
This is the **published version** of the bachelor thesis:

Useletí Clapés, Marina; Oliver del Olmo, Sonia, dir. Contrastive Studies : Strategies to Mitigate or Intensify Criticism in Catalan and English Book Reviews. 2016. 43 pag. (801 Grau en Estudis Anglesos)

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**Contrastive Studies: Strategies to Mitigate or Intensify Criticism in
Catalan and English Book Reviews**

TREBALL DE FI DE GRAU

Grau en estudis anglesos

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June 2016



Acknowledgments

First, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr Sònia Oliver del Olmo, for guiding me through this process of creating my TFG and giving me her expert advice. It has been a long and difficult task which Sònia has made possible. She has always encouraged me to do my best with the research and helped me when I needed it.

I would also like to express gratitude to Dr David Owen and Dr Ramon Panyella for providing me with their expertise and knowledge of English and Catalan Linguistics and Literature respectively. They very kindly agreed to be interviewed and gave me their opinion on the topic of my TFG, and their answers have been very useful to complement the results of my TFG.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents and my friends for always giving me their unconditional support and relying in my capacities to achieve everything I set myself to do.

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Abstract

Contrastive studies, according to Connor (1996), is the field of research which compares two languages to find out similarities and differences across languages and cultures. As English has become the lingua Franca, many non-native scholars are trying to publish their work in English. And despite mastering this foreign language, they do not manage to write like a native scholar. For that reason, the purpose of this study is to analyse criticism across languages (English and Catalan) in the same academic genre (book reviews) and how it is expressed through sociopragmatic phenomenon, such as hedges and boosters. Our results may show a pattern of frequency of use and type of criticism made, and this will allow us to give advice or help non-native scholars write book reviews in English L2. The corpus analysed is composed by 12 book reviews extracted from three linguistic academic journals in each language. For the analysis, a quantitative and a qualitative methodology have been used. It seems that English scholars tend to make negative comments, while Catalan scholars make more positive ones. In this sense the use of intensifying and mitigating strategies differs in both languages because book reviews are aimed at two different academic communities, which have their own academic conventions regarding this specific genre. Therefore, this study may be of interest for educators, L2 writers and scholars who are interested in knowing how criticism is expressed in English in order to be able to write a BR in this language as L2.

Key words: contrastive studies, applied linguistics, academic writing, Book Review (BR), criticism, hedges, boosters.

1. Theoretical Framework

1.1. English for Academic Purposes

English for specific purposes (ESP) is an approach to language teaching which emerged from the need of improving the teaching methodologies to teach English as a second language. There are three important factors that caused ESP to become very important: the high demand of English to suit particular needs, the development of the fields of Linguistics, and the development of educational psychology. It was noticed that language varies depending on the situation in which it is used. As Hutchinson and Waters (1987) state:

The idea was simple: if language varies from one situation of use to another, it should be possible to determine the features of specific situations and then make these features the basis of the learners' course. (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987:7)

This new approach to language teaching focuses on the learners' needs. A needs analysis is carried out to establish the features of the situation in which the language will be used and the learners' reasons for learning, thus the syllabus of the course is adapted to what the learners need to know about English language use. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) summarise the main idea of ESP the following way: "Tell me what you need English for and I will tell you the English that you need" became the guiding principle of ESP." (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987:8)

A further step in ESP is to focus not only on the language features, but also on the thinking process involved in language use and the interpretative strategies beyond language itself. The main objective of ESP is, then, to focus on the learners' needs and provide them with the English they need. The ultimate goal of this paper is to analyse the differences in Catalan and English BRs production in order to guide non-native scholars writing in English as a second language and improve their writing skills for this

specific academic genre. Therefore, it is important to analyse their needs and guide them on how to write a BR in English.

1.1.1. Academic Writing

According to Myers (1996), academic writing is the social activity that takes place within social institutions that require knowledge of specific social conventions, and the negotiation of boundaries between the writer and the reader. In this sense, participants of the academic world are expected to master the language-specific skills needed in their disciplines.

