

English as a scientific and research language
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Spanish authors dealing with hedging or the challenges of scholarly publication in English L2



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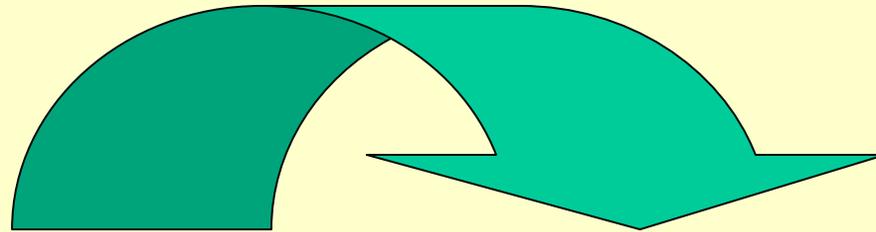
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1.CONTEXT

- ✓ There is no doubt about the **key role** English language plays in nowadays specialised communication. It has become **the lingua franca** in Science as Arabic, Greek or Latin were before.
- ✓ In spite of the increase of speakers of Spanish and other languages there is an obvious trend towards its use and **its influence in general language usage**: new concepts, new objects, new techniques (most of them coming from the Anglosaxon context)
- ✓ English, being a worldwide spoken language, **enjoys an important index in terms of human development, prestige and influence** in languages for specific purposes and this can be observed in **scholar publication in particular**.

*“The growing and generalised use of English in research publication today has created the need for non-native scholars not only to learn English, but to **have a good command of the discourse features of all research genres**”*

(Swales 2004:43)



This pressure to publish in English has made visible the existence of **certain rhetorical and epistemological differences** across languages and, in particular, between Spanish discourse and that of the Anglophone tradition.

*“English is now more than ever **the language of science**. Consequently non-native speaking (NNS) scientists have to cope with a **specific literacy** not only in their L1, but more importantly in English which may be their L2 or even L3”*

Hyland (2002)

Much more attention has understandably been paid to English than to other languages, as is the case of **Spanish**. Only more recently, due to the increasing interest in the study of **rhetorical patterns** both interlinguistically and interculturally, can we find some research based on the study of **Spanish writing:**

- *Valero-Garcés* 1996
- *Moreno* 1997
- *Burgess* 2002
- *Oliver* 2005
- *Martín-Martín* 2005
- *Salager-Meyer & Alcaraz Ariza* 2008
- *Morales et al* 2009

✓ Within professional discourses, the appropriate use of **rhetorical devices** is **vital** for authors presenting their knowledge in their academic discourse communities as:

*“Researchers are expected **to modulate** their assertions with the **appropriate degree of commitment** in order to make their work acceptable for publication”*

(Lafuente Millán 2009:65)

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

“We could say that so as to interpret and process information what we read is shaped by what we know and what we have read before... Therefore, genres belong to discourse communities (with public goals, means for communication, information and feedback opportunities, genres for those purposes, a lexis or jargon and experts”

Swales (1990)

*“**Contrastive Rhetoric** is an area of research in second language acquisition that identifies problems in composition encountered by **second language writers**, and, by referring to the rhetorical strategies of the first language, attempts to explain them”*

(Connor, 1996:5)

3.GOAL OF THE STUDY

“It is frequently claimed that instead of saying “I know”, members of the academia should rather *assume* or *suggest* when they address other scholars. Similarly, in the place of saying how things are, one *should sometimes* preferably say how things *might* be, or how things *perhaps* are. Hedging has been linked to highest-level peer communication such as professional specialist to specialist research articles [...] and the use of hedges is thought to be *particular characteristic of discourse between medical specialists* (Prince et al. 1982; Salager-Meyer 1994)” **Varttala (1999:178)**

Challenges in hedging

- a) A single expression **can convey several meanings**
- b) It can be expressed **using different strategies**: modal verbs, passive voice...
- c) Authors can be confused because of **cultural differences** as to expressing *doubt* and *certainty*

