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Abstract

The use of evaluation resources has proven to be an especially difficult area in English for Academic Purposes. Our aim is to propose a methodological framework for identifying recurrent differences in the use of evaluation resources in academic texts across English and other languages. We argue that for comparisons to be meaningful, studies of independent but comparable successful texts should contrast propositions that are similar in terms of their pragmatic or discourse function. We narrow the focus of the proposal down to the academic book review genre in one particular academic discipline and argue for the contrast of propositions functioning as critical acts on similar THINGS, the academic books under review. We reason that for fruitful comparisons it would be necessary to distinguish between evaluation resources occurring on the propositional, metadiscoursal and rhetorical planes. We discuss the types of evaluation resources that occur on these three planes in a corpus of 20 recent literary academic book reviews in English. We conclude that applying this framework to the quantitative analysis of comparable texts and propositions across languages would help to establish the extent to which the use of evaluation resources varies as a function of the language in a useful way.

Keywords: English for Academic Purposes, Academic Writing, Academic Book Reviews, Evaluation, Metadiscourse, Cross-cultural Studies

1. Introduction

The term *evaluation resources* in the present paper is taken to refer to all those language resources involved in the ‘expression of the speaker or writer’s attitude or stance towards, viewpoint on, or feelings about the entities or propositions that he or she is talking about’ (Thompson and Hunston 2000: 5). The most obvious instances of evaluation resources are those language items used to evaluate entities, for example, words like *particularly* and *unfortunate* in ‘The price is *particularly unfortunate*’ and *weakest* in ‘This final section of the book seems to me its *weakest* part...’ both found in academic journal book reviews. But the term *evaluation* in this more specialized understanding would also cover many more language resources than *ordinary* users of the language would typically expect.

It would also embrace language resources that evaluate whole propositions, like the hedge *seems* in the above example, or the attribution phrase in ‘*Myers (1989)* observes that ...,’ found in a research article. These resources can be considered evaluative in the sense that they signal the writers’ stance towards their own propositions. For instance, hedging or boosting a proposition shows respectively the writer’s degree of uncertainty or confidence in expressing that proposition. This is commonly taken to display the writer’s degree of commitment or detachment to the truth value of the proposition (Lyons 1995, Hyland 1998b). On the other hand, indicating the source responsible for a proposition by means of attribution (Tadros 1993) can also be considered as an indicator of the writer’s stance towards that proposition since this strategy helps writers to take more or less responsibility for their propositions. When propositions are offered as personal views through devices such as *to me* in *seems to me* it can be understood that

writers are fully committed to their propositions. By contrast, when propositions are presented under the guise of an attribution phrase, it can be understood that writers are distancing themselves from their propositions for some reason.

Evaluation resources of these types and others have elsewhere been treated under such headings as *attitude* (Halliday 1994), *epistemic modality* (Hyland 1998b; Stubbs, 1996), *appraisal* (Martin 2000; Martin and White 2005), *stance* (Biber and Finegan 1989; Hyland 1999, 2005a), and *metadiscourse* (Crismore et al. 1993; Dafouz Milne 2003; Hyland and Tse 2004; Hyland 2005b). Under these headings a great range of evaluation resources has been identified: those expressing *appreciation, affect and judgment*; those used to *intensify; grade and convey vagueness*; those involved in conveying *modality, hedging, evidentiality*; those used for *attribution* purposes and those used in *concession and justification* contexts. A review of this literature confirms the idea that evaluation has three basic functions, namely: expressing the speaker's or writer's opinion, establishing an interpersonal relationship with the hearer or reader and organizing the discourse (Thompson & Hunston 2000).

However, the appropriate use of evaluation resources has proven to be an especially difficult area in academic writing in English (Swales and Feak 1994: 136; Hyland and Milton 1997). This is not surprising since evaluation has shown to be sub-culture- and context-bound (Becher 1987; Hyland 2000; Hunston and Thompson 2000; see also the contributions to the special issue of *TEXT* 2003, 23(2)). Even for native speakers of a language, using evaluation resources appropriately does not seem to be without problems. As people move in their daily lives through different interpersonal environments and engage in different genres they constantly need to adjust textual and

rhetorical resources to construe what they consider to be appropriate roles and interpersonal relations in each type of communicative event. A constant change from one to another communication situation might explain why it may be difficult for some scholars to textually construe appropriate roles and interpersonal relationships. Who has not heard comments like, for instance: 'he talks like an open book' or 'he always talks as if he was giving a lecture' about one of his/her professors or colleagues at university?