However, non-native speakers can have a high knowledge of syntax and vocabulary, but their text will be spotted easily as written by non-native writers due to the differences in cohesion and coherence of the text structure. In fact, this is not due to a lack of knowledge in the language or faulty thinking, but because each language and academic discipline has its own conventions, which are negotiated culturally. Book reviews are the specific academic genre in which this paper will focus on because they contain critical appraisal and assessing how native and non-native scholars write is the main focus of this study.

1.2. Genre Analysis: Book Reviews

A genre, according to Martin (1984), “is a staged, goal oriented, social process in which speakers engage as members of a culture.” (Martin, 1984:25) Genres are established through social conventions and are recognizable by members of a culture. The main concern of genre analysis is to analyze how people use language with each other in everyday social interaction. There are as many genres as there are social and purposeful activities recognized by members belonging to a specific culture. As a matter of fact,

genres are recognized by looking at the common linguistic features those genres possess.

Swales (1990) provides a definition of genre based on three main ideas:

1. “A genre is a class of communicative events in which language (and/or paralinguage) plays both a significant and indispensable role.” (Swales, 1990:45)
2. “The principal criterial feature that turns a collection of communicative events into a genre is some shared set of communicative purposes.” (Swales, 1990:46)
3. “Exemplars or instances of genres vary in the prototypicality.” (Swales, 1990:49) For example, a text belonging to a specific genre may only share a few characteristic features, making the text more difficult to identify with the genre.

At this point, we would like to mention that Book Reviews (BRs) constitute an important genre in the academic community because BRs describe, contextualize, interpret, analyse and evaluate a valuable work made by a scholar in order to introduce that new work to the readers. In the case of academic BRs, the focus is on the argument of the book it is being reviewed in order to evaluate it positively or negatively.

BRs have a general structure which consists of an introduction, body and a conclusion. In the introduction, one finds the background information of the book and the author; in the body, one finds an outline of the book and the positive or negative comments; and the conclusion contains a final evaluation of the text. Despite BRs having a general structure, it may vary depending on the field of research –Linguistics – and on the language – Catalan and English –. In the following chart, there is a comparison of the structure of BRs in both languages extracted from two different websites.

Book Reviews Structure in both Languages	
English	Catalan
1. Introduction: background information of the book and author, context of the book and thesis of the author.	1.1.Heading: bibliography (author, year, title, volume, publication, etc.)
	1.2.Introduction: background information of the book (optional)
2. Outline of the book: summary of content and structure	2. Summary: summary of the content and structure
3. Analysis and evaluation: highlight parts of the book giving positive or negative comments	3. Analysis and criticism: positive or negative evaluation of the text. It is the most important part.
4. Conclusion: summary, final evaluation of the text and possibility to introduce new ideas related to the thesis.	4. Conclusion: summary of the criticism and suggestions of new content to take into account.

Table 1: book reviews structure adapted from writingcenter.unc.edu and xtec.cat.

Since we are comparing two languages (Catalan and English), our theoretical framework will include contrastive studies which is dealt with in the following section.

1.3. Contrastive Studies

Contrastive Studies, according to Connor (1996), is the field of research that studies the composition of second language writers in order to identify the problems that they have due to their first language influence. Language is influenced by culture, which is why each language has its own writing conventions.

However, English has become the *lingua franca* which is used in specific genres by writers who do not have English as a mother tongue and aim to publish or do research internationally. Although the non-native writer's level of English may be excellent, the L1 culture and writing conventions may perceive

“differences” in the written production, and thus, misunderstandings may arise within the two communities.

Connor (1996), following Kaplan’s ideas that languages have their unique linguistic conventions and these may interfere in second language writing and that it is necessary to learn the logical system of languages, goes beyond this traditional approach and presents new directions in Contrastive Rhetoric (CR). She has devotedly studied the importance of culture and language conventions of the L1 that may cause problems to non-native speakers writing in an L2. In her book, she presents seven different CR theories related to second language writing and suggests practical implications for teachers and researchers who have to write in a second language.

As Hyland (2005) points out, *metadiscourse* is a social act in which the writer communicates with the reader, and both negotiate meaning in order to facilitate communication. Social acts are not neutral because they are influenced by the interests, positions, perspectives and values of the people who participate in the social acts. This is related to the idea that it is important to instruct non-native speakers to be able to communicate with readers from a different culture and convey their message successfully.

