

Hedging in Forensic Discourse: A Case Study on Noida Double Murder Interview

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Abstract

This paper delves into the intricacies of forensic discourse, focusing on linguistic hedging strategies in the context of the Noida Double Murder Case. Positioned at the intersection of linguistics, law, and crime, forensic discourse analysis provides a lens to examine language in legal settings. The paper centres on the 2008 Noida Murder Case, specifically analysing the communication strategies employed by Rajesh and Nupur Talwar during an interview. The paper aims to unravel the linguistic nuances within the interview setting by utilising Taweel et al.'s Hedging Strategi model, grounded by Grice's Cooperative Principle. This paper used a qualitative analysis to decodes linguistic manoeuvres, focusing on hedging strategies. The data were taken from an in-depth interview to obtain empirical information and undergo two stages of analysis identification of conventional maxims and examination of hedging markers and strategies. The analysis reveals intentional deviations from communicative norms, exposing three prominent hedging strategies: Avoidance, Question-to-Question, and Self-Protection. These strategies serve to deflect scrutiny, shape perceptions, and navigate the delicate balance of legal discourse. This paper contributes to forensic linguistics by uncovering the role of hedging strategies in the Noida Double Murder Case. By applying theoretical frameworks to case-specific discourse, the paper enhances our understanding of linguistic dynamics in high-stakes legal interviews, emphasising their significance in navigating complex legal communication.

Keywords: Forensic Discourse; interview; hedging strategies; Noida Double Murder Case; cooperative principle

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INTRODUCTION

The implementation of hedging strategies is important – especially in instances that linguistic evidence plays a significant role in evaluating intention, credibility, or liability. At the centre of forensic communication stands the notion of 'hedging', that is, how people use language to avoid having a conclusive commitment towards their utterances and possibly conceal their true intention or belief (Milenković, 2021; Salager-Meyer, 1997). Such strategy is used to accommodate the uncertainty, vagueness and challenges associated with forensic contexts such as interrogation, testimonies in trials and similar situations (Carter 2011; Coulthard & Johnson 2007). Expounding on this view, Azmi et al., (2021) define a hedging strategy in a legal context as an ambiguous or cautious comment made by these important legal actors, such as prosecutors, defence attorneys, witnesses, or defendants. This kind of hedging may coincide with violation of the cooperation principle which signals that a speaker is being somewhat unwilling to put up his/her call in plain terms. (Dewa, 2017) Hedging, as Salager-Meyer in Gribanova and Gaidukova (2019, 86) points out, may inhibit giving straightforward replies. Commonly, when a high-profile individual employs hedging and avoidance strategies during interviews it is indicative of an unwillingness to embrace full honesty and a deliberate attempt to obscure reality (Milenković, 2021).

Moreover, hedging is an important feature of forensic discourse due to its effect on the construction of credibility, truthfulness, and motivation, all of which will have profound consequences for legal assessment and inquiry. Hedged language – an ambiguity expressed in phrasing of doubt such as "I think" or "it appears" – can shape the believability and trustworthiness of a speaker, which in turn shapes the interpretation of jurors, judges, or lawyers of testimony and other legal discourse (Nakane, 2019). Although hedging potentially reduce apparent confidence, it can also lend itself to a feeling of credibility by explicitly signalling a cautious approach to knowledge claims (Gales, 2015). Hedging can influence the interpretation of pronouncements on intent as language in which multiple interpretations are possible may sound cautious or at the very least evasive, depending on the context (Dumas, 2018). This ambiguity may make listeners second-guess the truthfulness of a talker, particularly if hedging is seen not as a reflection of an uncertainty, but as a disclosed means of avoiding a line of inquiry (Aijmer Simon-Vandenbergen, 2020). To professionals in law, the awareness of hedging is extremely important, especially because careful application of hedging can be used either to defend or to challenge the integrity of a statement (Blakemore, 2022). That is, in forensic linguistics, it is also invaluable to distinguish hedging to establish whether it is used to caution, to be truthful, or to avoid the possibility of being caught, all of which have direct implications for legal readings and results.

