

# An Analysis of Pragmatic Functions of Hedging in American Presidential Inaugural Addresses

Yongqing Teng

Shanghai Jiguang Polytechnic College, China

**Abstract**—This paper endeavors to analyze the functions of hedging devices in American presidential inaugural addresses from the 20<sup>th</sup> century to present on the Cooperative Principle and the Politeness Principle. Hedging is an important ingredient of fuzziness and plays an important role in human communication. People often take it as an effective strategy to improve their expressiveness and communicative effects. In American presidential inaugural addresses, the application of hedging contributes a lot to the mildness, politeness and flexibility of linguistic expressions, thus fulfilling the needs of some special political purposes.

**Index Terms**—hedging, inaugural address, the CP, the PP

## I. INTRODUCTION

The article “Fuzzy Sets” by L.A.Zadeh (L.A.Zadeh: 1965), which made a breakthrough in fuzzy research, means the establishment of the fuzzy theory. G. Lakoff defining hedges as “words whose job is to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy” introduced the notion of hedging in 1972. From the pragmatic perspective, hedges refer to words or phrases whose main function is to modify the meaning of utterances in relation to truth-condition. Hedging is a means through which authors can show their certainty and doubt towards their claim, showing the confidence they have in their claim, and communicating it to their readers. With the help of hedges, authors may leave some room for readers to judge the truth value of their statements. Some examples of hedging are *may*, *probably*, *assume*, etc.

The presidential address is a speech given at a special ceremony intended to introduce a new president. Presidential inaugural address, especially American presidential inaugural addresses form a special genre. Different from other political speeches, the aim of the presidential address is mainly to establish the status of a new president, and to try to arouse people’s belief on their traditional values such as liberty, freedom, religious belief, etc, but not to gain more votes.

As a special form of discourse which has both oral and written characteristics, the American presidential inaugural address has aroused great interest of the critics, analysts and linguists. More often than not, it was mainly concerned with translation, stylistics and rhetoric. And few students’ work has been done from the perspective of hedging. So, it is necessary for us to carry out studies on hedges in American presidential inaugural address to bring some hints for foreign language teaching, intercultural communication, and translation.

Beginning from the 1990s, the pragmatic study of hedging drew attention of many linguists both in China (He Ziran, 1990) and abroad (Froolen 1991). It is claimed that vagueness is a universal language phenomenon and it has much to do with pragmatics. To study hedging from the perspective of pragmatics is of much practical use. American Presidential inaugural addresses, as a special genre, though revised many a time, resort to hedging devices sometimes to meet the need of vagueness.

## II. THEORETICAL GUIDELINE

### A. Hedging and the Cooperative Principle

The Cooperative Principle (CP), as one of Grice’s important contributions to the research of conversation, has been tremendously discussed in the past few decades. This section will discuss how hedges perform their communicative duties in American presidential inaugural addresses by observing or flouting the CP.

#### 1) The Co-operative Principle

One of the major theories in pragmatics is the theory of conversational implicature proposed by the Oxford philosopher Herbert Paul Grice, who held that “our talk exchanges don’t normally consist of a succession of disconnected remarks, and would not be rational if they did. They are characteristically, to some degree at least, cooperative efforts; and each particular recognizes in them, to some extent, a common purpose or set of purposes, or at least a mutually accepted direction.” (Grice,1975,p.45) Grice formalizes his observation that when we communicate with one another, we try to be cooperative by means of what he has elevated into a notion called the Cooperative Principle. Grice’s suggestion is that there is a set of over-arching assumptions guiding any conduct of conversation (Levinson, 1983). He identified four basic maxims of conversation which jointly constitute a general Cooperative Principle:

A). The maxim of Quality

Try to make your contribution one that is true, specially:

- i) do not say what you believe to be false
- ii) do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence

B). The maxim of Quantity

- iii) make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of the exchange
- iv) do not make your contribution more informative than is required

C). The maxim of Relevance

Make your contributions relevant

D). The maxim of Manner

Be perspicuous, and specifically

- v) avoid obscurity
- vi) avoid ambiguity
- vii) be brief
- viii) be orderly

The Cooperative Principle and its maxims can be boiled down to the following: make your contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. Undoubtedly, Grice's view of the nature of communication met the objection that the view may do nothing but to describe a philosopher's paradise, but nobody actually speaks like that all the while. (Levinson, 1983) In fact, Grice meant to point out it is not true that people have to follow these principles to have successful communication. Rather, in most daily talks, when the communication doesn't proceed according to participants' expectations, the principles are nevertheless being observed at some deeper level, and thus, implicatures are triggered. It has been claimed that part of the definition of human language lies in the fact that they can be used to deceive and misinform (Lyons, 1977), which can also be seen in American presidential inaugural addresses.

