

Stronger and Weaker Hedging Language

Listen to your teacher say a generalising expression and hold up one hand, putting the hand high or low depending on whether you think the expression is strong (= very likely/ common/ often) or weak (= unlikely/ uncommon/ rare). Then when your teacher says a second (slightly or very) different expression, move your hand up or down depending on whether you think that the second expression is stronger or weaker. You don't have to worry too much about the original position of your hand or how much you move it, just think about what direction your hand should move in by comparing the two phrases. Your teacher will tell you if you moved your hand in the correct direction. Then do the same for other pairs of phrases.

Draw an up arrow and a down arrow next to the two phrases in each pair below. Up means more often/ more common/ more likely, and down means less often/ less common/ less likely, as if they were further up and down on a vertical line ranking the expressions.

Check your answers by reading out the stronger of each pair, or check with the answer key.

Test each other on the phrases:

- Play the same lifting or lowering your hand activity.
- Listen to your partner read out two phrases and repeat the higher one back.
- Listen to your partner read out a lower phrase and say a higher version back.
- Listen to your partner and say a lower version back.

Freer speaking

Give your opinion on the amount/ number, likelihood and/ or frequency of a social problem, e.g. "I think alcohol is usually the reason for domestic violence". Your partner will say if they agree or think that the statement should be made stronger or weaker.

Useful phrases for agreeing with generalisations

"I think you are (exactly) right."

"That is exactly/ precisely what I would say."

Useful phrases for disagreeing with generalisations

"I almost agree but I would say that..."/ "I wouldn't really say that. I think that..."/ "I would go further and say that..."/ "I wouldn't go so far, I would say that..."

"...it is (a little/ quite a lot/ a lot) more/ less likely."

"...it is true (a little/ quite a lot/ a lot) more/ less often."

"... it is (a little/ quite a lot/ a lot) more/ less common."

"Why do you think it's so...?"

Discuss your opinions again, but this time disagree at least slightly with your partner each time (even if you actually think that their statement is exactly correct).



Ranking hedging language pairs

How many?/ How much?

- a huge proportion
- a substantial proportion

- a considerable percentage
- a large percentage

- a fairly small amount
- a small amount

- a small number
- a tiny number

- a small majority
- a substantial minority

- a large amount
- a vast amount

- a very large number
- a very limited number

- absolutely all
- almost all

- many people
- most people

- almost no
- very few

- few/ little
- not so much/ not so many

- not much/ not many
- quite a lot

- few
- very few

- a couple of
- several

- a very large number
- an extremely large number

How often?

- almost always
- virtually always

- almost never
- practically never

- hardly ever
- rarely

- seldom
- very rarely

- often
- usually

- fairly often
- very often

How likely?/ How sure are you?/ How certain?

- almost certainly not
- definitely not

- could
- could potentially

- could conceivably
- could possibly

- certainly
- surely

- possibly
- probably

- little chance
- next to no chance

- fairly likely
- not very likely



Suggested answers

How many?/ How much?

- a huge proportion \wedge
- a substantial proportion \vee

- a considerable percentage \vee
- a large percentage \wedge

- a fairly small amount \wedge
- a small amount \vee

- a small number \wedge
- a tiny number \vee

- a small majority \wedge
- a substantial minority \vee

- a large amount \vee
- a vast amount \wedge

- a very large number \wedge
- a very limited number \vee

- absolutely all \wedge
- almost all \vee

- many people \vee
- most people \wedge

- almost no \vee
- very few \wedge

- few/ little \vee
- not so much/ not so many \wedge

- not much/ not many \vee
- quite a lot \wedge

- few \wedge
- very few \vee

- a couple of \vee
- several \wedge

- a very large number \vee
- an extremely large number \wedge

How often?

- almost always V
- virtually always \wedge

- almost never \wedge
- practically never V

- hardly ever V
- rarely \wedge

- seldom \wedge
- very rarely V

- often V
- usually \wedge

- fairly often V
- very often \wedge

How likely?/ How sure are you?/ How certain?

- almost certainly not \wedge
- definitely not V

- could \wedge
- could potentially V

- could conceivably V
- could possibly \wedge

- certainly \wedge
- surely V

- possibly V
- probably \wedge

- little chance \wedge
- next to no chance V

- fairly likely \wedge
- not very likely V