In order to help non-native scholars to write BRs, the focus of this study is on two key elements in criticism that help scholars to convey a specific meaning by mitigating or intensifying the intensity of the critical statement: hedges and boosters.

1.4. Focus of the Study: Hedges and Boosters

Hedges and boosters are sociopragmatic strategies, which can be words or phrases, used to mitigate or intensify the degree of criticism in academic texts. It is common to find

hedges frequently used in academic texts since it is preferred to be cautious when stating facts and showing knowledge. As Morales, Cassany and González-Peña (2007) state presenting Salager-Meyers (1994) claim:

La comunidad científica prefiere textos que proyecten modestia, humildad, precaución y honestidad (Salager-Meyer, 1994) Las estrategias de atenuación permiten alcanzar estos objetivos. (Morales, Cassany and González-Peña 2007:35)

On the one hand, hedges are sociopragmatic phenomena used to mitigate the degree of criticism. It can be done through the use of modal verbs, adjectives and adjectival phrases, adverbs and adverbial phrases, epistemic verbs, conditional, subjunctive, first person markers, impersonal forms, passive voice, depersonalisation, and using different pragmatic categories. An example that illustrates hedging in English is (1) “This **may** be an indication that the buffer layer relaxes the strain more efficiently” (Salager-Meyer, 2003 cited in Oliver 2004).

On the other hand, boosters are the opposite of hedges, that is to say, that boosters are used to intensify the degree of criticism or emphasise a claim. According to Hyland (1998), boosters “create and impression of certainty, conviction and assurance, and they can be used to instill trust and confidence in academic readers”. (Hyland, 1998:236-238). Thus, it can be done mainly through adjectives and adjectival phrases, adverbs and adverbial phrases, and some modal verbs and lexical verbs. A clear example of a booster is found in the following sentence: (2) “It echoes analysis **asserting** that English remains **deeply** permeated by Anglo epistemic assumptions”. (JPragBR1 1981).

2. Research Questions

In this paper, the author intends to establish the differences and similarities of Catalan and English BRs. The main objective of this paper is to compare BRs in Catalan and

English so as to analyse the use of hedges and boosters, which can be positive or negative, and establish a pattern. In this sense, the analysis will give us a view of the language conventions used to make criticism and will allow us to find a pattern cross-linguistically. To do so, we need to study the context of English and Catalan authors and the conventions these languages have when writing BRs. Once the norms and conventions of each language are known, we will be able to compare the different writing styles. Through this comparison, the challenges that Catalan native writers might face when they are writing in English as a second language will be pointed out.

At this point, we must mention that the analysis of the use of hedges and boosters will be carried out bearing these research questions in mind:

- 1- Does the use of hedges and boosters differ according to the L1 in use to make the critical statement more positive or negative?
- 2- Do Catalan and English texts use the same hedges and boosters typology?
- 3- Do hedges and boosters have different frequency of use in Catalan and English?

It will also be assumed that the use of hedges and boosters will differ in both languages. We expect English scholars to be more critical and direct when expressing their opinion, and Catalan reviewers to use more sociopragmatic strategies in BRs. Thus, the purpose of the use of hedges and boosters is expected to differ in both languages: English and Catalan.

In the following sections, the methodology used to carry out this study will be explained and the corpus selected will be described.

3. Methodology

The methods that will be used to analyse the different BRs will be mainly quantitative but also qualitative. The quantitative method will consist of different taxonomies which will be used to establish the frequency of use of hedges and boosters, and the differences and similarities (number of words, positive vs. negative criticism, structure, direct vs. indirect criticism).

In addition, for the qualitative method two professors specialized in Language and Literature will be interviewed about our preliminary results and provide insight into the most common “difficulties” encountered when analysing L2 BRs with the objective of complementing our findings.

3.1. Corpus

The languages chosen for this study are English and Catalan. The first is very important because it has become the *lingua franca* for international communication in different fields of academic research and is gaining more importance worldwide; and the latter has been selected instead of Spanish because there are fewer studies regarding Catalan than Spanish. In this sense, book reviews have been selected because their purpose is to analyse, evaluate and judge an academic discourse, thus, they constitute an important part of the culture of an academic community.