Hedging strategies are often present in interviews, which can raise interesting issues for forensic discourse analysis. Many different studies have investigated forensic discourse in the context of interviews or interrogations with witnesses, suspects or experts that take place in courtrooms (Cotterill, 2003; Gibbons, 2003), and emphasised how language can be decisive for many outcomes. Forensic linguistics has previously been crucial in interesting cases, for example Svartvik's analysis of

Timothy John Evans' testimony in the 1950s found that written and oral testimony from Evans differed upon translation between modalities, including issues of punctuation and sentence arrangement (Coulthard & Johnson, 2007). These studies highlight the importance of linguistic subtleties in legal settings, spoken or written (or both) and point to the requirement of having strong analytical tools and methodologies.

Similarly, discourse analysis in linguistic forensics often leans on foundational theories to explain interactions. Specifically, as stated by Oishi (2006), Austin's Speech Act Theory and Grice's Principle of Cooperation Theory, as discussed by Davies (2007), emerge as critical frameworks. These theories serve as analytical tools, shedding light on the intricate dynamics between an interviewer and a respondent during conversations. A notable application of these theories is evident in the work of Tiersma and Solan (2005), who employed them to explore the Schneckloth v. Bustamonte case. Within this context, police officers employed what appeared to be straightforward inquiries, such as, "Does the trunk open?" Yet, beneath this seemingly innocuous question lay an implicit command, urging the car's driver to comply with the directive by opening the trunk—a demonstration of maxim relevance in action. Grice's Principle of Cooperation provides a lens through which such interactions can be examined. It raises pertinent questions about the underlying motives or justifications behind the officer's query regarding the trunk's functionality. However, Austin's Speech Act Theory offers a complementary perspective. Here, the driver's interpretation of the officer's words transcends mere surface-level meaning (locution). Instead, the driver perceives it as a directive (illocution), prompting the subsequent action of opening the trunk (perlocution). Crucially, this interaction underscores the nuances of consent within legal contexts. The driver's willingness to comply, interpreted through Austin's framework, suggests a voluntary engagement with the investigation lack ethical or procedural transgressions.

Research done by Hartini (2014) utilizes the linguistic forensics approach to examined corruption phenomena. This research leaned on theoretical foundations such as acoustic phonetics, Grice's Principle of Cooperation, and insights derived from wiretapped conversations. Initially, phone tapping raised ethical concerns, with its legality being questioned. However, after securing permission from the Minister of Justice—despite some judicial reservations—the research proceeded. The focal point of the investigation was a conversation between Artalyta Suryani and Urip Tri Gunawan. Researchers carefully analysed voice frequencies and pressures using spectrograph technology, pinpointing distinctive features indicative of deceptive behaviour. By comparing the voice patterns across various recordings, the research found a unique speech characteristics inherent to everyone, as elucidated by acoustic phonetics. Delving deeper, the analysis aligned with Grice's Principle of Cooperation, focusing Artalyta's intricate behaviour. Specifically, deviations from the maxims of quantity, quality, and manner were observed: these deviations served various purposes, from complicated information and preserving face to create implicit meanings or implicatures.

Meanwhile, research by Waskita (2014), discourse conversations were meticulously analysed to investigate corruption in Indonesia. The research uses Dell

Hymes' Speech Act Theory and Halliday's transitivity to delve into telephone conversations between two implicated individuals, employing a descriptive approach to scrutinise conversational discourse centred on corrupt practices. However, advanced technology is required to determine voice in conversation analysis. In addition to using telephones for phonetic analysis, spectrographs have been used to accurately identify measures of tone, pattern, and pitch pressure of the corruptor's voice. Since the research requires sophisticated equipment and technology to determine its effectiveness, the effect has resulted in high-cost requirements.

