

This pre-print was published as

Moreno, A. I. (2004). Retrospective labelling in premise-conclusion metatext: An English-Spanish contrastive study of research articles on business and economics. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*. Vol. 3: 321-339.

Retrospective labelling in premise-conclusion metatext: an English-Spanish contrastive study of research articles on business and economics

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Abstract

The present study assumes that, despite the relative uniformity of research articles (RAs) imposed by the requirements of the genre, there may be intercultural variation in the rhetorical preferences of different writing cultures. The paper develops further Moreno's (1998) model for the comparison of the metatext employed in English and Spanish to signal premise-conclusion intersentential coherence relations. It does so by focusing on the types and preference of use of retrospective cohesive mechanisms employed in premise-conclusion metatext to label the premise from which the upcoming conclusion is to be drawn. Variability is searched for in different aspects of the label arriving at the following conclusions: 1) As regards the extent to which authors make explicit reference to the stretch of discourse from which the upcoming conclusion is to be drawn, Spanish academics show a greater tendency towards the use of fuzzy labels; 2) The overall distribution of the lexical range of labels is also different, English showing a greater tendency towards the use of non-metalinguistic labels. Retrospective labels have a greater tendency to add interpersonal meanings in English both 3) through the label itself and 4) through its modification; 5) The various ways in which modifiers in retrospective labels add ideational meaning seem to be distributed differently.

Keywords: Academic discourse; Metatext; Premise-conclusion coherence relations; Retrospective labelling

1. Introduction

The idea that the rhetorical structures of texts in different languages might vary greatly, and that such variation should be taken into account in language teaching programs, has received considerable attention since it was first proposed by Kaplan (1966). The two principal questions raised by the Kaplan hypothesis concern whether the imputed differences actually exist, and whether the difficulties with discourse structure experienced by second language learners are attributable to interference (or *negative transfer*) from the first language.

The present study deals with the first of these two questions, i.e. whether crosscultural differences actually exist in one aspect of rhetoric, namely *metatext*. The term metatext, or *metadiscourse*, is used to refer to “the linguistic material in texts, whether spoken or written, that does not add anything to the propositional content but that is intended to help the listener or reader organize, interpret, and evaluate the information given” (Crismore et al. 1993: 40). The present paper partially continues a tradition represented by studies such as Crismore et al. (1993), whose purpose was to investigate cultural (and gender) variations in the use of metadiscourse by student writers in the United States and Finland.

In previous research, the concept of metatext has not always referred to exactly the same type of phenomena. For example, Mauranen (1993) limits the notion of metatext to its text-organising role, which roughly corresponds to Halliday’s (1973) textual function. Mauranen leaves aside interactive elements such as expressions of the author’s attitudes and certainty, which would correspond more closely to Halliday’s (1973) interpersonal function. In other words, Mauranen (1993: 9) explores those metatextual elements which primarily serve the purpose of textual organisation such as connectors

(*as a result*), reviews (*so far we have assumed that...*), previews (*we show below that...*) and action markers (*the explanation is...*).

In her study, Mauranen (1993) explored cultural differences between texts written in English by Finnish and Anglo-American writers with respect to the use of metatext in papers from economic journals. Her results indicated that Anglo-American writers use more metatext than Finnish authors do. From these results, Mauranen argues that Anglo-American writers show more interest in guiding and orienting readers in the process of interpretation, and they make their presence felt in the text more explicitly than Finnish authors do when writing in English. This is taken to reflect a more reader-oriented attitude, a more positive notion of politeness, and a generally more explicit textual rhetoric. According to her interpretation, Finnish writers show a more negative kind of politeness and a greater tendency towards implicitness in their writing. She concludes that, although Finnish rhetorical strategies can be perceived as polite and persuasive in Finnish, their use may result in unintentionally inefficient rhetoric when transferred into English.

Like Mauranen (1993), the present study assumes that, despite the relative uniformity of research articles (RAs) imposed by the requirements of the genre, there may be intercultural variation in the rhetorical preferences of the Spanish and English writing cultures regarding the use of metatext in research articles on business and economics. The present study differs from Mauranen's in that it explores how academics from both cultures write in their L1s.

The specific goal of the study is to examine how Spanish and English writers present a claim by means of metatext in the particular rhetorical context of a premise-conclusion sequence, or *premise-conclusion intersentential coherence relation* (PQISR

henceforward, where PQ = premise-conclusion; and ISR = intersentential relation).

Consider the following example:

- (1) P {The average profitability of U.S. industry is higher than that in Japan and Germany, yet American shareholders have consistently achieved no better or lower returns than Japanese (and recently Germany shareholders)}. <> Q {There is thus no simple connection between average corporate returns on investment and long-term shareholder returns, as much conventional wisdom about shareholder value seems to suggest.} (Porter 1992)

In (1), the two semantic units of the PQISR are linked by the expression *thus*. Since this expression does not add anything to the propositional content of either one of the related semantic units, it can be considered as an example of PQ metatext (cf. Crismore et al 1993: 40). Its only function is to help the reader recognise that the previous discourse segment is functioning as a premise for the following segment, which will be interpreted as the conclusion. In other words, the function of *thus* is to indicate that there is a PQISR between the two related semantic units.