## 2). The CP analysis of hedging in American Presidents' Inaugural Addresses

American presidential inaugural addresses are characterized by their far-reaching and ineradicable influence upon the overall atmosphere of the U.S.A. Consequently, presidents are inclined to be extremely cautious in choosing appropriate expressions to make sure that the information is conveyed in a proper way. For this purpose, presidents tend to pick up varieties of hedges to perfect their speeches.

### Quantity-related hedges

Quantity-related hedges are employed when speakers are inclined to deliberately withhold information, provide the "right" amount of information and protect themselves. For example,

[1] For the **more than** 30 years that I have served this Nation, I have believed that this injustice to our people, this waste of our resources, was our real enemy. For 30 years **or more**, with the resources I have had, I have vigilantly fought against it. I have learned, and I know, that it will not surrender easily. (Inaugural Address of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 20, 1965)

The bold-faced words "more than" and "more" are cited from the inaugural address of president Johnson who employed the expression "more than" and "more" to hedge the specific number of time that he had served the U.S.A. The number indicative of lower limit "30 years" combining with the hedge "more than" can not only express that Johnson had served the U.S.A for at least 30 years, but also avoid the arguments from other parties, thus achieving the purpose of self-protection.

[2] **Almost** a year ago, in company with 16 free nations of Europe, we launched the greatest cooperative economic program in history. The purpose of that unprecedented effort is to invigorate and strengthen democracy in Europe, so that the free people of that continent can resume their rightful place in the forefront of civilization and can contribute once more to the security and welfare of the world.

Our efforts have brought new hope to all mankind. We have beaten back despair and defeatism. We have saved a number of countries from losing their liberty. **Hundreds of millions of** people all over the world now agree with us, that we need not have war—that we can have peace. (Inaugural Address of Harry Truman, Thursday, January 20, 1949)

In example [2], President Truman resorted to the hedging devices "almost" and "hundreds of millions of" to meet the need of vague expression. The hedge "almost" and the round-number "one year" help to make up an acceptable numerical conception that should be free from any suspicion concerning its truthfulness. The hedge "hundreds of millions of" can also avoid arbitrariness that might result from the proposition of an accurate number.

[3] Of the undoubted abuses which have grown up under the eighteenth amendment, part are due to the causes I have just mentioned; but part are due to the failure of **some** States to accept their share of responsibility for concurrent enforcement and to the failure of many State and local officials to accept the obligation under their oath of office zealously to enforce the laws. (Inaugural Address of Herbert Hoover, March 4, 1929)

The hedge "some" in example [3] is deliberately employed by President Herbert Hoover to withhold information, thus avoiding offence and being polite.

### Quality-related hedges

American presidential inaugural addresses, as a special political discourse, certainly represent a high degree of truth.

No matter how presidents themselves believe that statement or not or to what degree they commit themselves to the truthfulness of what they say, the hearers might have their own understanding of whether the statement is true or not. Hedging devices, as an effective way to tailor the quality of statements under particular contexts, are often employed by speakers to obtain particular implicatures through either abiding or by flouting the maxim of quality. Look at [4]:

[4] I am told that tens of thousands of prayer meetings are being held on this day, and for that I am deeply grateful. We are a nation under God, and I believe God intended for us to be free. It would be fitting and good, **I think**, if on each Inauguration Day in future years it should be declared a day of prayer. (First Inaugural Address of Ronald Reagan, JANUARY 20, 1981)

When President Ronald Reagan expressed his personal opinion that each Inauguration Day should be declared a day of prayer, he applied the quality hedge “I think” to make his speech more objective and avoid making his words arbitrary and bearing responsibility for the falseness of his idea due to lack of evidence.

In the following example, William Howard Taft, president of the United States, expressed his wish to minimize the evils resulting from immigration. The hedge “sincerely” commits President Howard to the great cause of making efforts to improve the condition of immigrants. The use of the hedging device “sincerely” helps confirm speaker’s sincerity towards the propositional attitude.