To this regard, the texts analysed will be BRs from three different prestigious journals belonging to the same fields of study in both languages: *Revista Tècnica de Política Lingüística*, *Revista de llengua i dret*, and *Els marges* in Catalan; and *Discourse Studies*, *English for Specific Purposes* and *Journal of Pragmatics* in English. Two Book Reviews with similar length will be selected from each journal making a total corpus of 12 samples to analyse. Our selection criteria for BRs will be the following: the BRs will be written by native speakers of

Catalan and English and will belong to three prestigious with high impact factor journals within the Linguistics discipline. The English corpus contains a total of 9.460 words, and the Catalan corpus a total of 8.534 words.

3.2. Quantitative methodology

The taxonomy used to classify the hedges and boosters found in the corpus has been adapted from Cassany (2007) and Oliver (2004). There will be used four categories to classify hedges which are: a) shields, b) approximators, c) author's personal doubt and involvement, and d) agentless strategies. In the following figures, one can see the realization of hedges with examples extracted from Oliver (2004), Hyland (2005) and Cassany (2007).

Classification of hedges		
Category	Linguistic items	Example
Shields	Modal verbs, semi-auxiliaries, probability adjectives, probability adverbs, and epistemic verbs.	should, to appear, to seem, probable, possible, probably, likely, to suggest, to speculate
Approximators	Adjectives and adverbs of quantity, degree, frequency and time.	quite, a little, somewhat, often, hardly ever, occasionally
Author's personal doubt and involvement	Conditional, and 1 st personal plural markers	could +infinitive, would+infinitive, was/were, we believe, from my point of view
Agentless strategies	Agentless passive, depersonalization, and impersonal structures.	It was avoided, they were performed, it is said, it is known, the study found that

Table 2. Classification of hedges based on Oliver (2004), Hyland (2005), and Cassany (2007).

Also, boosters will be classified using the following taxonomy extracted from Holmes (1988) which consists of five categories: a) modal verbs and auxiliaries, b) lexical verbs, c) adjectives, d) adverbs, and e) pronouns and determiners. Boosters can also be

classified depending on the certainty level, perspective, focus and time (Banfield 1982). However, in this study we will stick to the classification proposed by Holmes (1988) as previously mentioned. In the following figures, one can see the realization of boosters with examples extracted from Holmes (1988) and Hyland (2005).

Classification of boosters		
Category	Linguistic items	Example
Modal verbs and auxiliaries	Modal verbs and auxiliary verbs.	Will, can, must (possibility).
Lexical epistemic verbs	Lexical verbs in active voice.	To demonstrate, to show, to prove, to know, to find, to establish.
Adjectives	Adjectives of quantity, degree, frequency and time.	Evident, undeniable, sure, certain, true.
Adverbs	Adverbs of quantity, degree, frequency and time.	Never, obviously, clearly, truly, indeed, conclusively, always.
Pronouns and determiners	Pronouns, determiners and use of 1 st person singular markers.	I believe, I have, I consider.

Table 3. Classification of boosters based on Holmes (1988) and Hyland (2005).

The fifth category, named *pronouns and determiners*, includes 1st person singular markers as it has been considered that 1st person singular markers are boosters that give emphasis to claims and statements which the author makes. It contrasts with the category named *author's personal involvement* in the classification of hedges in which the 1st person plural markers are included.

At this point, we must mention that when analysing the corpus for this study, some problems have emerged. In some cases, it might be difficult to classify linguistic items as *hedges* or *boosters* because some of them can work as both mitigating and

intensifying strategies. As Oliver (2004) mentions: “algunes formes *atenúen* e *intensifiquen* al mateix temps”. (Oliver, 2004: 288) Also, the boundaries of the different categories are not strongly marked, which means that they may vary. The modal verb *will* illustrates this problem since it might be considered a hedge or a booster. For instance, in the following sentence the verb *will* can be understood as opposite to *would* by giving assurance or as possibility: (1) “Chemists **will** appreciate its specific content; others can learn from its methodology.” (ESPBR2 217)

3.3. Qualitative methodology

With regard to the qualitative methodology, two professors of the *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona* have been interviewed. The professors who have been interviewed are Dr David Owen and Dr Ramon Panyella. They are experts on the field of English and Catalan linguistics and literature respectively. They have answered five questions regarding the use of mitigating and intensifying strategies in English and Catalan BRs. The objective of these interviews was to corroborate and complement the results obtained in the analysis of the corpus of this study. The interviews have been included in the *appendices* and will be commented in the *conclusion* section.