The use of evaluation resources seems to have an important role in creating this kind of impressions. Let us take the case of attribution devices. While use of attribution devices may be a crucial persuasive strategy in contexts where the speaker/writer needs to display a credible voice, like in an academic talk, acknowledging the source of one's ideas may sound pedantic in other more casual contexts, at least in Spain. Also, overusing this device may not be recommendable in a genre like the academic journal book review, where writers need to present themselves as scholars who have been granted the status and the moral authority to pass judgment on the book under review. Something similar would happen in a non-academic genre like the opinion article, where mentioning other sources might even become counterproductive and diminish the final persuasive effect of the text (Dafouz Milne 2003: 47). By contrast, the use of attribution devices is crucial in research articles, but this resource is not always competently used (Tadros 1993: 113).

An appropriate management of evaluation resources presents even more difficulties for non-native writers of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) (see Neff et. al. 2004 in relation to Spanish writers of English as a foreign language). This is neither surprising since the expression of evaluation has also shown to be language-bound across English

and other languages such as Spanish. Moreno (1998), in particular, compares all the possible resources used by English and Spanish writers of research articles in Business and Economics to offer a claim in a premise-conclusion sequence. She finds that, as well as using conjuncts, both groups of writers use other alternative strategies. The uncovered importance of these alternative strategies is that they allow the presence of evaluation resources. By means of these resources writers are able to manage the degree of confidence they want to display, the degree of responsibility they wish to take for their claims, and the attitude they wish to show towards their own previously-stated arguments.

Moreno's (1998) study thus shows the crucial role of evaluation resources in construing an appropriate rhetorical attitude and interactive tenor for sharing claims in a given rhetorical context in two comparable disciplinary communities (Hyland 2005b). But its most important finding is that the frequency of use of the rhetorical options used to offer a claim differs, which suggests 'different conceptions of what an appropriate rhetorical attitude and interactive tenor is' (Moreno 1998: 577). Moreno also suggests that, if these rhetorical preferences for offering claims in Spanish are transferred when Spanish scholars are writing in English as an L2, the result might have unintended repercussions in the reader-writer interpersonal relationship. Her study claims for the need to carry out further contrastive analyses of the performance of evaluative markers in other rhetorical contexts (see also Markkanen and Schöder 1997: 14; Hyland 1998a: 262; Moreno 2004).

Thus establishing further contrasts of evaluative resources across comparable academic texts and disciplinary cultures (Bhatia 2004) could help us cast some more light on the

possible difficulties for non-native and non-experienced writers of English to create an appropriate rhetorical attitude and interactive tenor when writing in English for Academic Purposes. Drawing on Moreno's (1998) line of cross-cultural enquiry, our aim is to propose a methodological framework for identifying recurrent differences in the use of evaluation resources across academic texts.

2. The rationale for the comparative framework

Although our proposal is devised to compare evaluation resources, it is important to stress that it does not aim to compare evaluation resources *per se*, but how writers from different but comparable disciplinary communities (Hyland 2005b) convey and share comparable propositions appropriately in their respective linguistic and cultural contexts. One important observation that supports this decision is that ordinary users of a language are not usually worried about how to use one or another evaluation resource, such as a hedge or a personal pronoun. They seem to be more worried about conveying their ideas in a way that may serve their purpose as effectively as possible. As one of our informants acknowledged when asked about his reasons for using hedges or boosters in book reviews:

One's task is to make a rational judgment. Automatically that means that such things as reinforcing or mitigating devices are irrelevant. One gives facts and reasons, and one's own view, and the reader (and author) can take matters from there.

One important feature of Moreno's (1998) approach is that it proposes to base a cross-cultural contrast of academic texts on the analysis of comparable successful L1 texts, i.e. comparable successful texts written independently as original texts in each of the languages. This is done to help to achieve content validity for the two samples under comparison, i.e. to describe what is really typical of each of the languages and communication situations under comparison. For instance, translated texts would not usually meet this requirement. The problem is that contrasting independent texts makes it impossible for the researcher to compare identical ideas, let alone metadiscourse strategies for sharing or organizing them. The solution offered by Moreno (1998) is to compare the resources used for sharing and organizing equivalent propositions from a functional point of view across comparable genres (Swales 2004), disciplinary cultures (Bhatia 2004) and rhetorical contexts.