It is important to note that text connectives such as *thus* -or what Hyde (1990) terms *peripheral signals*-, are not the only devices for signalling premise-conclusion sequences. There are other strategies that may have different rhetorical effects in the development of argumentation. Let us consider another example:

- (2) The purpose of this section of the questionnaire was to determine more objectively the students' beliefs and views concerning the international accounting firms. As shown in the Appendix, the first question in the questionnaire asked students to rank their top three preferences for a position upon graduation from the university. The responses are shown in Table 1. P {The students indicated a substantial preference for a public accounting career with an international firm, i.e., 45.0%, consistent with the information gathered from interviews and classroom polls. Industrial accounting (22.1 %) and positions with smaller public accounting firms (14.5%) were a distant second and third respectively. The researchers expected, however, that students with a higher GPA would express greater preference than the general accounting student body. To examine for this possibility, an honors section requiring a 3.5 GPA or above was polled. Out of a possible 35 students, 32 (91.4%) stated a preference for a position with an international accounting firm.} <> **These results would appear to indicate** Q {the expected strong socialisation of all students toward the international accounting firms and the

overwhelming attraction and socialisation of the best students toward these firms.} (Blank et al. 1991)

In (2) the PQ metatextual expression is the whole of the italicised segment: that is, *these results would appear to indicate*. This segment is equally considered to be a case of premise-conclusion metatext since it adds no propositional content to any of the related semantic units, P and Q. Its main function is to help the reader to appreciate how the two segments of the discourse are connected to one another. In this case, the preceding fragment of text is interpreted as the *premise* for the *conclusion* expressed in the second segment, where the PQISR expression is to be found.¹

Examples one and two are both used to express basically the same conceptual category, a premise-conclusion sequence. This refers to the informational surplus (i.e. premise and conclusion) that this coherence relation affords the interpretation of the related discourse segments above and beyond the semantic interpretation that they would receive if they were isolated.

However, when we compare these two manifestations of a single conceptual category, we realise that their rhetorical effect is different. For example, in (1) the writer assumes that the reader is able to figure out the exact extent of the fragment of discourse from which a conclusion is going to be drawn. That is, there is no explicit item in the metatextual expression *thus* that signals or makes explicit reference to the stretch of discourse from which the upcoming conclusion is to be drawn. In (2), on the other hand, the choice of the metatextual expression indicates a greater concern for guiding the reader through the reading process by indicating precisely that the conclusion will be drawn from a preceding fragment of discourse as the relevant premise. In other words, there is an explicit anaphoric reference by means of the retrospective label *these results* to the stretch

¹ In cases like this one, the term *PQISR signal* is reserved to refer more precisely to the element of the whole metatextual expression that plausibly has the most responsibility in the generation of the inferential relation. In example (1), the signal will be the actual expression *thus*. In example (2), the most plausible signal will be the verb *indicate*.

of discourse from which the upcoming conclusion is to be drawn. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the conclusion drawn in (1) is presented with a great degree of confidence by means of the connective *thus*, whereas in (2) the degree of confidence in expressing the conclusion is hedged by means of *would appear to*.

The present study tries to determine the extent to which English and Spanish authors of research articles on business and economics encapsulate, or make explicit reference to, the stretch of discourse from which the upcoming conclusion is to be drawn by means of PQ metatext, and whether this might be a source of variation between the two languages compared.

2. The study

2.1. The data

The present contrastive study has made use of a parallel corpus consisting of research articles (RAs) on business and economics, 36 in English and 36 in Spanish. The texts were drawn following conventional sampling procedures. Such a corpus was based on the appreciation that the texts in the two independent collections had been created under similar circumstances in the two languages/writing cultures. However, the study felt the need of further levels of delicacy for the definition of similarity constraints than simply belonging to the same subgenre (cf. Moreno 1997, 1998; Connor & Moreno forthcoming). This was considered crucial because researchers examining or comparing texts must be sure that they are comparing the same type of text across cultures (cf. Grabe 1987).

In this respect, the corpus design was very elaborate so as to control for those contextual factors that might influence the shape of PQ metatext (dependent variable). Otherwise, the differences that might be obtained after the cross-linguistic comparison

could be attributed to contextual factors other than the factor that was really being investigated, i.e. the language/writing culture (independent variable). Thus, a corpus of texts was chosen in each language that met the following prototypical features: text form = *scientific exposition*; subgenre = *research article*; subject-matter, or topic = *business and economics* (directly related to specific academic disciplines), level of expertise = *expert writer*; global superstructure = *Introduction-Procedure-Discussion*, *Problem-Analysis-Solution*; *Situation-Explanation*; *Situation-Analysis-Forecast* and *Problem-Solution-Evaluation* (cf. Connor and Moreno forthcoming, for a discussion of the importance of careful comparable corpora designs).