[5] The admission of Asiatic immigrants who cannot be amalgamated with our population has been made the subject either of prohibitory clauses in our treaties and statutes or of strict administrative regulation secured by diplomatic negotiation. I **sincerely** hope that we may continue to minimize the evils likely to arise from such immigration without unnecessary friction and by mutual concessions between self-respecting governments. Meantime we must take every precaution to prevent, or failing that, to punish outbursts of race feeling among our people against foreigners of whatever nationality who have by our grant a treaty right to pursue lawful business here and to be protected against lawless assault or injury. (Inaugural Address of William Howard Taft, March 4, 1909)

Due to the unique characteristic of political arena, no propositions or even promises should be taken seriously. Hedges, as an effective means to adjust the propositional quality to a degree, just meet the special political purpose through strengthening the deceiving power of politicians’ statements.

#### Relevance-related hedges

Studies show that Grice’s Maxim of Relevance is in most cases well adhered to in American presidential inaugural addresses through the use of hedges guaranteeing immediate relevance. Look at the bold-faced word in example [56],

[6] All countries, including our own, will greatly benefit from a constructive program for the better use of the world’s human and natural resources. Experience shows that our commerce with other countries expands as they progress **industrially** and **economically**. (Inaugural Address of Harry Truman, Thursday, January 20, 1949)

Harry Truman (the first president of the U.S.A after the Cold War) put forward four major courses of action. The “program” mentioned in this excerpt is based on the fourth course of action—“Fourth, we must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas.” Thus, President Truman employed the relevance hedge “economically” and “industrially” to make his speech relevant to his proposal. The employment of this hedging device helps express that only economic-related development and expansion is favorable but not non-economic development, such as military development.

#### Manner-related hedges

In American presidential inaugural addresses, there are situations that need to have clear-cut sentences or viewpoints, and obscurity or redundancy leading to misunderstanding is not allowed. Hedges in relation to manner can have an effect in helping the speeches to abide by the Maxim of Manner. Look at following citation from the inaugural address of Herbert Hoover on March 4, 1929.

[7] Although education is primarily a responsibility of the States and local communities, and rightly so, yet the Nation as a whole is vitally concerned in its development everywhere to the highest standards and to complete universality. Self-government can succeed only through an instructed electorate. Our objective is not **simply** to overcome illiteracy. The Nation has marched far beyond that. The more complex the problems of the Nation become, the greater is the need for more and more advanced instruction. Moreover, as our numbers increase and as our life expands with science and invention, we must discover more and more leaders for every walk of life. We can not hope to succeed in directing this increasingly complex civilization unless we can draw all the talent of leadership from the whole people. (Inaugural Address of Herbert Hoover, March 4, 1929)

President Hoover used the hedge “simply” to render the statement brief while powerful in illustrating the objective of American civilization. The hedge increases the strength of the negative word “not” and helps emphasize the objective of American civilization.

Another example of manner hedges is listed below.

[8] The world itself is now dominated by a new spirit. Peoples more numerous and more politically aware are craving and now demanding their place in the sun—not **just** for the benefit of their own physical condition, but for basic human rights (Inaugural Address of Jimmy Carter, January 20, 1977)

The manner hedge “just” employed by President Carter, no doubt, emphasizes the reason why people are demanding for their place in the sun, not only for the benefit of their own physical condition, but rather for basic human rights.

### B. *Politeness and Pragmatic Vagueness in American Presidential Inaugural Addresses*

Although the CP is frequently employed in verbal communication, it is not universal to all communicative situations, for there are linguistic communities to which not all of them are applicable. We should notice that the CP in itself can not explain:

- (i) why people are often so indirect in conveying what they mean;
- (ii) what is the relation between sense and force when non-declarative types of sentences are being considered (Leech 1983 :80)

Due to this reason, the Politeness Principle and Face-Threatening –Act theory cannot be regarded as other principles added to the CP, but as necessary complements. And for pragmatic analysis of hedging in American presidential inaugural addresses, it is not enough to analyze it only from the perspective of CP. Hence, studying hedging in terms of the PP and FTA theory is quite necessary.