As Moreno (1998) notes, the pragmatic function of a proposition affects the choice of evaluation resources. For instance, while descriptions of facts are not usually hedged, claims are (Myers 1989: 13). So simply counting evaluation resources in order to compare the general attitude and interactive tenor of the writers across academic texts will not be very meaningful. If we do not know the type and frequency of propositions present in the texts we will not know, for instance, how many of them could or should have been hedged. Furthermore, even in very specific contexts, the equivalence of propositions is sometimes difficult to assess because the same proposition may serve multiple purposes. In academic book reviews, for instance, apparently factual or descriptive propositions often have an implicit evaluative role. All this suggests the importance of both comparing equivalent propositions and taking the rhetorical context

into account. Thus, in order to illustrate our proposal, we will narrow our focus down to one type of proposition, an evaluative appreciation.

Still, an evaluative appreciation, or comment, may be about many different types of THINGS, i.e. entities, events, or states-of- affairs. The type of THING discussed will also affect the choice of language items, such as adjectives and other resources, to express the evaluative appreciation. These choices will in their turn affect the language used for intensifying or downtoning the comment made. The type of THING discussed will also affect the type of evaluative and other interpersonal metadiscoursal resources used to share the appreciation. For instance, a negative appreciation of a THING very dear to the reader may need to be more mitigated than a negative appreciation of a less personal THING, since the former may be more face-threatening. This suggests the importance of comparing evaluative comments on similar THINGS.

Our proposal will be illustrated by focusing on one type of comparable proposition, an evaluative appreciation, both positive and negative, of one particular comparable THING, an academic book under review, in one particular genre, the academic book review (cf. Hyland 2000: 45). The main reason for choosing this genre is that it also exists in other languages such as Spanish and its exemplars usually contain a great frequency of evaluative comments. A typical example is: ‘And —as always in a book of Kate Flint’s— the bibliography is simply extraordinary’. We have termed this type of comments *critical acts on the book under review*, which are defined as positive or negative remarks on a given aspect or sub-aspect of the book under review in relation to a criterion of evaluation with a higher or lower level or generality. Critical acts may be realized by any structural unit, irrespective of its textual configuration, that contains

both the sub-aspect commented upon and what is said about it (see Moreno and Suárez 2008 for a method to identify and quantify critical acts in book reviews).

Having restricted our focus in this way, the purpose of the following sections will be to expound a method that could be fruitfully used to compare how writers from different but comparable disciplinary communities convey and share critical acts on the books under review appropriately in academic book reviews in their respective linguistic and cultural contexts by means of evaluation resources. This method will be illustrated with examples of critical acts taken from a corpus of 20 recent literary academic book reviews in English. After introducing the corpus, the method section will show how we identified evaluative concepts around the expression of critical acts on the books under review that could be compared to similar evaluative concepts in other languages like Spanish. Most of these evaluative concepts are operationalizable into linguistic features that can later be submitted to further comparisons (Connor and Moreno 2005), except in those cases where the evaluation is implicit.

3. The corpus

Academic journal book reviews are the typical texts that appear at the end of many scientific journals whose major purpose is not only to inform readers about new books in the discipline but also — and principally — ‘to evaluate the scholarly work of a professional peer within the scholarly community’ (Lindholm-Romantschuk 1998: 40; see also Belcher 1995; Simon 1996; Motta-Roth 1998; Gea Valor & del Saz Rubio 2000-2001; Hyland 2000; Burgess & Fagan 2004).

In order to achieve a maximum degree of similarity between the outcomes of a given genre across two languages, other contextual variables need to be taken into account due to their possible effect on the content and form of the texts (see Moreno 2007). The need to control for the academic discipline arose because some aspects of the academic book review genre have shown to be shaped differently as a function of the disciplinary culture. For instance, differences have been found across disciplines in the hard and soft fields in aspects like the evaluative adjectives chosen by academics to praise and criticize books and in the aspects focused on in book reviews (Hyland 2000: 51). This highlights the importance of understanding the concept of *writing culture* as the interaction of a number of smaller writing cultures, not in the traditional sense of national or *received* culture (Atkinson 2004).

We decided to focus on a disciplinary culture within the Humanities or Social Sciences since the disciplinary communities created around these place greater importance on scholarly book reviews than, for instance, those created around the experimental sciences (Spink et al.1998: 369). We also decided to focus on academic book reviews written nowadays. This restriction was also crucial because the temporal factor has proven to affect the rhetorical and textual configuration of this genre in various ways (Roper 1978; Salager-Meyer 2006), which highlights the dynamism of writing cultures. Given that our aim was to observe how critical acts on the books under review are conveyed and shared appropriately, we decided to describe them as they occurred in academic book reviews published in well-known international journals. This would ensure that the texts had been written by successful writers or, at least, had been

considered acceptable in their final shape by the gatekeepers of the corresponding disciplinary communities.