The analysis reported here affects a total of 915 cases of retrospective PQ metatext: 625 in English and 290 in Spanish. The total number of sentences analysed is 10,300 in English and 6,000 in Spanish. This means that 6.07% sentences in English and 4.83% cases in Spanish present an explicit retrospective PQISR.

2.2. Research Questions

Five research questions were posed in the present study:

- 1) To which extent do English and Spanish authors of research articles on business and economics make explicit reference to the stretch of discourse from which the upcoming conclusion is to be drawn by means of PQ metatext? By choosing which information to label, writers organise the text. This shows their concern for guiding their readers in the reading process.
- 2) To what extent does the lexical range of the retrospective labels used in PQ metatext by Spanish and English academics differ? These choices reflect the writer's perceptions, either of real world events or actions or of the text itself. By choosing labels writers incorporate meanings therein.

- 3) To what extent does the choice of evaluative PQ retrospective head nouns differ between Spanish and English? The choice of these labels indicate the way in which the writer chooses to interpret the force of the previously-stated proposition(s) from which s/he is about to draw conclusions.
- 4) To what extent does the type of modification occurring within the structure of the nominal group in retrospective PQ labels differ between Spanish and English?
- 5) To what extent do the two writing cultures differ in relation to the various ways in which modifiers in a PQ label add ideational meaning?

3. Methods of PQ retrospective labelling analysis

As Winter (1992) notes, labels are inherently unspecific nominal elements whose specific meaning in the discourse needs to be precisely spelled out. When this meaning is spelled out, or lexicalised, in a previous clause or sentence, then the label is retrospective (cf. Winter 1982, 1992; Francis 1994; and Charles 2003). When this meaning is lexicalised in the following discourse, then the label is prospective (cf. Francis 1994; Sinclair 1993). Due to space limitations and their much greater frequency, the present study has focussed on retrospective labels.

The following linguistic criteria were considered in the development of the analysis system used in the present study: degree of explicitness, lexical range, addition of evaluation, type of modification, and type of ideational meaning.

3.1. Degree of explicitness in PQ retrospective labels

The degree of explicitness of retrospective labels in making reference to previous discourse from which to derive the conclusion(s) may vary from being explicit to being fuzzy or implicit.

3.1.1. Explicit PQ retrospective labels

Typical explicit labels whose specific meaning is found in previously-stated arguments (or premises) are *deictic acts*, such as *these circumstances* or *these results*.

According to Francis (1994: 86):

The major criterion for identifying an anaphorically cohesive nominal group as a retrospective label is that there is no single nominal group to which it refers: it is not a repetition or a ‘synonym’ of any preceding element. Instead, it is presented as equivalent to the clause or clauses it replaces, while naming them from the first time. The label indicates to the reader exactly how that stretch of discourse is to be interpreted, and this provides the frame of reference within which the subsequent argument is developed.

Thus, in example (2) the retrospective label *these results* indicates that the whole stretch of discourse in brackets should be interpreted as *results*, which will be taken as support for the upcoming conclusion. By choosing which information to label the writer has organised the text (cf. Charles 2003: 318) thereby making the reading task easier for the reader.

Let us consider other examples both from the English and the Spanish corpus where the PQ signal uses a variety of grammatical structures:

English: **These circumstances** suggest that..., the conclusion of **the model** is that..., **the result showing**...might be indicative of..., as shown in **table 4**...

Spanish: Podemos interpretar **este hecho** como... (**this fact** may be interpreted as’), quizá la conclusion más destacable de **la encuesta realizada** es... (‘perhaps the most important conclusion from **the survey carried out** is’), **estos datos**

son indicativos de... (**these data** are indicative of'), como puede apreciarse en la figura 6... ('as can be seen in figure 6').

3.1.2. Fuzzy PQ retrospective labels

By contrast, there are a number of PQ expressions where the deictic element is made explicit by just a pro-form, such as *this* and *all this* in English, or *esto/s* ('this/these'), *eso* ('that'), *ello* ('it'), *aquí* ('there') and *lo cual* ('which') in Spanish. Let us consider the following examples:

English: **This** means that..., **all this** suggests that..., **this** is one indication of...,

Spanish: Esto significa que... ('this means that'), de ello parece deducirse... ('from **it**, it seems to be inferred'), dicho esto,... ('having said **this**'), según esto,... ('on **this** basis'), por todo ello... ('for **all this**').

As can be seen in all these cases, although there is a retrospective item, its reference is not always very clear. The effect of this is that the reader does not know exactly which stretch of discourse the retrospective item refers to. But, as Francis (1994: 88) puts it, "the precise extent of the stretch to be sectioned off may not matter: it is the shift in direction signalled by the label and its immediate environment which is of crucial importance for the development of the discourse."