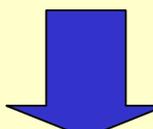
Therefore, we expect:



1. Hedging variation according to **IMRAD section** : *research article* (RA) and *case report* (CR)
2. Significant differences in hedging **frequency and/ or categories** in Spanish and English (L1 and L2)

4. METHODS

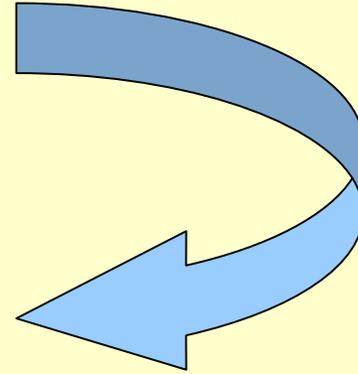
Steps followed:

1. Creating a **corpus** for research
 2. Developing a **Spanish taxonomy**
 3. Quantitative and qualitative analyses on *hedging*
 4. Including extra observers in the analyses
 5. **Statistical Study**: correlations and chi square
- 
6. **Comparison** of intergeneric (CR y RP) and interlinguistic results (Spanish & English L1-L2)

CORPUS

- **Bilingual:** Spanish and English L2.
- **Synchronic:** 30 specialized texts **recently published.**
- **Representative:** **Journals' prestige** in the field of Medicine (*British Medical Journal vs Medicina Clínica, etc.*)
- **Specialized:** Prototype of language usage in the genres studied.
- **Suitable extension:** 29.540 words (10 CR-SP), 53.620 words (10 RP-SP) and 43.521 words (10 RP-ENG2)

Towards a **Spanish taxonomy** proposal



- **Salager-Meyer (1994)**
- **Hyland (1998)** writer/reader oriented hedges
- *Hedges vs boosters* Hyland (1998, 2000)
- *Epistemic vs deontic modality* (**Piqué-Angordans, Palmer and Posteguillo (2002)**)

TAXONOMY (Oliver, 2005)

Pragmatic categories	Functions in discourse	Linguistic items	Linguistic level
<i>Shields</i>	Protection	Modal verbs, probability adj.	lexical
<i>Aproximators</i>	Vagueness	adv./ quantity, degree, time...	lexical
<i>Expressions of doubt and involvement</i>	Interpersonal dimension	-conditional -subjunctive -person markers	morphological
<i>Agentless Strategies</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Protection ▪ Convention 	-Passive voice -despersonalization	syntactical

EXAMPLES

SHIELDS

“Aquelloos pacientes con una baja actividad enzimática **pueden presentar** efectos secundarios como la citotoxicidad y aplasia medular” CR-SP1

“...they **seem to have** biological activity and similar functions to those of cytokines...” RP-ENG2

APROXIMATORS

“...esta inflamación causa síntomas que están **usualmente** relacionados con una obstrucción difusa y variable de las vías aéreas, que es **frecuentemente** reversible de forma espontánea...” RP-SP9

“ With BP-em, the blockade achieved maximal effect **slightly** later, but it was of significantly longer duration” RP-ENG1

AUTHOR'S EXPRESSIONS OF DOUBT AND PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT

“Por tanto, **podría** considerarse que la situación nutricional de sobrepeso en la edad escolar **supondría...**” RP-SP3

“**Most of what we know** has been obtained from in vitro experiments with mucosal fragments of epithelial cells” RP-ING3

AGENTLESS STRATEGIES

“Numerosas evidencias han propiciado que se haya llegado al consenso de...” RP-SP6