Building on the linguistic dynamics in forensic discourse analysis highlighted in the previous studies, this paper focuses on the Noida double murder case, specifically analysing an interview to examine hedging strategies employed throughout the discourse. This paper focuses into the communication strategies employed by Rajesh and Nupur Talwar during their interview concerning the 2008 Noida Murder Case—a high-profile incident marked by its complexity and controversy (The Indian Express, 2017). Drawing upon conversation analysis, specifically interview, this paper seeks to unravel the complexities inherent in the Talwar couple's discourse, considering verbal and non-verbal cues, including body language and intonation (Creswell, 2009; Kamarul Azmi Jasmi, 2012). Chaer and Agustina (2014) explains that conversation is a linguistic interaction activity in one or more forms of speech between two parties, speaker, and listener, with a single topic of conversation and at a specific time, place, and situation.

Aarushi Talwar, the only child of Rajesh and Nupur Talwar, tragically died at 14, found with her throat slit in her Noida, India bedroom on May 16, 2008 (NDTV, 2017). The nature of the act suggested a surgical specialist was involved (Chauhan, 2012). Given the crime's location, suspicions initially swirled around the Talwars, both dentists with a practice in Noida (Reuters, 2017). Adding to the mystery, the Talwars' domestic help, Hemraj Banjade, initially emerged as the prime suspect, only to be found dead on the premises a day later. The layout of the Talwars' residence, adjoining Hemraj's terrace, connected via a shared room, intensified the case's complexity, prompting an investigation by the Noida Police (Sharan, 2011). However, their initial handling of the crime scene was lax, allowing media and the public to contaminate potential evidence shortly after Aarushi's death.

Subsequent investigations were hampered by lost or tampered evidence (Chauhan, 2012). A report by Marco Margaritoff (2019) posited a motive: a suspected illicit relationship between Aarushi and Hemraj. Allegedly, upon discovering this, Rajesh attacked Hemraj, inadvertently striking Aarushi. Nupur, discovering the aftermath, purportedly decided to cover up the incident to salvage family honour. The couple attempted to mislead investigators by manipulating the crime scene, relocating Hemraj's body and staging the scene to deflect suspicion. Ultimately, Hemraj's decomposing body was discovered on May 17, revealing the grim truth. Despite the compromised scene and lack of conclusive forensic evidence, the Talwars, having access to the crime scene, were arrested on May 23, 2008. However, as reported by BBC News (2017), they were later exonerated by the CBI, which shifted focus onto three of Rajesh's associates, including Krishna Thadarai, his clinic assistant. After inconclusive interrogations, these suspects were released, with the CBI suggesting the

involvement of the Talwars' close acquaintances (BBC News, 2017). In a turn of events, the Allahabad High Court acquitted the Talwars on October 12, 2017, overturning their earlier life sentences (The Indian Express, 2017).

METHOD

In forensic discourse research, interview analysis serves as an important approach, as evidenced by seminal works such as the Derek Bentley case (in Coulthard, 2005), the Shipman Trial (in Coulthard & Johnson 2007), and the Robert F. Kennedy Case (in Kevoe-Feldman, 2019). Although various factors may influence the dynamics between interviewers and respondents, recorded interviews offer a unique window for comprehensive analysis, encompassing both verbal and non-verbal elements, such as body language and facial expressions, thereby enriching the forensic material (Creswell, 2009; Kamarul Azmi Jasmi, 2012). However, it is essential to recognise the potential limitations of this methodology, as recordings, while facilitating comprehensive observations, do not grant access to the respondent's internal thought processes (Mathers et al., 1998). By synthesising hedging strategies grounded with maxims cooperative principle, this paper aims to decode the complex linguistic manoeuvres exhibited by the Talwar couple, shedding light on their credibility, potential evasion tactics, and underlying communicative dynamics within the research framework (Cresswell, 2009; Jharotia & Signh, 2015).

This paper utilizes qualitative approach, employing Taweel et al.'s (2011) hedging strategy, together with Grice's Cooperation Principle (1975) to analyse interview data involving the Talwar couple. Although it has limitations in terms of providing detailed static and comparative perspectives (Creswell, 2009), qualitative studies allow analysis to be carried out on various dimensions of language, including the sociocognitive of the speaker (which includes opinions, perspectives, and attitudes) as well as other multimodality elements. Conversation analysis is a pivotal methodological approach, leveraging insights from interviewers and respondents to elucidate the dynamics of sequential discussions (Hutchby, 2017). Rooted in a collaborative ethos, conversation analysis views language as a conduit for social action (Hoey & Kendrick, 2017).