3.1.3. Implicit PQ retrospective labels

Finally, there is one important group of PQ expressions where the retrospective referential item is left implicit, leaving the reader to decide which stretch of the previous discourse the conclusion is to be drawn from. Though it is usually understood that this is found in the immediately preceding discourse, the reader is left unaided to figure out the

exact extent of that stretch. This is the case of most conjuncts both in English and Spanish.

In most conjuncts the retrospective element tends to be implicit since it is either ellipped, as in *as a consequence*² / *como consecuencia* ('as a consequence'), or reminiscent in the conjunctive expression itself, as in *therefore* / *por tanto* ('thus/therefore').

But conjuncts are not the only case. There is also a set of integrated PQ metatextual expressions where the retrospective item is left totally implicit (*). Let us consider some examples where the PQ signal is:

English: We can only conclude (*) that...; The main implication (*) is that...

Spanish: Se observa (*) claramente que... ('it can be clearly seen (*) that'), si alguna conclusion (*) puede aparecer como evidente es que... ('if one conclusion (*) seems clear, it is that').

3.2. *Lexical range of PQ retrospective labels*

Another likely source of variation between the two languages compared may have to do with the lexical range of the retrospective labels used in PQ metatext. Of course, the list of nominal-group heads that may function in this way is open-ended, which may make a cross-cultural comparison very difficult. As Widdowson (1983: 92) points out, this type of *procedural* vocabulary – which structures and supports the more specific, field-related vocabulary of academic texts – consists of “words of a wide indexical range...useful for negotiating the conveyance of more specific concepts...” It is possible, however, to establish some kind of comparison in relation to the type of label that each case of retrospective nominal group embodies. The most widely referred-to

² of a previously-stated proposition

distinction found in the literature is that proposed by Francis (1994). Within the category of labels Francis (1994: 83) distinguishes a set of head nouns she calls *metalinguistic* from other non-metalinguistic or more general category head nouns.

Metalinguistic labels:

...are nominal groups which talk about a stretch of discourse as a linguistic act, labelling it as, say, an argument, a point, or a statement. In other words, they are labels for stages of an argument, developed in and through the discourse itself as the writer presents and assesses his/her own propositions and those of other sources. Unlike, say, problems and issues, which exist in the world outside discourse, they are ad hoc characterisations of the language behaviour being carried out in the text.

Within metalinguistic labels, Francis (1994: 90) further distinguishes between various subgroups of head nouns that sometimes overlap: illocutionary nouns, language activity nouns, mental process nouns and text nouns. Due to the nature of the genre of texts analysed in the present paper, research articles on business and economics, I have modified Francis's taxonomy. The system includes two major categories: non-metalinguistic nouns and metalinguistic nouns. The examples below are taken from the present corpus.

3.2.1 Non-metalinguistic nouns, or general category nouns

English: **These circumstances** suggest that..., **the projects submitted** clearly represent evidence against..., **this behaviour** is consistent with..., because of **this lack of statistical significance**...

Spanish: Podemos interpretar este hecho como... ('**this fact** may be interpreted as')

3.2.2. Metalinguistic nouns

1. Visual unit noun:

English: **Table 1** shows that..., as shown in **table 4**

Spanish: En el cuadro 7 se observa que... ('**table 7** shows that'), como puede apreciarse en **la figura 6...** ('as can be seen in **figure 6**'), aunque en la figura anterior no aparecen de forma explícita, es fácilmente deducible que... ('though they are not shown explicitly in **the previous figure**, it is easy to deduce that'),

2. Textual unit noun:

English: **The preceding subsection** showed that...

Spanish: Tal y como se demostró en el apartado 2.5...., ('as shown in **section 2.5.**'), una consecuencia de la proposición 1 es que... ('a consequence of **proposition 1** is')

3. Mental process noun:

English: From **the post hoc analysis**,

Spanish: Las principales conclusiones que se han extraído de este análisis preliminar demuestran... ('the main conclusions drawn from **this preliminary analysis** demonstrate'), como se puede apreciar del análisis realizado ('as **the analysis carried out** shows')

4. Language activity noun/discourse function noun:

English: **These observations** show that..., based on **these observations...**

Spanish: De lo expuesto hasta ahora se extrae que ('from **what has been discussed so far** it follows that'), por dicho motivo ('for **this reason**')

5. Research-related noun:

English: **The t-test statistics** clearly indicate..., the conclusion of **the model** is that..., **the result showing**...might be indicative of..., from **this research literature**...

Spanish: **Los resultados empíricos del análisis** sugieren que... (‘**the empirical results from the analysis** suggest that’), quizá la conclusión más destacable de la encuesta realizada es... (‘perhaps the most important conclusion from **the survey carried out** is’), **estos datos** son indicativos de... (‘**these data** are indicative of’), dados estos resultados... (‘from **these results**’).