#### **The Politeness Principle**

He Ziran (2003) once pointed out politeness is a linguistic universal .By saying this, he means that 1) linguistic politeness exists in all languages and 2) politeness considerations regulate every human being's behavior in social interaction. The linguistic manipulation in American presidential inaugural addresses is no exception. In this study, two conceptualization of politeness including Leech's (1983) Politeness Principle, Brown and Levinson's Face Theory, are employed to interpret the motivation of using pragmatic vagueness in American presidential inaugural addresses.

The maxims of the PP go in pairs as follows.

- A). Tact Maxim (in impositives and commissives)
  - (i) Minimize cost to other
  - (ii) (Maximize benefit to other
- B). Generosity Maxim (in impositives and commissives)
  - (i) Minimize benefit to self
  - (ii) Maximize cost to self
- C).Approbation Maxim (in expressives and assertives)
  - (i) Minimize dispraise of other
  - (ii) Maximize praise of other
- D). Modesty Maxim (in expressives and assertives)
  - (i) Minimize praise of self
  - (ii) Maximize dispraise of self
- E). Agreement Maxim (in assertives)
  - (i) Minimize disagreement between self and other
  - (ii) Maximize agreement between self and other
- F). Sympathy Maxim (in assertives)
  - (i) Minimize antipathy between self and other
  - (ii) Maximize sympathy between self and other

In short, Leech introduces the PP which runs as follows:

- (a) minimize (all things being equal ) the expression of impolite beliefs;
  - (b) Maximize (all things being equal) the expression of polite beliefs.
- (Thomas 1995:159)

### C. *The FTA Theory*

Face –threatening –act (FTA) theory is the further extension of Leech's Politeness concept. According to Brown and Levinson, *Face* has two aspects—*positive* and *negative*. "Positive face is the need to be connected and negative face is the need to be independent" (Yule, 1996,p. 61-62). Illocutionary acts that are possible to damage or threaten another person's face are known as *face –threatening acts* (FTAs) .In order to reduce the possibility of damage to the hearer's face or to the speaker's own face, speakers are inclined to employ certain strategies, such as hedging devices to save the hearer's face or the speaker's face.

Positive face strategy is related to hedging because when presidents have to mention something rather acute, they should not show their prejudice against any other countries. What they should do is to talk about things objectively.

Negative face strategy also has much to do with hedging strategy. When presidents talk about sharp things, no matter how indignant they are, they should not impose their positions on others. What they should do is to show the consistency and impartiality of their country's policy instead of blindly emphasizing the absolute truth of their own positions.

## III. A CASE STUDY: PRESIDENT OBAMA'S INAUGURAL ADDRESS

From the above description, we know that pragmatic conceptualization of politeness can be employed to explore why presidents would use hedging in their inaugural addresses. In this section, President Obama's inaugural address will be cited as a concrete example to further study how presidents achieve politeness by using hedging in their inaugural

addresses.

Due to the limitation of the length, we will choose some excerpts as examples to show how the politeness principle and face strategies are appropriately employed.

#### A. *Politeness Principle and Obama's Inaugural Address*

In this part, how President Obama achieved politeness through hedges is explored in accordance with Leech's principle of politeness. Look at the citations of [9] and [10].

[9] To the Muslim world, we seek a new way forward, based on **mutual interest and mutual respect**. To those leaders around the globe who seek to sow conflict, or blame their society's ills on the West - know that your people will judge you on what you can build, not what you destroy. To *those* who cling to power through corruption and deceit and the silencing of dissent, know that you are on the wrong side of history; but that we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist.

[10] To the people of **poor nations**, we pledge to work alongside you to make your farms flourish and let clean waters flow; to nourish starved bodies and feed hungry minds. And to *those nations* like ours that enjoy relative plenty, we say we can no longer afford indifference to suffering outside our borders; nor can we consume the world's resources without regard to effect. For the world has changed, and we must change with it.

In [9], President Obama observed the maxim of agreement and maxim of sympathy. He maximized agreement between the United States of America and the Muslim world. Since this inaugural address is not only heard by American, but also audiences in other countries including Muslim nations, President Obama minimized the disagreement between America and the Muslim world to preserve the face of the audience of the Muslim world. Hence, he used the hedging phrase "mutual interest and mutual respect" to maximize the agreement, and consequently achieved politeness.

The italicized word "those" in [9] and [10] belong to the hedging group called subjects with unclear referents. Through the application of this hedging word, President Obama actually maximized sympathy between America and the related nations or leaders. Without pointing out clearly what they exactly refer to, on the one hand, he minimized antipathy between them; on the other hand, he showed his politeness and friendship.