DATA RESOURCE

This paper's data was obtained from interview recordings involving conversations between the interviewer and two respondents. It will examine their opinions, perspectives, and attitudes. The data were sourced from an interview recording titled "Aarushi Talwar Case: Rajesh and Nupur Talwar speak out," conducted on January 5, 2011, and shared on YouTube on October 13, 2017. This 23-minutes and 25-second recording, produced by NewsX, features an English-language conversation between the interviewer and the Talwar couple. From the transcription of this recording, comprising 3,791 words, the paper aims to uncover the subtle linguistic nuances, violations of Grice's maxims, and hedging strategies employed by the respondents. The data analysis unfolds in two stages. Initially, the paper identifies conversational maxims, offering a nuanced understanding of the speech acts between the interviewer and the respondents (Creswell, 2009). Subsequently, the analysis focuses into the hedging markers and strategies, focusing on the push-pull marker

strategy outlined by Taweel et al. (2011) within the framework of Grice's Cooperation Principle (1975).

ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK

Taweel et al.'s model presents a multifaceted framework that categorises hedging strategies into three distinct levels: (1) Invisible Hedging Strategies, (2) Visible Hedging Markers, and (3) Varieties, Tactics, and Pragmatic Functions. However, this paper only focuses on the first hedging strategy; invisible hedging strategies. Within this realm, the strategies are further subcategorised into three distinct sub-strategies: (i) Avoidance Strategy, (ii) Question-to-Question Strategy, and (iii) Self-Protection Strategy. Each sub-strategy manifests unique hedging markers within the discourse, often leading to breaches of Grice's Cooperation Principle (1975). Grice's Principle of Cooperation (1975) provides a foundational framework comprising four maxims: (i) maxim of quality, (ii) maxim of quantity, (iii) maxim of relevance, and (iv) maxim of manner. These maxims serve as analytical tools, guiding the examination of conversational data. The maxim of quality underscores the importance of authenticity in utterances, while the maxim of quantity emphasises the need for informativeness without unnecessary elaboration. The maxim of relevance ensures that utterances maintain contextual alignment, avoiding irrelevant elements. Lastly, the maxim of manner seeks for clarity, conciseness, and cohesiveness in speech. Violations of the Cooperation Principle occur when these maxims are compromised, underscoring the importance of adherence to these guiding principles in forensic discourse analysis. The interpretation of these markers yields invaluable insights into the observed deviations. Rosanti et al., (2016) argue that, in language studies, hedging is determined through the speaker's manifestation to avoid adverse effects.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The intricate dance of communication, as observed between interviewers and respondents, is a realm rife with strategic manoeuvres, complexities, and subtle nuances. Grice's seminal work on the maxims of cooperative communication (1975) is a foundational lens through which these interactions are critically examined. The conversations involving the Talwars, fraught with tension and implications, offer a rich tapestry to explore these strategies in depth. Grice's cooperative principle is central to understanding the Talwars' discourse, which encompasses the maxims of quantity, quality, relation, and manner. The principle presupposes that communicators aim for clarity, relevance, and truthfulness. When respondents deviate from these maxims, as frequently observed in the data, it signals intentional manoeuvres, possibly aimed at safeguarding personal interests or sidestepping uncomfortable truths. Hence, when a respondent gives feedback that does not meet or exceeds the required information, it is said to be violating the maxim of quantity. A violation of the relevant maxim occurs when the respondent gives a statement unrelated to the question asked. The maxim of quality will be disturbed when the validity of the information provided by the respondent is doubted, and the maxim of method is violated when there is ambiguity (Grice, 1975). Taweel et al. (2011) further elaborates on these violations or deviations from Grice's communicative maxims, categorising them into the sub-strategies of Avoidance, Question-to-Question, and Self-Protection, illuminating how respondents manage conversations.