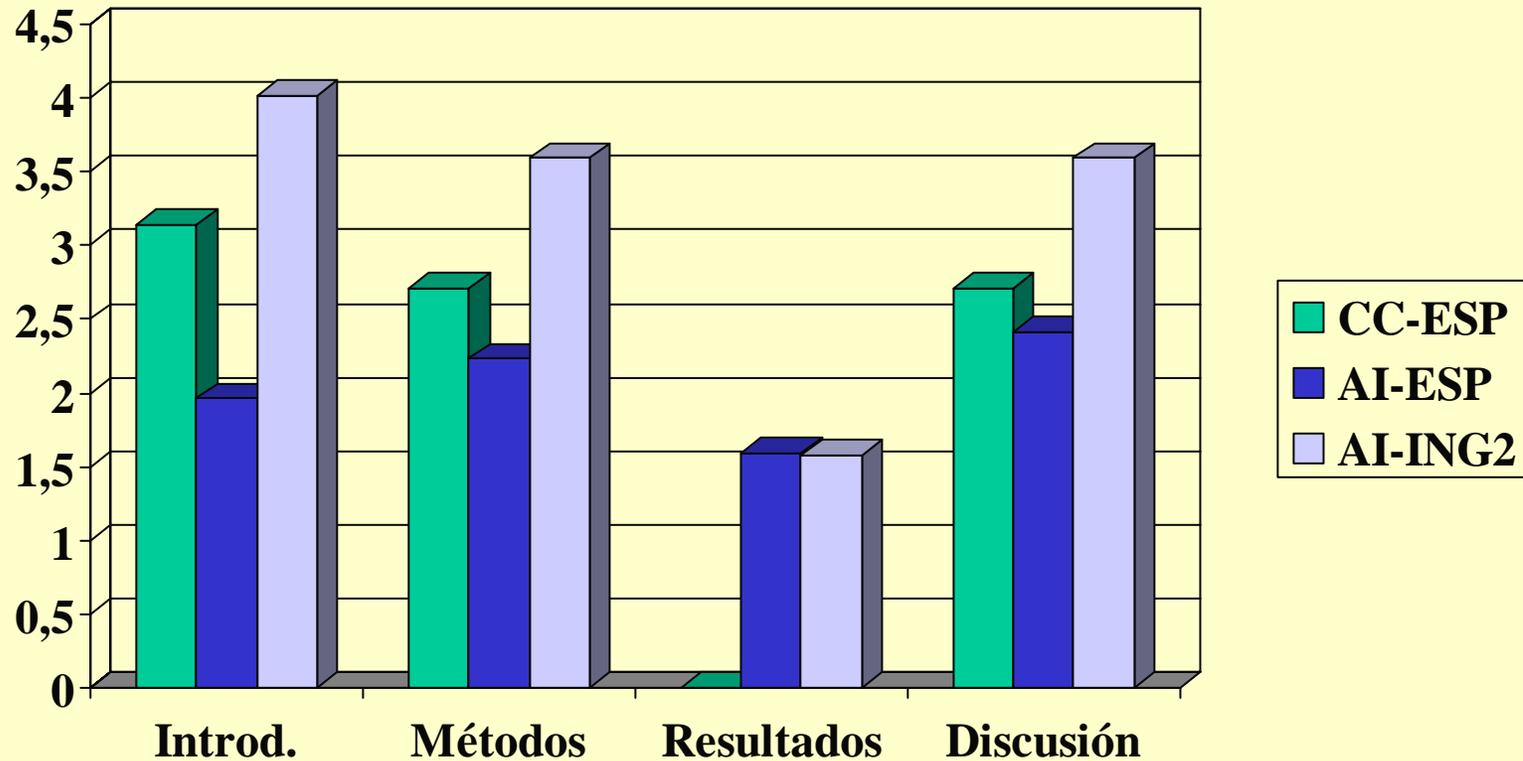
“Significant morbidity and mortality have been reported in patients with SAHS” RP-ENG3