4. Results

Regarding the structure of the BRs in both languages, English and Catalan, they follow the structure mentioned in the *genre analysis: book reviews* section, in figure 1. BRs begin with an introduction where the background information is explained, a summary of the book being reviewed, an analysis of the book which may contain positive or negative criticism and a conclusion with the final evaluation.

Both language, however, differ in the kind and distribution of criticism. In Catalan there is a tendency for positive criticism that is noted in all the sections of the BR, mainly in the analysis and the conclusion. Negative criticism can be also observed

in Catalan BRs, but it is usually “hidden” behind positive criticism and in the form of suggestions in order to mitigate it. In English BRs, there is a tendency to use negative criticism and it is usually distributed in the analysis of the BR and the conclusion. It can be noticed that criticism in English is more negative as well as more mitigated and focused on the content of the book. In fact, the authors of BRs in English are more likely to keep distance between the author of the book and themselves, whereas Catalan scholars tend to involve themselves in the analysis of the BR creating a close relationship with the reader and the author. The distance that the author establishes can be seen in the following example:

- (4) “**The book is** very readable, with key points presented at the beginning of each chapter to help identify the main points for exploration.” (DSBR2 390)

In this case, the reviewer of the book chooses to use an agentless passive in order to avoid personal involvement in the statement, even though the comment is positive. In the following example, the author of the Catalan BR uses a 1st singular person marker to get involved personally in the review and give her personal opinion subjectively:

- (5) “Ja **aviso** que malgrat les **meues** pretencions d’observadora internacional, no **em** podré abstenir d’opinar, atés que l’obra objecte de ressenya hi convida, en tant que defensa una tesis.” (LLIUBR1 79)

In the following figure, the total number of hedges and boosters found in English and Catalan BRs is shown.

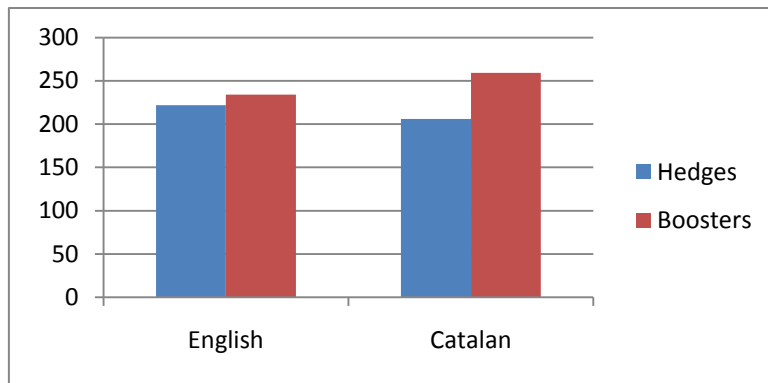


Figure 1. Total number of hedges and boosters in the corpus.

Regarding the use of hedges and boosters in the corpus, it has been observed that, in general terms, the use of intensifying strategies (boosters) is higher in Catalan than in English. In both languages, hedges are used to mitigate the intensity of negative criticism. The following sentences illustrate the use of hedges to mitigate the intensity of criticism in both languages:

(6) “**If** cultural context is to be truly considered, as the authors advocate in several chapters, a more representative sample of languages **should be** selected.” (JPraBR2 1677)

(7) “L’únic apartat **una mica** confús de la seua exposició és el que parla d’estàndards autònoms i estàndard composicional.” (LLIUBR1 82).