For all these reasons, our study focused on the population of academic book reviews of literature published between 2000 and 2002 in well-known international journals. In order to represent this population of texts, a sample was *quasi-randomly* drawn from the following journals: *The Review of English Studies* (published in Great Britain; texts from 2002); *Notes and Queries* (published in Great Britain; texts from 2000); *English Literature in Transition. 1880-1920* (published in North-America; texts from 2002); *Studies in Romanticism* (published in North-America; texts from 2001). This choice of journals aimed to strike a balance in terms of the British and the North-American academic writing cultures. Although the possible rhetorical variation across these two big writing cultures was not the focus of the study, it at least needed to be taken into account. Since the texts were going to be submitted to a qualitative manual analysis, we needed to collect a manageable sample. The resulting sample of texts, or corpus, consisted of 20 academic book reviews, five per journal. The size of the corpus amounts to 21.382 words, but the interesting feature is that it contains 459 critical acts.

4. A framework for comparing evaluation resources in academic texts across languages

The first problem that we came across when analyzing evaluation around the expression of these critical acts was that its realization was accomplished by a very complex array of lexico-grammatical and rhetorical resources. We would like to argue that one fruitful

way of sorting out evaluation resources is by first distinguishing between those situated on the propositional and those situated on the metadiscoursal planes. This distinction between the two planes of discourse has been widely recognized in the literature (vande Kopple 1985, Crismore et al. 1993, Moreno 1998, Hyland and Tse 2004).

Evaluation resources situated on the propositional plane would be initially comparable across languages because they would be used to evaluate THINGS — whose referent is in the world outside the text. Evaluation resources on the metadiscoursal plane would be comparable because they would be used to evaluate entire propositions or their discourse function without adding new propositional content to the text. But we would like to suggest that a further plane of discourse is needed to account for evaluation resources that are neither linguistically encoded on the propositional plane nor on the metadiscoursal plane but on the rhetorical plane. To observe these different planes on which evaluation resources can be situated and their rhetorical effects in English, various examples from our corpus will be discussed.

4.1 Evaluation resources on the propositional plane

Let us consider the following positive remark, where the text in plain font contains non-evaluative propositional material, and the double underlined item and that in italics contain evaluative material on the propositional plane.

(1) The book is especially *impressive* in its uses of nineteenth-century science. [elt76-11E]

In example (1) an aspect of the book under review (its uses of nineteenth-century science) is evaluated and what is said about it is that this aspect of the book is especially *impressive*. The semantic meaning of the adjective *impressive* shows a kind of appreciation towards that aspect of the book, which allows us to interpret this evaluative remark as positive, i.e., as a case of praise or compliment. On the other hand, the adverb especially signals the degree or force of the appreciation and thereby projects the extent of the writer's reaction towards the aspect commented upon (the so-called attitudinal markers or emotionally-charged intensifiers — mainly adjectives and adverbs in Gea Valor 2000: 64). Since what is commented upon by the combination of these two words especially *impressive* is an entity whose referent is in the world outside the text, they can be considered as two evaluative devices situated on the propositional plane. A focus on the propositional plane would thus allow us to compare the evaluation resources used to show appreciation towards similar kinds of THINGS, and thus compare the value-systems appealed to by the corresponding disciplinary communities.

4.2. Evaluation resources on the metadiscoursal plane

If we now consider evaluation resources on the metadiscoursal plane, we propose to divide them into those that affect the propositional content of the current sentence and those that affect the propositional content – or the discourse function – of surrounding sentences or larger fragments of text. This division, which is not usually explicitly established in the literature on metadiscourse (cf. Vande Kopple 1985; Crismore et al. 1993; Hyland 2005b), would help us observe and compare the evaluation resources

employed by writers when they are sharing a new proposition in the text by contrast to what happens when they are evaluating or reinterpreting a proposition that either has already been shared in previous discourse or is to be shared in the upcoming discourse. This distinction is relevant because the latter resources are much more rhetorically complex than the former since their scope goes beyond the structural boundaries of the sentence and are usually involved in performing other functions too.

4.2.1. Evaluative metadiscourse affecting the current propositional content

Let us now consider the following positive critical act where the single underlined and italicized text contains evaluative material on the metadiscoursal plane.