5. RESULTS

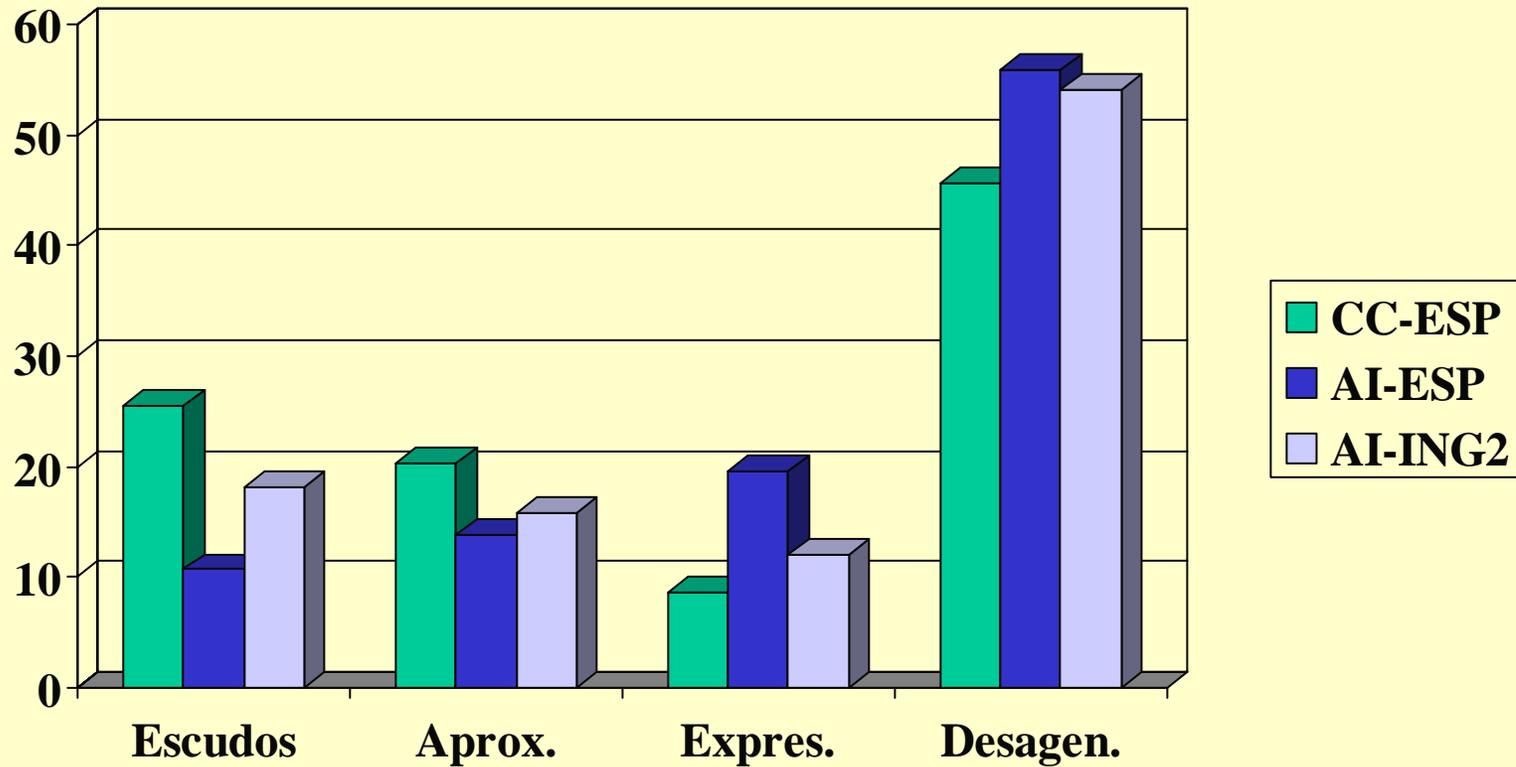
Inter-rater Correlations

	CR-SP	RP-SP	RP-ENG2
<i>Shields</i>	95% P-value ≤ 0.05	99% P-value ≤ 0.01	99% P-value ≤ 0.01
<i>Aproximators</i>	82% NS	99% P-value ≤ 0.01	99% P-value ≤ 0.01
<i>Expressions of doubt&involv..</i>	99% P-value ≤ 0.01	95% P-value ≤ 0.05	94% NS
<i>Agentless Strategies</i>	99% P-value ≤ 0.01	99% P-value ≤ 0.01	—