In the same line, boosters are used in English and Catalan to intensify positive criticism. This phenomenon is shown in the following sentences:

(8) “As a concise introduction to CA for the unfamiliar researcher this is a **very** useful and well-crafted chapter.” (DSBR1 267)

(9) “Els plantejaments concrets en què Pla basa la seva proposta de reforma de la normativa són d’un sentit comú **inqüestionable**.” (LLIUBR1 81)

The higher use of boosters in Catalan might be due to the tendency to use positive criticism. It can be noticed that the English use of hedges is slightly higher than in Catalan. However, it is necessary to take into account the fact that the English corpus contained more words than the Catalan corpus and that the difference in use of hedges and boosters may, hence, not be significant.

Both languages follow this pattern, however, some exceptions can be identified. For instance, sometimes negative comments are emphasised with boosters in Catalan, and positive comments are mitigated using hedges in English. It is important to bear in mind that this is not the main result obtained. The following examples illustrate a negative comment in Catalan mitigated by a hedge (10) and one emphasised by a booster (11):

(10) “Per acabar d’arrodonir l’obra, **potser** es **podria** demanar a l’autor que es plantegés la **possibilitat** d’establir remissions internes entre entrades sinònimes.” (EMBR2 130)

(11) “La perfecció no existeix I **em refermo** en la meua prevenció inicial: el taló d’Aquil·les del lingüista de l’Avui és **segurament** un coneixement parcial de la variació geogràfica i l’encaix potencial d’aquesta variació en el model estàndard que propugna.” (LLIUBR1 82)

The following sentences exemplify a positive comment intensified using a booster (12) and a positive comment mitigated with a hedge in English (13):

(12) “It is **clear** by the end of the book that these goals have **largely** been reached.” (JPragBR2 1677)

(13) “These chapters **are likely to** be useful as resources so students can, for example, look up exactly how to format a table or citation when they need to.” (ESPBR2 219).

As explained in the *methodology* section, hedges and boosters have been classified according to two different taxonomies. Regarding English, the most used category of hedges is *agentless strategies*, and the least used is *author’s personal doubt and involvement*; and as for boosters, the most used category is *pronouns and determiners* and the least used is *lexical verbs*. With respect to Catalan, the most used category of hedges is *agentless strategies*, and the least used is *shields*; the most used category for boosters is *adverbs and pronouns and determiners*, and the least used is *adjectives*. It is important to highlight that English uses considerably more agentless strategies than Catalan, and that the use of pronouns and determiners is higher in Catalan. The following figures show which categories of hedges and boosters are more and less frequently used in the corpus selected. However, it is important to mention that a high degree of variety has been found, thus these results only suggest the average use.