(2) Readers of ELT may be especially *interested* in the long chapter centered on the Ruskin-Whistler controversy. [elt76-11E]

In example (2) the modal verb may is used to soften slightly the force of the proposition expressed by the writer by adding the extra meaning of *tentativeness*. The meaning of the statement becomes something like: it is possible but not guaranteed that readers of ELT will be interested in the aspect of the book commented upon. Without this modal item, a hedging device, the prediction would have been expressed in very categorical terms [Readers of ELT will be especially interested in...], showing the writer's strong belief in it. This way of offering a view would have been rather imposing on the reader's perception of the book. But mitigating the force of the assertion forges an interesting interpersonal role. While positioning the addressed readers to share with the

writer this view about one good aspect of the book referred to, the hedging device reduces the force of the imposition. Seen in another light, by representing a textual voice open to, or entertaining, alternative dialogic positions (White 2003: 272), the writer shows her respect for the readers' personal viewpoints and tastes, which contributes to maintain social harmony (Gea Valor and del Salz Rubio 2000-2001: 176).

The modal item *may* in example (2) can also be situated on the metadiscoursal plane because the epistemic meaning added by it affects, or modifies, the meaning of the entire proposition without adding any new propositional content to the text (i.e. nothing new about the entity of the external world referred to). This evaluative resource just signals the writer's stance towards the proposition encoded in the current sentence. It is a case of text about the text/discourse/proposition itself. There follow two more epistemic evaluation resources on the metadiscoursal plane that add the extra meaning of tentativeness. In example (3) the resource is used for making a suggestion for improvement (i.e. an indirect criticism) and in example (4) it is used for offering praise. The two resources have an evaluative mitigating effect.

(3) ...he does not exercise skepticism at moments where it *might* help him. [12E-elt94]

(4) Her demonstration of the interplay...provided, *I think*, new tools for all of us. [11E-elt76]

On other occasions it is possible to identify evaluative resources whose function is not to mitigate, nor boost, but to convey the writers' attitude towards their current propositions or critical acts, neither adding any extra propositional meaning, as in the following example:

(5) More problematically...Irwin pursues critical avenues of dubious validity. [12E-elt94]

In example (5), the evaluative item *problematically* occurs within a metadiscourse device, *more problematically*, that has the interpersonal effect of aiding the reader's interpretation of the writer's attitude towards the aspect under review. In this example, the announced attitude towards the book is clearly negative (cf. *attitude markers* in Hyland 2005b) and is also explicitly encoded in the current proposition in specific terms.

4.2.2 Evaluative metadiscourse affecting the propositional content or the function of surrounding discourse units

On other occasions evaluative metadiscourse affects the meaning of some previously-stated (or upcoming) proposition(s). At this point, we would like to introduce a useful distinction in the study of metadiscoursal devices as a function of the type of relevance they help to establish. As has been well documented in the literature, metadiscoursal items aid in the interpretation of coherence relations of two major types: those that establish *relevance of content* and those that establish *relevance of relational function* (Blakemore 1987; Sinclair 1993 and Moreno 2003a). Consider the following examples:

(6) ...is interdisciplinary in the broadest sense ...Amid this richness, some chapters seemed to me more successful than others... [11E-elt76]

The underlined text in (6) highlights a metadiscoursal device that contains a noun phrase termed *retrospective label* in the literature (Francis 1994; Moreno 2004). This label can be considered metadiscoursal because it does not add any new propositional meaning to the text (i.e. nothing new about the book under review) but its interpretation is affected by the interpretation of a previously-stated proposition. By encapsulating propositional content already stated in the text and using it as part of the content of the current proposition, this type of label helps the writer to establish the relevance of the current proposition in terms of its content, thus helping the reader to perceive the continuity of the discourse topic. In this sense, the label serves a textual, or interactive function (Cristmore et al. 2003; Hyland 2005b), since it refers to information provided in other parts of the text.

But it is important to realize that the noun *richness* in the label also serves another metadiscoursal function: the interpersonal function, or interactional, function (Vande Kopple 1985; Crismore et al. 1993; Hyland 2005b). In this function, the noun serves to express the writer's attitude towards propositional material that has been presented in a previous discourse unit. Moreno (2004: 333) terms this type of label an *evaluative retrospective label*. Instead of adding new propositional content, the noun only reinterprets or evaluates the previously-stated proposition. By doing so, the writer gives a new indication of his attitude towards the issue commented upon. In (6), this may have been done for two possible reasons: a) in order to clarify the possible ambiguity created by the use of the adjective *interdisciplinary* in the previous proposition; and/or b) in an attempt to make the upcoming criticism easier to accept after a positive comment has been offered. This clear multifunctionality of the label in (6) highlights

the difficulty in categorizing some metadiscoursal items as either textual or interpersonal. In any case, it is a type of *encapsulating deictic act* (Sinclair 1993) that helps the writer to establish *relevance of content* (Moreno 2003a: 125).