As Charles (2003: 318) notes, the use of a retrospective label also involves a choice of the way in which the information to be encapsulated is labelled:

These choices reflect the writer’s perceptions, either of real world events or actions (using non-metalinguistic head nouns) or of the text itself (using metalinguistic head nouns). By choosing which information to label, writers organise the text and by choosing the label itself, they incorporate their meaning therein.

3.3. Evaluative PQ retrospective labels

As Francis (1994) points out, retrospective labels are presented as given and, therefore, as synonymous with their preceding clause(s), or text fragments). However, “such synonymy is a construct, a resource which the writer draws upon to serve the purposes of his argument” (Francis 1994: 93). In the PQ metatext that occurred in the analysed scientific corpora, labels – which are normally the theme of the new sentence – usually have ideational meaning. They serve to indicate that the rheme of the new sentence (i.e. the conclusion) will be about the extended referent encapsulated by the label (i.e. the referent that is now interpreted as the premise in the argumentation). In a

few cases, though, labels sometimes have interpersonal meanings, such as in the following schematic examples:

P. <> Such an **error** implies that Q.

P. <> Because of these **inconsistencies** Q.

P. <> Esta **discriminación** no quiere decir ni mucho menos Q.

(‘P. <> This **discrimination** does not mean Q at all.’)

In the examples above, the interpersonal meanings conveyed by labels such as *error* and *inconsistencias* in English or *discriminación* in Spanish may, in fact, add something new to the argument by signalling the writer’s evaluation of the premises which they encapsulate. That is to say, the choice of these labels indicates the way in which the writer chooses to interpret the force of the previously-stated proposition(s) from which s/he is about to draw conclusions, either as an error, an inconsistency or a discrimination.

3.4. Modification in PQ retrospective labelling

In a detailed analysis of PQ metatext, various types of nominal groups have been identified functioning as labels:

1. Just a pronoun:

English: This, they and it in lexical chains.³

Spanish: Esto (‘this’), ello (‘it’) and él (‘him’), ellas (‘them’) in lexical chains.

2. A modified pronoun:

English: All this

Spanish: Todo esto/ello (‘all this’).

3. A determiner + a lexical item:

³ Cf. Moreno (2003: 127) for a distinction between true encapsulation and point-to-point cohesion and a reconsideration of the status of some of the latter cohesive items.

English: This combination, the figure, such cross-referencing, our analysis, these considerations, this argument, these findings

Spanish: Este hecho ('this fact'), estos gráficos ('these graphs') lo anterior ('what has been mentioned before'), dicho motivo ('such a reason'), estos resultados ('these results').

4. A determiner + a modified lexical item:

English: The perspective outlined above, the cartoon in fig 1, the preceding subsection, the factor analysis, the three examples in this section, the other results in table V

Spanish: Estos dos aspectos que pudieran... ('these two aspects that might'), el cuadro 2 ('table 2'), el apartado 2.5. ('section 2.5. '), el análisis realizado ('the analysis carried out'), la exposición desarrollada hasta el momento ('what has been discussed so far'), los resultados obtenidos en la sección 3 ('the results obtained in section 3').

5. A modified lexical item:

English: Voluntary membership in the peer review section of the AICPA, table 3, similar reason, evidence presented in the previous section.⁴

The area that I speculate might represent another source of cultural variation between the two languages may be related to the type of modification that occurs within the structure of the nominal group in anaphoric labels within PQ metatext, and the way in which the nominal head is modified. As Francis (1994: 84) rightly notes, "the cohesiveness of labels is a function of the whole nominal group, not the head noun."

Thus it is also relevant to look contrastively at the various types of modification of the

⁴ It is interesting to note that only cases in English have been registered in this group, so this is an obvious area of inequivalence between the two languages compared. However, this difference can be explained due to the requirement in Spanish for this type of modified lexical noun to be preceded by a determiner. So the reason for this inequivalence has more to do with the internal configuration of the structure of the nominal group in each language than with culture-bound peculiarities.

head noun in the nominal groups above (types 2 and 4), and to see what they contribute to the encapsulating roles of the labels in which they are used. Since there are only two cases of type 2 in each language, let us restrict the discussion mainly to type 4.

As Francis (1994: 95) points out, “like the head nouns of labels, their modifiers may have ideational, interpersonal, and textual meaning.” Let us consider each of these in turn.

3.4.1. Ideational meaning of modifiers in PQ retrospective labelling

Modifiers whose function is primarily ideational “add to the meaning of the head noun by classifying or defining it, making its participant role more explicit” (Francis 1994: 95). Various ways have been identified that may contribute to a better definition and classification the thing referred to by the head noun. The options in the present corpora are quite distinct from the possibilities reported in Francis (1994: 95), which indicate that we are dealing with a different genre. Modification of the head noun in anaphoric premise-conclusion metatext may have the following functions:

0. Indicating the dimension of the thing referred to:

English: The **relatively large** degree of hardware differentiation also means...

1. Indicating the quantity of the thing referred to:

English: The **three** examples in this section show...