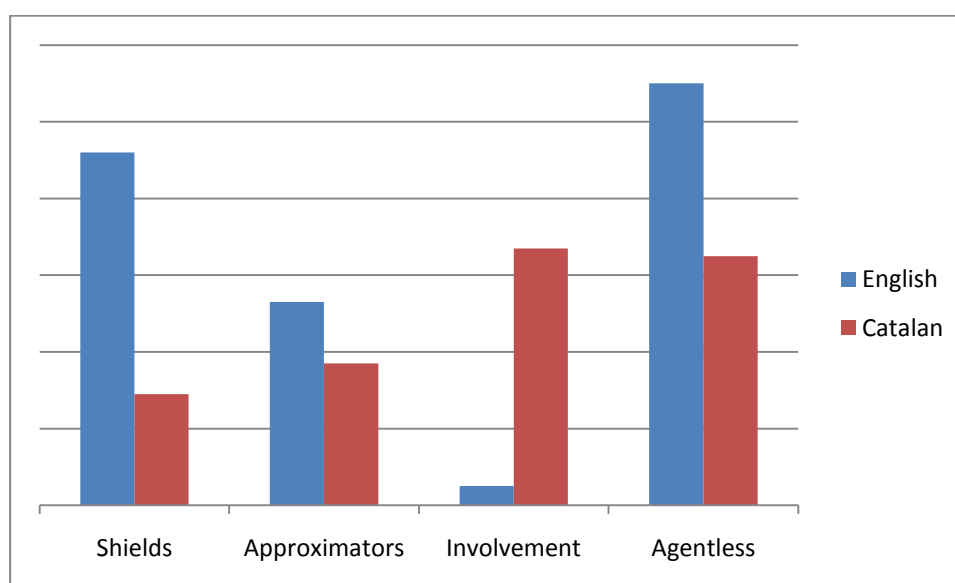


Figure 2. Use of hedges typology in English and Catalan

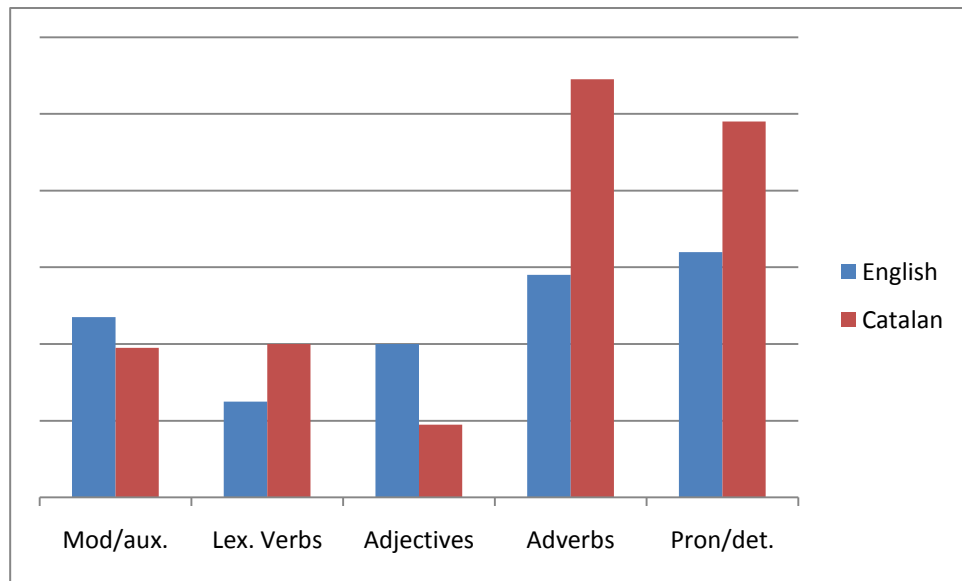


Figure 3. Use of boosters typology in English and Catalan.

As it has been mentioned previously, some problems have emerged during the analysis of the corpus since the boundaries of the categories might be not clear, which means that some words can be classified as hedges or boosters depending on the context where they appear. In addition, some linguistic items can mitigate and intensify a claim or statement at the same time. Furthermore, there are several different classifications for hedges and boosters, which made the task of choosing the most suitable one rather complex. All these factors might have influenced the analysis of the corpus of this study and the decisions made regarding the classification of the linguistic items.

In the following section, we will deal with the possible reasons that explain the different use of hedges and boosters in English and Catalan BRs, and the preliminary conclusions of this study.

5. Conclusion

In this study, a corpus of English BRs and a corpus of Catalan BRs have been compared in order to observe how academic criticism is conveyed in English and Catalan. To achieve this goal the linguistic items which mitigate and intensify criticism, which are

hedges and boosters, have been analysed within the genre of BRs. And this has allowed us to establish a pattern and see the frequency of use of these linguistic items which are main elements for making critical statements. The main conclusions that have been drawn are that English BRs contain more negative comments, while Catalan BRs contain more positive comments. In addition, hedges are frequently used to mitigate negative criticism, and boosters are usually used to intensify positive criticism in both languages. This fact makes us give a negative answer to our first research question which is “Do the use of hedges and boosters differ according to the L1 in use to make the critical statement more positive or negative?”

Following the two taxonomies proposed in the methodology section, it is observed that the typology of hedges and boosters used in both languages to intensify and mitigate strategies is different. Thus, it shows that the answer to the research question 2 “Do Catalan and English Texts use the same hedges and boosters typology?” is negative. The fact that the most used hedge categories are *agentless strategies* in English and *author’s personal doubt and involvement* in Catalan may support the idea that English scholars tend to mitigate criticism more than Catalan scholars. Also, the most used booster categories are *pronouns and determiners* in English and *adverbs and pronouns and determiners* in Catalan. Despite having the same category of boosters as the most used, the presence of pronouns and determiners is notably higher in Catalan than in English. In this sense, these results seem to show that English scholars mitigate criticism more than Catalan ones. By contrast, Catalan scholars get more personally involved in opposition to English scholars who distance themselves more from the critical statements by using hedges to avoid confrontation.