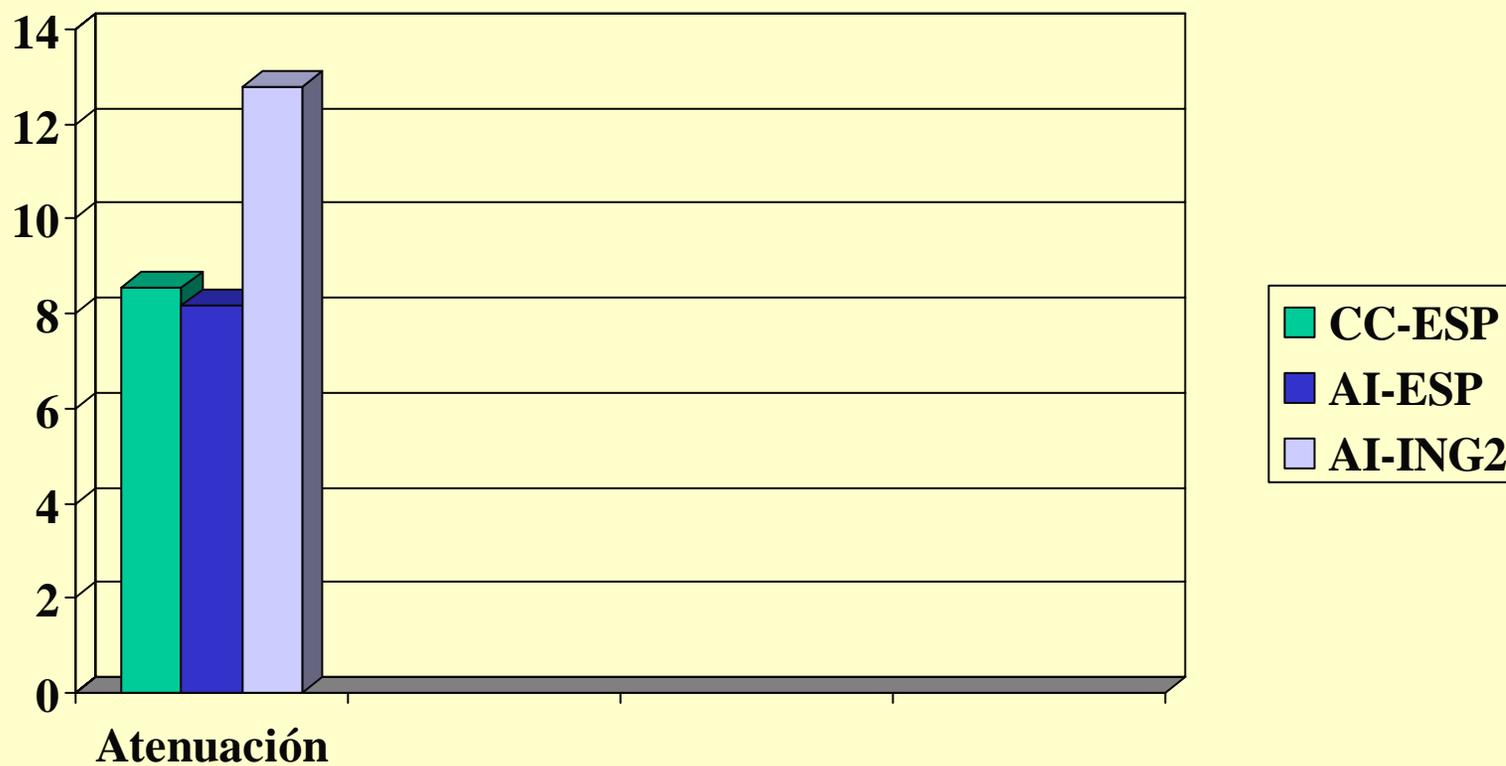
Frequency per IMRAD section



Frequency per *hedging* categories



Frequency of *hedging* per genre



Comparing **Spanish** - **English L2**- **English L1**

Studies on Hedging	<i>Oliver</i> (2005) RP-SP	<i>Oliver</i> (2005) RP-ENG2	<i>Salager-Meyer</i> (1994) ENG1	<i>Fortanet et.al</i> (2001) ENG1
<i>Shields</i>	10.70%	18.20 %	40.7%	42%
<i>Aproximators</i>	13.90%	15.78%	23.2%	26%
<i>Expressions of doubt and inv.</i>	19.52%	11.98%	7%	7%

6. ATTITUDE MARKERS

GOAL: analysis of interpersonal features and, within this broad scope, **the study of appraisal**.