Avoidance Strategy in Action

The Avoidance Strategy becomes evident in the Talwars' interactions when the topic shifts, generalisations or feigned ignorance are utilised to evade direct inquiries. This strategy requires confidence in the transition of topics by providing information that is easy to understand and does not raise doubts. In other words, the topic shift is done intuitively (Tawee et al., 2011). Such tactics were palpable in the Talwars' responses, where the conversation often pivoted from direct questions about the murder to broader societal contexts or personal sentiments, thus violating the maxim of relevance. For instance, when Nupur Talwar responds to a question regarding their client's behaviour post-murder with a generalised statement about societal sentiments, she is creating a smokescreen that blurs the specifics, making it challenging to pin down accountability or responsibility, as shown in example 1 below.

1. Interviewer **So, your client has not dreaded at all?**
 Respondent 2 **I don't understand, I mean I would say anybody, any person who has any feelings would not say this could be done by a father and a mother. It doesn't take too much to think about it and to think this is not right.**

In Example 1, the interviewer probed the client's disposition toward the Talwars' post-murder. The term 'dreaded,' as per Merriam-Webster, conveys a sense of fear or apprehension. This question holds particular significance for the respondents due to the pervasive belief among the media and the public that they are the primary suspects in the Aarushi Talwar murder case. However, Nupur Talwar (respondent 2) responded to this inquiry by contravening both the maxim of quantity and relevance. This violation is facilitated by a hedging marker, taking the form of a persona. Notably, Nupur Talwar extends the reference from specific clients to encompass 'anybody and any person,' thereby broadening the scope to the public. While the term 'client' signifies a specific individual availing services from a company, the broader term 'anybody and any person' implies the public. This shift in persona entails a transition from a specific group to a more inclusive one, concurrently initiating a topic shift. At the same time, Nupur Talwar further fortified their stance by underscoring their role as parents through the phrase 'father and mother', emphasising the inherent inclination of parents to protect and care for their children. This defence rested on the premise that cruelty toward their offspring would be inconceivable due to the instincts ingrained in parental roles. These strategic moves allow the respondents to deflect discussions about their potential culpability in the crime, thereby avoiding being perceived as criminals.

Similarly, Rajesh Talwar employs a strategic manoeuvre by steering the conversation from Krishna's motives to positioning himself as the victim, as portrayed in Example 2. This transition not only diverts attention but also strategically places the burden of determining outcomes on the investigative agency, safeguarding him from direct criticism. This strategic manoeuvre violates both the maxim of quantity and the

maxim of relevance. In Example 2, Respondent 2 or Rajesh Talwar's deliberate shift of focus to himself instead of addressing the inquiry about Krishna's motives evades speculation against Krishna and reinforces his portrayal as a loving person. This narrative then takes an intriguing turn as the conversation shifts from 'motive' to 'agency.' Rajesh Talwar employs a hedging strategy by diverting attention from the ongoing speculation. This shift strategically places the burden of determining the outcome on the investigative agency, effectively mitigating criticism directed at him without directly commenting on Krishna. The orchestrated topic shift reflects a confident strategy to foster a seamless exchange of information while preventing doubts from emerging during discussions on pertinent issues (Taweel et al., 2011).

2. Interviewer **Why would he kill your daughter?**
 Respondent 2 **well, again... I mean... you respect him as your regard, I think. This is something very difficult for me to start talking about. It's not fair you know. I know what it feels like, so somebody is pointing fingers at me. I don't want to do that to anybody, let the agency get something then they will do something, then we can-**

Reinforcing this strategy is the use of the circumvention strategy developed to reflect the couple's personality as friendly and kind people, which can be referred to through 'we were mostly homely kind of people' and 'there could not be homelier than us' in Example 3 below. The deliberate construction of this persona introduces a contradiction between the negative 'title' and the perceived personality of the Talwar couple.

3. Interviewer **Why would they invent that?**
 Respondent 2 **I don't know; all I can say is probably those who invented are the ones who are probably party to all that. We were mostly homely kind of people. I mean, there couldn't be more homelier people than us.**

Rajesh's response to the 'title' discussion highlights the violation of maximal quality and relevance and the diversion to the community's negative attitude as a reflection of disrespect. This strategic move aims to garner sympathy rather than criticism from the public, thereby diminishing the impact of being accused of murder. The method employed by Rajesh in distorting the 'title' discussion demonstrates a calculated effort to shape public perception, leveraging the community's perceived negativity as a shield against accusations. This multifaceted approach seeks to reframe the narrative, emphasising the Talwar couple's supposed benevolence and garnering empathy to mitigate the potential repercussions of the murder accusations.