In [10], there is another form of hedging – plural forms, to achieve the aim of being polite. Through the use of hedging words "poor nations and those nations", Obama ingeniously maximized sympathy between the US and the other nations concerned. The hedging strategies helped make him polite and his speech objective.

#### B. *Face Strategies and Obama's Inaugural Address*

In his inaugural address, President Obama employed the positive face strategy. As the newly-elected president, he made America a strong figure by using such kind of utterances as "We remain the most prosperous, powerful nation on Earth" to praise the country. He also praised the American ancestors by means of expression "we remember with humble gratitude those brave Americans who, at this very hour, patrol far-off deserts and distant mountains." Here, the adjective "brave" is a hedge used as positive strategy to show respect and politeness to his citizens who have made efforts to the establishment and development of the U.S.A.

Besides positive strategies, there are also some negative strategies in Obama's inaugural address used to make the speech more polite and tactful.

As is known to all, in inaugural addresses, presidents will surely mention foreign policies made by American government. But due to the purpose of preserving the negative face desire of the nations or governments concerned, the presidents will pay more attention to their choice of words and express themselves in a careful way.

President Obama is the same. When he talked about some new foreign policies, on the one hand, he tried to arrange his remarks in a skillful way so as not to impose their opinions on others; on the other hand, he still bore in mind his position to maintain the high and strong position of the United States of America. For example:

[11] "We **will** begin to responsibly leave Iraq to its people, and forge a hard-earned peace in Afghanistan. With **old friends and former foes**, we **will** work tirelessly to lessen the nuclear threat, and roll back the specter of a warming planet."

The bold-faced words in the example are all hedges used by President Obama to understate some touchy international relationship. With the help of those hedging words, President could not only guard and maintain the position of America, but also make what he said sound mild and acceptable. Specifically, the hedging word "will" shows the intention of the American government that they would like to give freedom to Iraq people and hope Afghanistan would be peaceful. The plural word "old friends" and "former foes" are also employed in a clever way because they could help President Obama avoid specifying the nations or governments concerned.

Thus, President Obama not only showed his consideration to American hearers, but also expressed his great respect to citizens in other countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan.

#### IV. FUNCTIONS OF HEDGING IN AMERICAN PRESIDENTS' INAUGURAL ADDRESSES

In the above sections, we have analyzed the hedging devices from the perspective of pragmatics. Here in the following part, we will study the communicative and practical functions of hedging language in American presidential

inaugural addresses.

#### A. *Avoiding Absoluteness*

One of the main functions of hedges in inaugural addresses is to make utterances not so assertive and avoid absoluteness. According to Hubler (Huber, 1983), the reason for using hedges is to make sentences more acceptable to the hearer and thus their chances of ratification will be increased. Thus the application of hedges will make the description of events more flexible and acceptable.

In the study of the American presidential inaugural addresses in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century, we have found that hedges like *almost*, *some*, *possible*, etc are often employed to meet the needs of vagueness and make the information being conveyed more believable and flexible. See the examples of [12] and [13]:

[12] The Panama Canal will have a most important bearing upon the trade between the eastern and far western sections of our country, and will greatly increase the facilities for transportation between the eastern and the western seaboard, and may **possibly** revolutionize the transcontinental rates with respect to bulky merchandise. (Inaugural Address of William Howard Taft, March 4, 1909)

[13] Communications and commerce are global; investment is mobile; technology is **almost** magical; and ambition for a better life is now universal. We earn our livelihood in peaceful competition with people all across the earth. (First Inaugural Address of William Jefferson Clinton, January 20, 1993)

In the two examples, through the application of the hedging words “possibly” and “almost”, Presidents Taft and Clinton made their statements more believable and flexible. If presidents had stated the information definitely, hearers might have doubted about the truthfulness of their utterances.

#### B. *Achieving Politeness*

Another function of hedging device is to achieve the result of politeness. According to the Politeness Principle, speakers will choose to employ politeness to show awareness of another person’s face. From this, we can see that the need to maintain face is the reason why we choose to imply rather than assert explicitly or why we use hedges to express our attitude indirectly. That is also the reason why American presidents employ hedging devices in their inaugural addresses.