On other occasions the relevance of the content of the new proposition is established by retrospective metadiscoursal labels that merely serve to reclassify a previous discourse unit in terms of its function. Let us consider example (7), which consists of four critical acts on the propositional level. In this example, only metadiscoursal items have been underlined for the sake of clarity. Of these, those in italics serve an interpersonal evaluative function and those in small capital letters serve a mainly textual function. The rest of items in (7), whether evaluative or not, add new propositional content to the text, for which reason they have not been highlighted.

(7) [1] ...a certain amount of artificial padding is required on the part of the author to turn it [the book] into a coherent whole. ALSO [2] Peppi's style is not the most economical AND [3] he *might* have put a little more trust in the reader to follow his argument without putting up verbal signpost at every turn. NEITHER CRITICISM, HOWEVER, SERIOUSLY DETRACTS FROM [4] the book's 'considerable' value. [elt195-13E]

This fragment shows a very complex metadiscoursal device before critical act [4] is offered because the two major types of coherence relations co-occur at this point in the text. On the one hand, the label *neither criticism* has the textual function of helping to establish the relevance of the current proposition in terms of its content with respect to previous discourse. In particular, this label serves to bracket or encapsulate previously-stated negative comment on the book under review in functional terms, i.e. as *criticisms*,

before the text develops further its propositional content. The label summarizes the function performed by the previous discourse units without adding any new indication of the writer's attitude towards previously-stated propositions or issues (cf. *frame markers* in Hyland 2005b). Thus the noun *criticism* in this label, by contrast to the noun in the label in (6), is not evaluative *per se*. It is a type of retrospective label termed *encapsulating discourse act* by Moreno (2003a: 127) and *epistemic retrospective label* by Mur Dueñas (2004: 147).

However, although this bracketing is not evaluative, it also forges a positive interpersonal role, at least in those writing cultures where a writer-responsible style is appreciated, i.e. where it is assumed that it is the duty of the writer to make his/her text clear to the reader. This is the reason why, in our view, this kind of textual metadiscoursal resource should be directly included in studies of the interpersonal in discourse, but only indirectly included in studies of evaluation in discourse. For, although 'evaluativeness undoubtedly constitutes an essential aspect of the interpersonal in discourse' (Mauranen and Bondi 1993: 269), not all interpersonal devices in Halliday's (1973: 66) terms would, strictly speaking, have an evaluative function. However, only van de Koppe's (1985) classification of metadiscourse (see *illocution markers* in his scheme) seems to acknowledge in practice the interpersonal effects of what other authors consider mere textual metadiscourse. This again shows a lack of consensus on how metadiscoursal items should be categorized.

Let us now examine the metadiscoursal item *however* in (7), which is a conjunct, usually considered as a clear case of textual metadiscourse. This conjunct serves to establish a different kind of coherence relation, the one that serves to establish *relevance*

of relational function (Moreno 2003a: 129). In particular, it serves the writer to make explicit a concessive relation of *claim-counter claim* between the two related discourse units. This coherence relation arises when the reader needs to do some extra inferential work to interpret the discourse function of a previous discourse unit in an attempt to establish the relevance of the upcoming proposition. It is important to note that the extra propositions inferred from the two related discourse segments are relational, i.e. they depend on each other, and they are perceived in discourse functional terms: e.g. *claim-counter claim*. Since the concessive relation in (7) could have equally been inferred without the aid of *however*, it may be said that its presence facilitates readers' interpretation of this relation, thus contributing to facilitate communication between writer and readers. In this sense, in writing cultures where explicitness is appreciated, the use of explicit signals of coherence relations also have positive interpersonal connotations, but this does not mean that these resources should be considered evaluative.