Question-to-Question Strategy: A Balancing Act

The second sub-strategy, known as the question-to-question strategy, operates to circumvent the disclosure of information already within the interviewer's knowledge or readily available. In contrast to typical conversational dynamics, this strategy emphasises the collaborative orchestration of questions and answers between the

interviewer and the respondent. Here, the interviewer endeavours to exert control over the flow of conversation by deliberately constraining the respondents' thought processes. As exemplified in Example 4, when confronted with queries about the motive behind the murder, Rajesh Talwar deftly shifts the narrative, questioning the fairness of the interviewer's line of inquiry. His response, laden with emotive undertones, serves multiple functions: it deflects attention from the core question, portrays them as victims of unfair scrutiny, and subtly reframes the narrative in their favour.

4. Interviewer **Why have they picked up on you?**
 Respondent 1 It's actually very difficult for me to answer that. Because I have done everything possible, whatever the CBI asked me. You know it's like saying you are guilty until you are proven innocent, not the other way round. You know, what else am I expected to do? I did every single test that they wanted, and everything was negative. So, what does one do, is this the way you are supposed to be treated? Is this the kind of treatment that one deserves in this country?

Data 4 contextually revolves around the authorities and the public, attributing blame to the Talwar couple as the primary suspects in a murder investigation. The ensuing speculation prompts inquiries into the motivations behind the implicated parties' actions, imbuing the questions with an element of provocation. This deliberate provocation seeks to elicit responses that may expose the respondents' emotions beyond their control. The responses in this exchange began with violations of the maxim of quantity and the maxim of relevance, followed by deviations from the intended focus of the discourse. Rajesh (respondent 1), well-versed in investigative processes, strategically leverages his experience to present his cooperation in the investigation as a hedging strategy. Notably, he introduces a poignant query questioning the treatment one deserves in this country, implicating broader issues related to his welfare as a citizen. Such play on emotion serves a dual purpose, redirecting the discourse and introducing tangential topics. Rajesh's strategic manoeuvre, in addition to the violation of *ma*, aligns with the principles outlined by Tawee et al. (2011), emphasising the respondent's adept use of emotive elements to deflect from the crux of the matter while subtly addressing overarching concerns related to citizenship and treatment within the country.

Self-Protection Strategy: Crafting Narratives

This approach involves respondents offering expansive, assertive, and often persuasive replies to shield themselves from potential criticisms or implications. Nupur Talwar's discourse on their interactions with the media exemplifies this strategy. By weaving a comprehensive narrative of their experiences, she seeks to solidify their position, mitigate potential criticisms, and portray themselves as victims of circumstance. In Example 5, Respondent 2 exemplifies the self-protection strategy by weaving a comprehensive narrative of her experiences; she seeks to solidify her position, mitigate potential criticisms, and portray herself as a victim of circumstance.

Instead of providing straightforward answers, respondents counteract by redirecting and posing questions back to the interviewer, interweaving them with the issues initially presented. The use of questions serves as a tactical hedge, deflecting direct responses to the desired questions. It is crucial to note that this strategy does not anticipate receiving accurate answers or responses from the interviewer but is a deliberate manoeuvre to sidestep the obligation to provide forthright responses, underscoring the strategy's underlying intent to elude a candid disclosure (Taweel et al., 2011).