Spanish: Estos **dos** aspectos...es lo único que teóricamente justifica... (‘these **two** aspects are the only thing that theoretically justify’)

2. Indicating the relative location of the thing referred to:

English: The **preceding** subsection showed that...

Spanish: Como se ha reflejado en el cuadro **de la página anterior**... (‘as can be seen in the table **on the preceding page**’)

3. Indicating the precise location of the thing referred to:

English: The results displayed **in table 2** demonstrate that...

Spanish: A partir de los resultados obtenidos en la sección 3... ('from the results obtained **in section 3**')

4. Identifying precisely the thing referred to:

Spanish: Según se muestra en la figura 4...('as figure 4 shows'), Tal y como se demostró en el apartado 2.5...('as demonstrated in section 2.5)

5. Indicating the class of the thing referred to:

English: The **empirical** evidence is not consistent with...

Spanish: Los resultados empíricos del análisis sugieren que... ('the **empirical** results from the analysis suggest that')

3.4.2. *Interpersonal meaning of modifiers in PQ retrospective labelling*

Modifiers whose function is primarily interpersonal serve to convey the writer's attitude towards the thing referred to. The present corpora, however, have shown very few cases of this phenomenon in the retrospective labelling taking place in PQ metatext. In fact, only five cases have manifested in the English corpus. By examining these five cases, it is possible to distinguish two possible ways in which interpersonal meaning may be added to the head noun by means of a modifier. Let us consider one example of each:

- (3) The null form of the hypothesis is that experience, personal responsibility, and the loan evaluation judgment are not related. The hypothesis of no relationship was rejected ($p < 0.03$), and it is assumed that there is a **significant** interaction of personal responsibility, the loan evaluation judgment, and experience. That is, different loan evaluation judgments are made as the levels of personal

responsibility and experience vary. The **significant** interaction *indicates* a significant main effect of personal responsibility, a significant main effect of experience, and that the lower order two-way interactions are significant. (Jeffery 1992)

In this case, the “interaction of personal responsibility, the loan evaluation judgment, and experience” is evaluated as *significant*. However, this attitude, which in academic discourse tends to be presented as necessarily objective, has already been indicated in a previous sentence. Thus the function of the modifier is simply to repeat it.

(4) Expanding worldwide competition, fragmenting markets, and emerging technologies mean that established firms must renew themselves continually, by transforming stagnant businesses and by creating new wealth through new combinations of resources (Guth and Ginsberg, 1990). Product innovation is a primary means of corporate renewal. Through product innovation firms can maintain or build market share in both mature and new businesses (Kerin, Mahajan and Varadarajan, 1990), and also discover new synergies among their resources (Burgelman, 1983). Despite the importance of product innovation, research shows that established firms have difficulty developing and marketing commercially viable new products (Cooper and Kleinschmidt, 1986; Zirger and Maidique, 1990; Dougherty and Heller, 1991). These **persistent** problems *suggest that* we do not have an adequate understanding of how to organize for product innovation, and thus how to organize for corporate renewal. (Dougherty 1992)

Although the nominal group *these persistent problems* acts as a single cohesive unit, the evaluation conveyed by the modifier *persistent* is slipped in as part of the given information, though it is in fact a new indication of the writer’s attitude towards the

issue. So in this case, the modifier encodes interpersonal meaning quite unequivocally: it evaluates the proposition encapsulated by the label *problems*.

3.4.3. Textual meaning of modifiers in PQ retrospective labelling

There has only been one case in English whereby the modifier has contributed directly to the organisational role of the label (cf. Francis 1994: 98). Let us consider it:

- (5) Q1 {Organization rewards should be related to rate of improvement in performance (rather than level of performance),} <> P1 {as such incentive systems will naturally attract and motivate the type of personality that is never satisfied with the status quo.} The theory of competitive rationality also suggests that Q2 {individual employees should receive special rewards for insights and ideas that lead to innovations in product design quality or cost savings}, but Q3 {group profit-sharing is also needed} P2 {to encourage interdependence and efficient implementation.} For similar reasons, Q4 {paying chief executives huge salaries may encourage persons who aspire to be a CEO, but can have a disastrous effect on organization morale, cooperation, initiative, implementation, and adaptability.} (Dickson 1992)

In this example, the modifier *similar* helps the head noun *reasons* to order the message with respect to previous discourse and signal the relationship between the two chunks. On the one hand, it indicates that another conclusion is going to be drawn. On the other hand, it tells the reader that the reason for drawing such a conclusion is more or less the same to those given for drawing previously-stated claims.

4. Results

The results obtained will be reported in relation to each research question.

4.1 Degree of explicitness of PQ retrospective labels

The first research question dealt with the use of explicit vs. fuzzy vs. implicit retrospective labels in the English and Spanish articles. As seen in Table 1, application of the Pearson's chi-2 test reveals that the difference obtained between the two overall distributions of these three possibilities of labels is statistically significant for $p < 0.05$ ($p = 0.000$) between the two languages compared.