So far we have only discussed cases of interpersonal retrospective metadiscourse that may or may not have an evaluative role. The same kind of discussion could be developed about prospecting metadiscoursal items. Prospecting items are insightfully discussed in Tadros (1985) and Sinclair (1993). Moreno (2003a) also treats them in detail and distinguishes again between those prospecting resources that are meant to establish *relevance of content* by means of: a) *prospecting deictic acts*, or *enumeration* (Tadros 1985, e.g. *problems, errors*); or b) *prospecting discourse acts*, or *advance labelling* (Tadros 1985; Sinclair 1993, e.g. *his message, the statement, consider, compare, distinguish*); and those prospecting resources that are meant to establish

relevance of relational function by means of *prospecting logical acts* (Moreno 2003a, e.g. the *reasons* are obvious).

The interpersonal role of these prospecting resources is clear. They serve writers to create expectations in the text that facilitate interpretation since they help to predict the relevance of the upcoming discourse units and thus help to engage readers. What will be crucial for comparative studies of evaluation is to identify evaluative resources that advance the writer's specific attitude towards the upcoming discourse units or towards the issues that will be discussed in the following discourse. The item *obvious* in 'the reasons are obvious' serves that evaluative function in a prospecting logical act. Example (8) below also contains an evaluation resource, *problem of development*, that serves an evaluative function in a prospecting deictic act. As will be clear, it advances the writer's negative attitude towards the aspect discussed in the following sentence.

(8) A similar *problem of development* exists in the suggested connections between the romantic and modern periods. For instance, in the first and last chapters, Jasper's tantalizing suggestion that the romantics are the progenitors of modern "canonical criticism" is not pursued in much detail.

Let us now consider other resources that are also clearly evaluative, but which as part of complex metadiscoursal environments are difficult to analyze and categorize. One interesting metadiscoursal item present in example (7) above is the adverb *seriously*. Its effect can be best appreciated if we rephrase the entire metadiscoursal device as '*despite these two not very serious criticisms*'. In this light, it can be seen that the adverb *seriously* does not contribute anything new to the propositional content of the current

sentence. It is simply used to show the writer's stance towards his own previous criticisms, diminishing their force. This mitigation of the criticisms would also contribute to facilitating interaction and social interplay between the participants in the communication situation (Halliday 1973: 66), thus forging an important evaluative interpersonal role. As part of the metadiscoursal device, the adverb *seriously* should be categorized as evaluative metadiscourse in this use.

4.3. Evaluation resources on the rhetorical plane

On reading example (7) it is possible to conjecture that a certain degree of tension has been created in the writer-reader relationship, since the provision of three criticisms, one after the other, can be considered as a clear face-threatening act (Gea Valor 2000-2001: 146), both towards the author of the book under review and towards other readers' possible existing perception of that book. If we now read the beginning of the last sentence, it will be seen that some of the tension gets released, partly because of the mitigating effect of the adverb *seriously*, but mainly due to the effect of a different, though related, evaluation resource that occurs at [4]. It consists in balancing the previously-stated criticisms by providing immediate praise.

This combinatory resource has already been identified in the literature on book reviews. For instance, Gea Valor (2000-2001) shows how it serves to redress specific face-threatening acts both at local and more global rhetorical levels in the texts. This counterbalance or mitigation of the previous criticisms also has the interpersonal effect of contributing 'to maintain social harmony and solidarity with the reviewee (sic)' (Gea

Valor 2000-2001: 146) (See also Hyland 2000: 55). We would like to argue that this resource should be placed on the rhetorical plane of discourse because it is not usually encoded by lexico-grammatical means. The presence of the metadiscourse item *however* is not sufficient to signal the specific concessive relation of criticism-praise. It is only when the reader has processed and interpreted the pragmatic function of the upcoming proposition as one of praise that the negative meaning of the previous criticisms is actually counterbalanced.

4.4. Evaluation-related resources on the rhetorical plane

Let us now consider another type of evaluation-related resource situated on the rhetorical plane that is hardly considered in studies of evaluation because it is not, strictly speaking, evaluative but is crucial for interpreting the evaluative nature of apparently neutral/descriptive passages of language. As has been observed by some researchers, this is in fact one major problem with studying evaluation in discourse: that evaluation is very often implicit (Martin 2003: 173). Let us now consider the following example from our corpus:

(9) [1] The book is especially *impressive* in its uses of nineteenth-century science.// [2] For example, Flint makes a *brilliant* application of debates from experimental physiology to George Eliot's puzzling short novel *The Lifted Veil*.// [3] Another chapter explores the way in which scientists themselves searched for an 'expressive set of visual images' which could satisfactorily convey their explanations of the unseen forces that act on the physical world.// Similarly, [4] the nineteenth-century predecessors of

Freud, she argues, were drawn to a ‘vocabulary of surface and depth, of the hidden and the revealed, of dark and of light’ which was also applied to the topography of modern cities, especially to the threats posed by both the literal and the figurative ‘underworld’ // [elt76-11E]