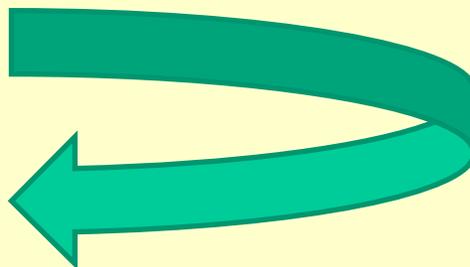
FRAMEWORK: *Appraisal Theory*, developed by Sidney School (Martin & Rose 2003, Martin 2005, Martin & White 2005) as a system of evaluation in discourse interaction.

METHODS: Taxonomy of Attitude Markers:
a) judgement, b) appreciation and c) affect.

CORPUS: 120 BRs in English and Spanish (60 in the field of Medicine and 60 in Linguistics)

- ❑ Precisely, in such a prototypical *genre* as academic *Book Review* (BR), in which the intended meaning is to inform the scientific community about the latest research in the field by providing an assessment based on certain *values* toward what is considered “science”, some *judgement* on the scientific work and a personal *appreciation* and *affect*, which may vary from one culture to another, across disciplines and cross-linguistically, too.
- ❑ **The selection of randomized samples** from international scholars was based on the prestige of **highly indexed research journals** as, *The New England Journal of Medicine* (NEJM), *British Medical Journal* (BMJ) and *The Lancet* and: *English for Specific Purposes, Discourse Studies* and *Journal of Pragmatics* **in English**. And *Anales Médicos* (Mex), *Archivos de Bronconeumología*, *Revista Médica de Chile* and *Discurso & Sociedad*, *Signos* (Chile) and *RSEL* (*Revista Española de Lingüística*) **in Spanish**.

“[Reviews] *contribute to the dissemination and evaluation of research* while providing an alternative forum in which academics can set out their views ... allow[ing] established writers **a rhetorical platform**” (Hyland, 2000: 43)



Research questions:

- **When and how is attitude expressed in *Spanish and English* academic book reviews?**
- **Are they positive or negative attitudes?**
- **Are attitudes graded in some way?**
- **Which kind of attitude is more relevant: *affect, judgement or appreciation*?**
- **Are there any differences in the Spanish and English academic communities?**

TAXONOMY (Martin & White, 2005)

Category	Function	Example
ENGAGEMENT	It focuses on the way the author introduces the statement of others	The author <i>claims/ explains/ informs/ states</i> , etc.
GRADUATION	It consists on the strength given to the author's words (<i>Boosting / Hedging</i>)	A <i>really</i> good book; It was <i>very</i> accurate.
ATTITUDE	It focuses on the different options for expressing a positive or negative evaluation	The <u>well-known</u> reputation of this author ...



EXAMPLES

AFFECT/AFFECTION: **direct or indirect involvement of the reviewer in the text**

- *As I read the book, I looked forward with interest to the last section, although I equally enjoyed the first, with its historical focus. (NEJM BR1)*
- *The chapters on attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder and cerebral palsy reflect that we are still at an early point in the identification of genes that produce these conditions. (NEJM BR1)*
- *To be fair, the sections in which surgical aspects of treatment are discussed are well balanced.... (NEJM BR9)*