5. Interviewer
Respondent 1

What has been the role of the media in your way of thinking?
We have gone through different experiences with the media over the last two and a half years. And then a lot of police initially came and were pretty adamant that we don't talk to the media because the media would kind of destroy our investigation and they would be hopeless to do anything for us. We believe completely in them at that time. Later, they were the ones who told stories to the media. Which of course, the media picked up, announced everywhere, the media already kind of done their investigation and then probably damage what was remaining of the case. There have been points and situations, like today when media has helped us in putting our word plea across as parents of Aarushi, you know, we are helpless we are frustrated we don't know what to do with ourselves we don't know what to do with our lives we want people to support us and help us –

In data 5, a discernible hedging strategy, identified as the inclusivity process, is highlighted. The questioning in this section is focused on the respondents' views regarding the role of the media in the case. In the data, Nupur Talwar (respondent 2) strategically employs a protective measure by casting the police as a barrier, aiming to shield herself from potential testimonies involving the media. She also attributes blame to the media for the case's failure and interference with the investigation, thus orchestrating an additional hedge. Crucially, Nupur's statements, laden with factual elements, effectively divert the interviewer's attention. Additionally, Nupur employs persuasive techniques that appeal to the interviewer's empathy for the loss of their child, Aarushi Talwar. Despite its effectiveness, this strategic approach violates the maxim of quantity and relevance since it provides more information than necessary, leading to tangential deviations.

CONCLUSION

Examining linguistic strategies becomes paramount in the complex landscape of forensic discourse analysis, where language intertwines with law and crime. This paper embarked on a comprehensive exploration of hedging in forensic discourse, focusing on the case study of the Noida double murder interview involving Rajesh and Nupur Talwar. The intersection of linguistics, law, and crime revealed a rich tapestry of communication strategies that unfolded during the high-profile investigation of the tragic death of Aarushi Talwar. The Noida double murder case

provided a compelling backdrop, marked by its intricacies, controversies, and a multitude of stakeholders vying for clarity. The interdisciplinary lens applied in this paper facilitated a nuanced understanding of how language, as a forensic tool, operates in the realm of interviews. The theoretical foundation, woven from Grice's Cooperative Principle and Tawee et al.'s hedging strategy model, guided the analysis and elucidated the intricacies of the communicative dynamics at play.

The examination of the Talwar couple's discourse revealed a strategic interplay of linguistic manoeuvres designed to navigate the challenges posed by the investigative interview. Through the Avoidance Strategy, respondents skilfully shifted topics, generalised responses, and feigned ignorance to sidestep direct inquiries. This strategic manoeuvring, observed through violations of the maxim of quantity and the maxim of relevance, served as a shield against potential implications. The Question-to-Question Strategy, identified as a balancing act, allowed the respondents to collaboratively orchestrate questions and answers, exerting control over the flow of conversation. Rajesh Talwar adeptly employed emotive undertones to deflect attention, portraying themselves as victims of unfair scrutiny. Despite its subtlety, this strategy underscored the calculated nature of the responses and deliberate efforts to shape the narrative in their favour. The Self-Protection Strategy emerged as a prominent approach, with respondents crafting comprehensive narratives to shield themselves from potential criticisms. Nupur Talwar deployed persuasive techniques to solidify their position, mitigate criticisms, and position themselves as victims of circumstance. Using questions as tactical hedges demonstrated a calculated intent to elude forthright responses, emphasising the strategy's goal to avoid candid disclosure.

The paper's qualitative methodology, anchored in conversation analysis, delved into verbal and non-verbal elements, enriching the forensic material. However, it is imperative to acknowledge the inherent limitations of this approach, as it does not grant access to internal thought processes and necessitates meticulous attention to technical aspects. Building on the foundations laid by seminal forensic linguistics studies, this paper contributed to the evolving body of knowledge in the field. The complexities unveiled in the Noida double murder case underscored the importance of linguistic nuances in legal contexts. As forensic discourse analysis unravels the intricacies of language in investigations, the insights gleaned from this paper resonate beyond the confines of the Talwar case, offering valuable contributions to the broader understanding of linguistic strategies in forensic contexts. In conclusion, the examination of hedging strategies in the Noida double murder interview shed light on the intricate dance of communication within forensic discourse. The fusion of linguistic theories, contextual analysis, and a multidimensional strategies provided a holistic understanding of the Talwar couple's responses, adding layers to the discourse analysis landscape. As forensic linguistics continues to evolve, this paper contributes to the ongoing dialogue, emphasising the significance of language as a forensic tool in unravelling complex legal narratives.

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