558) last work, the algebraic textbook entitled The Whetstone of Witte (1557). Recorde is unanimously regarded by historians of science as the author of the first competent introductions to arithmetic, algebra, astronomy and geometry in the vernacular language. Historians of the English language regard Recorde as the most influential 16th century textbook writer in the vernacular language, and the scholar who largely contributed to the development of the language and vocabulary of mathematical science in England: arithmetic apart, his treatises were the very first books totally devoted to the mathematical science to be printed in English. The present study proposes a functional perspective of Recorde’s lexical innovation regarding the scientific vocabulary of arithmetic and algebra (in the light of the 16th century English question of “terms of art”) and aims at defining not only the mechanisms of language change but also the motivations for the language change. Drawing on the authoritative literature on lexical semantics (Ullmann 1951, 1962) and on more recent trends in theoretical semantics (Rosch 1977, 1978; Rosch & Mervis 1975) and historical semantics (Geeraerts 1983, 1986, 1997), the present study aims to blend the author’s functional explanations for the language changes he introduced with a functional perspective that a modern reader would look out for. Within both a synchronic and diachronic perspective the study integrates the semasiological and the onomasiological approach to lexical-semantic change into a more comprehensive theory of language change.


The present study investigates the use of English in the discourse of economic and financial reporting (i.e. Annual Company Reports), with data originating from original English texts, that is, texts produced in native English contexts, and texts either translated (i.e. mediated) into English from Italian and other European languages. It consists in a contrastive analysis of hedging and boosting strategies as manifestations of the writer’s presence in the text and, accordingly, his/her role as a mediator in the disclosure of information and the description of a company’s performance together with its attempt to gain credibility and mitigate possible negative data.

Drawing from the literature on professional, organizational and institutional practices in financial reporting, together with earlier literature on hedging in general and on ESP in particular, the present study proposes a communicative explanation for the use of hedging in company annual reports, as representations of economics as discourse of economics activity, in which textual and interpersonal features of meta-discourse are complementary. This book is divided into three chapters. Chapter one forms the theoretical core of this study and presents a brief survey of the relevant concepts and theoretical notions regarding hedging by offering an overview of linguistic literature and earlier studies since the notion was introduced in linguistics by G. Lakoff (1973). The chapter emphasises the complexity of this phenomenon, which originated in logic and semantics but has been developed further over time in pragmatics and discourse analysis and is now used in areas like metacommunication and in communication strategies such as mitigation and politeness.

Chapter two concentrates on annual reports as a genre; it offers a description of how Swales’ characterization of genre along with the professional and statutory literature on financial reporting can be applied when it comes to defining annual reports, thus providing a theoretical basis and rationale for the empirical study carried out in chapter three. Chapter three provides an in-depth analysis of the functions and types of hedging in a corpus of annual reports, using both corpus-based and manual techniques. The data and methodology used are described and some of the preliminary findings of the empirical study are introduced and discussed. The chapter aims at looking at the ways in which hedging devices are used to “modalize” or modulate discourse and claims in this form of corporate communication.


This paper explores the rhetoric of Robert Recorde’s scientific thought as shown in his algebraic textbook entitled The Whetstone of Witte (1557). By ‘rhetoric’ of science is meant in this study’s Recorde’s eloquence and conventions in arguing for his own views on the intent, premises and pragmatic purposes underlying his scientific thought and expression, and, accordingly, the language to be used in dealing with arithmetic and algebra, as well as the features that the didactic texts on such topics should possess.