JUDGEMENT: reviewer's attitude towards the reviewee

- *On this topic, Glick presents **few new sources** or **fresh insights**. (NEJM BR4)*
- *The authors include **many experts** in clinical research and basic science. They **eloquently address** what is known...The authors present **evidence** for why things are not so different from the way they used to be. This discrepancy is **helpful** in **illustrating** the unknowns in this area of study. (NEJM BR5)*
- *The authors' **ability** to draw together an **immense** and **diverse** knowledge base into a logical and **comprehensive overview** is **impressive**, and while the review of the current evidence base is **authoritative**, the human face of manic depression and the experience of this disorder among artists, writers, and composers are **illuminating**. (NEJM BR6)*

APPRECIATION: reviewer's attitude towards reviewee's book

- Overall, the book **hits the mark** by offering **a great deal** of information in a relatively short book. The chapter on the history of mental retardation **is filled** with facts that have gone unnoticed or been forgotten. (NEJM BR1)
- An Introduction to Human Molecular Genetics will be **a useful resource** for medical and dental students, as well as for advanced undergraduates and graduate students, research scientists, and physicians. **The abundance of clearly presented** information renders this textbook **a chef d'oeuvre**. (NEJM BR2)
- ...future editions of this book **would benefit from a more** comprehensive discussion of predictive genetic testing and its ethical, social, and legal ramifications. (NEJM BR2)

Preliminary RESULTS

Are they positive or negative attitudes?

- **83%** of the book reviews **are positive** in English. Slightly higher in Spanish.
- There seems to be more criticism in *Linguistics* than in *Medicine* book reviews.

Which kind of attitude is more relevant: *affect*, *judgement* or *appreciation*?

- There is more *appreciation* (51,6%) than *judgement* (28,1%) and more *judgement* than *affect* category (20,3%) in English.

- In this sense, the expressions of *judgement* and *appreciation* in the Spanish BRs overlap. This fusion is not so obvious in the English BRs of our corpus.

*“La monografía, cuidadosamente editada, va presentando ordenadamente los conceptos y principios básicos, así como los que pueden considerarse más especializados, de la morfología. Detenerse en todos ellos no resulta posible, y menos necesario, de modo que aquí haré referencia a aquellos contenidos donde la *aportación de G. Booij* a un estudio introductorio como el que presenta resulta *a mi entender relevante*. Puede sin lugar a dudas juzgarse como tal la diferenciación que *el autor* establece en la sección 5 [...] (5th paragraph of text 2R)*

- **Are there any differences in the Spanish and English academic communities?**

About the possible differences in the Spanish and English academic community in evaluating BRs, we must mention that our data suggest that in Spanish BRs *judgement* and *appreciation* —that is to say, the evaluation of the behaviour of an author and the quality of his/her book— are “mixed”; but in English BRs this combination is less evident. Nevertheless, we insist that more data is required to prove this tendency.

We have presented the **preliminary results** of a study on the linguistic units used **to convey appraisal in the book review genre**. As we can see in the sample analysis carried out, the BRs a highly “appraising” genre since there is a description of the reactions of BR writers toward the content they deal with. We consider the analysis of attitudes in discourse relevant because **it often reveals affiliations and complexities** that take place **in interpersonal relationships**.

All the examples we have presented here are looking for the “**applause of the reader**” when strongly recommending the piece of work being reviewed by using **positive substantives and adjectives** and/or reinforcing them with “**intensifying**” **adverbs** and **specific discourse markers** in the first person. On the other hand, **hedging devices** are often used when introducing negative assessment or addressing criticism directly to the author of the book (*judgement* category).

7. CONCLUSIONS

- ✓ **Rhetorical differences** in hedging by Spanish and English authors (frequency and typology)
- ✓ **Hedging** in specialized discourse is **different according to the genre** (*case report, research paper, book review*) **and the writer** (Spanish native speaker or English native speaker).
- ✓ **Attitude markers** in BRs seem to **differ both across languages and disciplines.**

In England it is bad manners to be clever, to assert something confidently. It may be your own personal view that two and two make four, but you must not state it in a self-assured way, because this is a democratic country and others may be of a different opinion.

By George Mikes (1946:32)

In How to be an alien

**THANKS FOR YOUR
ATTENTION**

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