Example (9) shows a sequence of four critical acts. The first act is a general evaluative appreciation whereby one aspect of the book under review *its uses of nineteenth-century science* is assessed as *especially impressive*. This general critical act can be interpreted as unambiguously positive because of the presence of the adjective *impressive*, which indicates a positive quality. The important point to note is that this positive general critical act has created a prospection (Sinclair, 1993) that leads the reader to predict that the following fragment of text will provide the justification for evaluating the book as impressive from the perspective mentioned, thus creating the expectation of a *claim-justification* coherence relation. This would be another case of *prospecting logical act* (Moreno 2003a: 133). The constraint established on the relevance of the following discourse is such that, if the prospection is not fulfilled, then the text might be perceived as incoherent, or at least incomplete, in relation to reader expectations. In fact, in the example above, the following three specific critical acts serve to fulfill the prospection created. And, as can be seen, even though acts ([3] and [4]) do not present explicit evaluation resources but material of an apparently more descriptive nature, the reader is led to interpret them as positive critical acts.

The occurrence of these claim-justification sequences of critical acts is so frequent in academic book reviews that justifications for critical views are almost expected as obligatory in this genre. For instance, Gea Valor and del Saz Rubio (2000-2001)

acknowledge that, although reasons, or justifications, are most of the times provided implicitly, they are sometimes introduced explicitly by means of causal subordinators such as because, since, due to, that's why, etc. They argue that 'providing reasons to justify both criticisms and compliments helps the reviewer to maintain his positive face and makes him come across as a rational individual who evaluates the book on the basis of his expertise and knowledge of the subject' (Gea Valor and del Saz Rubio 2000-2001: 171). In this sense, this rhetorical device also plays an important interpersonal role in these texts.

5. Final remarks

The main conclusion that may be drawn from the above discussion is that in cross-cultural studies of evaluation resources in academic discourse it will be crucial to define precisely what is meant by evaluation for there main reasons: first, because although evaluative meaning is often explicit, it may also be implied, and this should also be taken into account for valid comparisons; second, because the concept of evaluativeness is not always clearly distinguished from the concept of interpersonal. As has been shown, even though clearly textual (i.e. text organizing) metadiscoursal devices, like *however*, or *neither criticism*, play an important interpersonal role they are not, strictly speaking, evaluative; and, third, because evaluation resources may occur on very different planes of discourse and are often so rhetorically complex that they are difficult to categorize. It will then be fundamental for cross-cultural studies to delineate clearly their criteria of comparison (i.e. their *tertia comparationis*, see Connor and Moreno

2005) to ensure that they are comparing comparable evaluation resources. Defining these criteria more explicitly has been the major purpose of our paper.

If we now applied this framework of comparison to the quantitative analysis of particular academic genres, it would help us compare evaluation resources across languages and cultures in a meaningful way. In the search for meaningfulness, our framework has proposed to focus on one particular type of proposition on one particular THING in one particular genre and in one particular disciplinary culture. To illustrate the method, it has discussed the case of critical acts on books under review in academic book reviews of literature. But most importantly, the present framework would help us identify differences and similarities in the use of evaluative resources in a way that can be more usefully applied to teaching English for Academic Purposes (Moreno 2003b).

As has been suggested, although evaluation resources seem to have important rhetorical effects in the writer-reader relationship, ordinary writers do not seem to be much aware of how they are used or when they need to be used to create those effects. Therefore, explicit awareness of how these resources and their rhetorical effects vary cross-culturally to convey and share specific comparable propositions in precise rhetorical contexts should help academic writers improve their rhetorical efficiency in other writing cultures. In our view this awareness would be more helpful than general awareness of how these resources and effects vary across unspecified types of propositions.

Once quantitative contrastive results are obtained after the application of this framework, the next logical step would be to explain the possible rhetorical differences

identified in the texts *as products*. To do so, qualitative methods would be needed (questionnaires, interviews, observations, case studies,...) in order to: a) empirically prove the rhetorical effects created by the use of these resources in the given comparable genres and disciplinary cultures; and b) uncover the cultural features (values, norms, learning processes and so on) shared by the members of each of the disciplinary communities involved in the comparison that may have influenced the rhetorical options taken to create those effects.

Finally, we would like to suggest that the present framework could also be applicable, with a few adaptations, to inter-generic and inter-cultural comparisons within English and within other languages such as Spanish.

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