The ancient Indian sage Manu once said that a good politician might *Speak the pleasant, but not the untruth; speak the truth, but not the unpleasant*, which to some degree explains functional vagueness in obeying the maxim of quality and the principle of politeness. In American presidential inaugural addresses, politeness also plays an important role. For example:

[14] Of the undoubted abuses which have grown up under the eighteenth amendment, part are due to the causes I have just mentioned; but part are due to the failure of **some** States to accept their share of responsibility for concurrent enforcement and to the failure of many State and local officials to accept the obligation under their oath of office zealously to enforce the laws. (Inaugural Address of Herbert Hoover, March 4, 1929)

President Herbert Hoover didn’t point out exactly the names of the states in the above excerpt. In this way, the speaker could not only express his opinion, but also make the speech polite and tactful.

#### C. *Accomplishing Tactfulness*

To make the speech tactful is the third function of hedging in American presidential inaugural addresses. As we all know, the newly-elected presidents would usually declare new policies that they would carry out during their tenure of office. But one thing the politicians should remember is that they must avoid making clear-cut public statements on touchy issues. It’s vital for them to choose words carefully and make what they said tactful and mild. Under this circumstance, resorting to hedges is a good way to avoid direct reference. For example,

[15] To the people of **poor nations**, we pledge to work alongside you to make your farms flourish and let clean waters flow; to nourish starved bodies and feed hungry minds. And to **those nations** like ours that enjoy relative plenty, we say we can no longer afford indifference to suffering outside our borders; nor can we consume the world’s resources without regard to effect. For the world has changed, and we must change with it. (Inaugural address of Barack Obama, January 20, 2009)

Here, through employing the plural forms, President Obama on the one hand conveyed the “right” amount of information; on the other hand, he avoided giving offence to the related countries because he didn’t point out the names of the countries explicitly.

### V. SUMMARY

After a careful study of the inaugural addresses of American presidents, we find that hedging is an effective way employed by presidents to realize special political purpose. Words and impersonal structures are the most often used hedging devices, especially the modal auxiliary “*may*”, which is almost employed by every president. Another finding in the study is that the use of hedging in American presidential inaugural addresses is not arbitrary, but follows certain communicative principles such as the Co-operative Principle, the Polite Principle and the Face-Threatening –Act Theory. Finally, after a contrastive analysis, it is found that presidents tend to use less and less hedges in their inaugural

addresses. For example, American presidents in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century used almost eight to ten hedges in each of their speeches, but in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the inaugural addressees have so far seldom used hedges especially on international issues.

The present study has been quite tentative, so there is unavoidable limitation. Firstly, because of the limitation of time and resources, we have just categorized the major forms of hedging in American presidential inaugural addresses, without analyzing the frequency of them; secondly, this paper has not carried out a contrastive study between the inaugural addresses and other speeches made by the same president. If we could make such a contrastive analysis, undoubtedly we can have a better understanding of American presidential inaugural addresses. There is no denying that more researches on this topic remain to be conducted.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Foolen, A. (1991). "Met linguistic Negation and Pragmatic Ambiguity: Some Comments in A Proposal by Laurence Horn". *Journal of Pragmatics* 36: 217-237.
- [2] Franken, N. (1997). "Vagueness and Approximation in Relevance Theory". *Journal of Pragmatics* 28:135-151.
- [3] Grice, H.P. (1975). Logic and Conversation, in Cole, P. and Morgan, J. (ed.), *Syntax and Semantics3: Speech Acts*. New York: Academic Press.
- [4] He Ziran, (2002). Introduction to Pragmatics, ChangSha Hunan Education Publishing House, Hunan.
- [5] Hubler, A. (1983). Understanding and Hedges in English. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- [6] Lakoff, G. (1972). Hedges: A Study in Meaning Criteria and the Logic of Fuzzy Concepts, in *Chicago Linguistic Society Papers* 8. Chicago: Chicago Linguistic Society.
- [7] L.A.Zadeh. (1965). Fuzzy sets, *Information and control*, 8(3):338-353
- [8] Leech, G.N. (1983). Principles of Pragmatics .London: Longman.
- [9] Levinson, S.C. (1983). Pragmatics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [10] Lyons, J. (1977). Semantics .Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

**Yongqing Teng** was born in Shandong, China in 1979. She received her master degree in linguistics from Shanghai University, China in 2009.

She is currently a lecturer in the Department of Foreign Languages of Shanghai Jiguang Polytechnic College, China. Her research interests include applied linguistics and pragmatics.