HEDGING IN ACADEMIC WRITING

撰寫英文論文時，我們雖然應積極就研究結果提出個人的論述，但在寫作的語氣或宣稱的強度 (strength of claim) 上會比較保守、謹慎、甚至低調，通常只作出嘗試性的推論 (tentative generalization)，而非普遍性的論斷，給自己的結論保留一些安全空間，用以降低可能詮釋錯誤的風險。這種在論文中常見之弱化論述的現象稱之為hedging。

> Hedging是西方學術寫作的概念，有些臺灣同學以中文撰寫論文常使用「一定是」、「必定是」、「完全是」、「絕對會」、「確實會」等強烈肯定和普遍性的語氣，以顯示對自己論述的信心，或強調研究結果的貢獻和意義。但這種寫法在英文論文寫作上卻是不恰當的。

英文論文寫作上常用的幾種 hedging strategies:

1. 使用表「可能性」的情態助動詞

如 may, might, could, would 等字，顯示對所陳述的事件或現象並非百分之百完全確定，保留安全的論述空間。例如：

• The data suggests that there may be a correlation between caffeine intake and anxiety levels.

• The results could potentially be explained by a variety of factors.

2. 加入表「可能性」的副詞或形容詞

副詞如 probably, possibly, perhaps, maybe, apparently, presumably, likely，或形容詞如 likely, possible, probable, partial 等字。但有些同學受中文寫作影響，在撰寫英文論文時也喜用強烈的肯定語氣，在句中加上 certainly, undoubtedly, absolutely 等極端的副詞，應儘量避免這些用字。例如：

• The findings possibly indicate that further research is needed.

• The study's limitations likely impact the generalizability of the results.

3. 使用一些表「可能性」的名詞或「建議性」「主觀性」的動詞

「可能性」的名詞如 possibility, probability 或「建議性」「主觀性」的動詞如 suggest, propose, seem, appear, believe, speculate, tend to 等。例如：

- The results suggest a potential correlation, but more research is needed to confirm this conclusion.

- These results appear to have theoretical implications.

研究論文寫作者應交替使用以上三種技巧作嘗試性的概括推論，而非只使用一般動詞或be動詞來作論述。

其它 hedging 的常用句型如下：

- It may be inferred that …

- It may be reasonable to assume that …

- It seems likely that …

- This seems to imply that …

- It has been suggested that …

- Our findings suggest that …

- A possible explanation for … is that …

- One possible reason could be …

- It is possible that … caused …

- It is highly probable that …

- Probably the major reason for its success is …

- A partial explanation for this may lie in the fact that …

- One reason for these results could be that …

- These results may be explained by considering …

- …might have been a small factor in …

- …may have contributed to …

*參考文獻：
廖柏森(2020)。《英文研究論文寫作：文法指引》（第三版）。眾文。
Hyland, K. (1998). *Hedging in scientific research articles*. John Benjamins.