Table 1
Explicit vs. Fuzzy vs. implicit PQ retrospective labels

Category	(p=0.000)	English		Spanish	
		n	%	n	%
Explicit		209	33.44%	85	29.31%
	Noun	201	96.17%	83	97.65%
	Pro-noun	8	3.98%	2	2.41%
Implicit		374	59.84%	148	51.03%
Fuzzy		42	6.72%	57	19.66%
Total		625	100.00%	290	100.00%

On the one hand, both English (59.84%) and Spanish (51.03%) seem to show a greater preference toward the use of implicit labels in retrospective premise-conclusion metatext. On the other hand, a remarkable difference lies in a greater preference of Spanish towards the use of fuzzy labels (19.66%) as compared to English (6.72%) in this particular genre.

4.2. Lexical range of PQ retrospective labels

Let us now focus our attention on those retrospective labels occurred in PQ metatext whereby the label is made explicit by a head noun (cf. table 1: $n = 201$ in English vs. $n = 83$ in Spanish). It is interesting to note that the overall distribution of the different types of noun shows statistically significant differences ($p = 0.002$) between English and Spanish (see table 2).

Table 2
Lexical range of PQ retrospective labels

Category	(p=0.002)		English		Spanish	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
General noun	24	11.94%	5	6.02%		
Visual unit noun	39	19.40%	22	26.51%		
Textual unit noun	3	1.49%	7	8.43%		
Mental process noun	6	2.99%	7	8.43%		
Language activity + discourse function noun	8	3.98%	6	7.23%		
Research-related noun	121	60.20%	36	43.37%		
Total	201	100.00%	83	100.00%		

In both languages there is a greater tendency towards the use of research-related nouns (60.20% in English, 43.37% in Spanish), but this tendency is greater in English. This is followed by the use of visual unit nouns (19.40% in English, 26.51% in Spanish), a tendency that is greater in Spanish. Another interesting difference is the greater tendency for English to use general category (i.e. non-metalinguistic) nouns as labels.

4.3. Evaluative PQ retrospective labels

Let us now turn our attention to those non-metalinguistic or general nouns found in retrospective labels within PQ metatext (cf. table 2: n=24 in English, n=5 in Spanish).

Table 3
Evaluative PQ retrospective labels

Category	(p=0.521)		English		Spanish	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Non-evaluative label	16	66.67%	4	80.00%		
Evaluative label	8	33.33%	1	20.00%		
Total	24	100.00%	5	100.00%		

Although the differences are not statistically significant (p=0.521), there seems to be a greater tendency for English (33.3%) to add interpersonal meanings to their encapsulating labels than Spanish (20%).

4.4. Modification in PQ retrospective labelling

Let us now examine those retrospective labels with a *deictic + modified lexical item* structure.

Modifiers may be chosen to add ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings. Modifiers whose function is primarily ideational add to the meaning of the head noun by classifying or defining it, thus making its participant role more explicit. Modifiers whose function is primarily interpersonal serve to convey the writer's attitude towards the thing referred to. Modifiers with a textual function contribute directly to the organisational role of labels.

Table 4
Modification in PQ retrospective labelling with deictic + modified lexical item structure

Category	English		Spanish	
	n	%	n	%
Ideational	51	89.47%	58	100.00%
Interpersonal	5	8.77%	0	0.00%
Textual	1	1.75%	0	0.00%
Total	57	100.00%	58	100.00%

In both languages, the type of modification used is mainly ideational, especially in Spanish where this appears to be the only choice. In English, 8.77% of modifiers add interpersonal meanings to the label, and 1.75% of modifiers add textual meanings, whereas these strategies have proven to be inexistent in Spanish.

4.5. Ideational meaning of modifiers in PQ retrospective labelling

Let us now focus on the larger group of retrospective PQ labels where the modifier is used to add ideational meaning.

Table 5
Ideational meaning of modifiers in PQ retrospective labelling

Category	English		Spanish		
	(p=0.000)	n	%	n	%
Indicating the dimension of the thing referred to		2	3.92%	0	0.00%
Indicating the quantity of things referred to		2	3.92%	1	1.72%
Indicating the relative location of the thing referred to		9	17.65%	13	22.41%
Indicating the precise location of the thing referred to		16	31.37%	5	8.62%
Identifying precisely the thing referred to		0	0.00%	23	39.66%
Indicating the class of the thing referred to		22	43.14%	16	27.59%
Total		51	100.00%	58	100.00%

Table 5 reveals statistically significant differences in the distribution of strategies used to make the participant role of the referent referred to by the label more explicit (p=0.000). Whereas in English the three most common strategies are 1) indicating the class of thing referred to (43.14%), 2) indicating the precise location of the thing referred to (31.37%), and 3) indicating the relative location of the thing referred to (17.65%); in Spanish identifying precisely the thing referred to (39.66%) is the most common strategy – which is nonexistent in English – followed by indicating the class of thing referred to (27.59%) and indicating the relative location of the thing referred to (22.41%).

5. Summary and conclusions

The present study aimed at comparing and contrasting the types and preferred uses of the retrospective mechanisms employed by the English and Spanish writing cultures to link the two members of the intersentential premise-conclusion sequence in a parallel corpus of 72 Research Articles on Business and Economics. It found that both English and Spanish academics tend to use implicit labels in retrospective premise-conclusion metatext with greater frequency. This greater similarity might be interpreted as a general assumption on the part of the writer that the reader is able to section off from

the preceding text the relevant arguments in order to accept the conclusion announced and presented immediately afterwards with no objection. This persuasive strategy of the writer may have to do with creating a sense of solidarity with the audience by presupposing that they are sufficiently involved in the reading process, so much so that they do not need to be spelled out which arguments are relevant for a given conclusion to be drawn and shared. This, of course, has the risk that if readers are not sufficiently concentrated they may have to go back over the preceding text again in the search for the relevant argument(s). It also assumes that readers and writer(s) share a similar theoretical framework, whose assumptions should allow them to arrive at similar conclusions. Otherwise, the attempted persuasive strategy would fail.

The present study also found that Spanish academics showed a tendency towards the use of fuzzy labels as compared to English. As Francis (1994) notes in relation to English, this strategy may be used by writers “to creative or persuasive effect, perhaps providing scope for different interpretations, or blurring the lines of specious or spurious arguments” (Francis 1994: 88). This might also be applicable to Spanish writers, but with a higher incidence.

Both English and Spanish showed a greater tendency towards the use of research-related nouns, followed by the use of visual unit nouns in order to refer back to the premise from which the conclusion is drawn. The distribution of these tendencies, however, differs. It is difficult to interpret these results in relation to culture-bound peculiarities because both types of labelling (i.e. use of research-related nouns and visual unit nouns) might be strategies for authors to distance themselves from their interpretation of data (cf. Moreno 1998: 575). The use of such labels might give the impression that it is the text that is speaking for itself, and the writer is just an instrument spelling out the interpretation process. Labelling with visual unit nouns very

much depends on whether authors have first presented results in the form of a visual unit.

English showed a greater tendency towards the use of general category nouns, or non-metalinguistic labels, as compared to Spanish. This might have to do with the fact that these labels give writers a better chance to create a stance, i.e. to incorporate interpersonal meanings, in their interpretation of data from which to draw conclusions (cf. results from Tables 3 & 4), whereas metalinguistic labels are more likely to be added ideational meanings (cf. Charles 2003). However, an analysis of larger corpora would be needed to confirm this suggestion.

It seems that English writer tend to add interpersonal meanings to their retrospective labels by means of evaluative head nouns to a greater degree than Spanish writers. Future interpretation must wait until larger corpora are analysed, since, at this time, the data are too scarce to allow for reliable conclusions.

Both languages mainly use the ideational type of modification. This tendency is indicative of a great interest in clearly and precisely classifying and defining the type of premise from which authors are drawing conclusions. In English, a small proportion of modifiers add interpersonal and textual meanings to the label, whereas these strategies have proven to be nonexistent in Spanish. Nonetheless, further research with much larger corpora would be necessary to confirm this tendency.

There are different ways in which modifiers in a PQ label add ideational meaning. The two writing cultures differ in the distribution of strategies used to make the participant role of the referent more explicit. Further qualitative research should attempt to investigate the reasons for authors to use the different strategies.

With the present study, I have gone no further than calculating the values of similarity or disparity which characterise the linguistic performance of native speakers of Spanish

and English within the particular rhetorical context of the research article with respect to the types and preferred uses of retrospective labels in premise-conclusion metatext. The path is now cleared for contrastive studies that wish to explore the origins of the phenomenon of linguistic transfer.

Two other possible uses of the results obtained are found in fields such as English for academic purposes and translation. For example, if Spanish academics wishing to publish in English were made aware of the great similarities in certain areas – and the differences in others – of labelling their premises in a premise-conclusion sequence, we would be placing them at a great advantage. It would only be a matter of providing exposure to and practice with equivalent labels available in English to the expressions they would have used in their own language, paying special attention to the degree of explicitness with which the premises are referred to in premise-conclusion metatext, the type of label chosen, and the type of meanings added to and by the label itself in each language. In the field of translation, the results obtained in the present study could be useful in a similar way. Given a retrospective label of a given degree of explicitness, which incorporates such and such meanings in the source language, they could help translators to predict the type of expression that would have plausibly been used in the target language.

Acknowledgements

The present study is part of a research project financed by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Technology -Plan Nacional de I+D+I (2000-2003) Ref: BFF2001-0112-, entitled *Contrastive Analysis and Specialised English-Spanish translation: Applications and Tools (ACTRES)*.

Appendix A: Sources of examples

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