With regard to the third research question which is “Do hedges and boosters have different frequency of use in Catalan and English?” the answer is positive. On the

one hand, the frequency of hedges is higher in English than in Catalan. It seems that the higher use of hedges is related to the tendency to make negative comments in English BRs and establish a distance between the reviewer and the author of the book to avoid confrontation. A possible explanation for this trend to make negative comments is that English criticism in academic communities is more linguistically direct and the “objective” evaluation of books seems to be prioritized over subjective evaluations. As Salager-Meyer (1994) and Morales, Cassany and González-Peña (2007) mention, the English academic community prefers texts which show modesty and caution. And hedges are more frequently used because they allow the writer to achieve these objectives of being humble and cautious.

On the other hand, the use of boosters is higher in Catalan than in English. As Hyland (1998) states, boosters are used to express certainty and conviction. It is risky to use them for English reviewers since they are expected to show caution in their statements. In Catalan BRs, certainty and conviction are conveyed when the reviewer is making a positive comment and this might be related to a possible pattern to make positive comments and avoid direct criticism in Catalan BRs. As a matter of fact, there is a greater tendency for writers of BRs to get personally involved in the BR, for this reason, it seems that the aim of the BRs is to create a pleasant relationship between the reviewer and the author of the book being reviewed. For this purpose, a subjective evaluation of the book is needed.

The following examples show the implication of the author in Catalan BRs (14) and the distance that the author of English BRs establishes when making statements (15):

(14) “De la segona n’haurem de parlar; de la primera **considero que** té justament el punt d’equilibri que el català d’avui necessita.” (LLIUBR1 79)

(15) “**It is written** in a way that foregrounds new values, principles and decisions and these serve as a cohesive link throughout the book.” (DSBR2 390).

It is important to notice that the English and Catalan academic communities where the BRs are aimed to are very different. As it has been mentioned earlier, the English community values modesty, honesty and caution (Salager-Meyer 1994). Despite BRs having the same ultimate goal in both languages which is evaluating a book or a written work made by a scholar, the ways in which these objectives are achieved are very different. As Connor (1996) says, language is influenced by culture and each culture has its own conventions. This is why each language, English and Catalan in this case, have different ways of expressing criticism and achieving the goals of the BR genre.

The first is a huge academic community in which many BRs are written and published, whereas the latter is a smaller academic community where scholars are more likely to know each other. Hence, in the English academic community the author of the BR is more likely to focus on the evaluation of the book content and make more direct criticism through the use of hedges. That is to say, English BRs contain more criticism, but it is softened by using more hedges. By contrast, in the Catalan community the author of the BR is more likely to focus on creating a pleasant relationship with the author of the book by emphasising on praise. As Panyella explains referring to the Catalan academic community:

Pensant sobre tot en el cas del català; com més petita és la comunitat nacional, social o científica, més probable és que dominin aquestes estratègies

sociopragmàtiques en les ressenyes. [...] Segurament, doncs, en l'àmbit cultural i literari català hi ha una tendència a l'autocensura i, inversament, una forta inclinació a destacar i amplificar les virtuts de l'obra ressenyada.

The implications of this study are to show the differing patterns of use of hedges and boosters and the different types of criticism in BRs written by L1 scholars in both English and Catalan in order to help non-native scholars to write BRs in English. This study might be useful for non-native scholars who want to introduce themselves into the English academic community and would like to avoid transferring the Catalan patterns for BRs into their L2 writing. However, the results obtained in this study are not conclusive because our corpora might be too small. In order to draw significant conclusions, further research would be needed with the goal of analysing a larger corpus of BRs in both languages and it would be also interesting to analyse English BRs written by non-native scholars in order to find out whether the use of hedges and boosters from the L1 is transferred to the L2 or not.

Dr David Owen and Dr Ramon Panyella, professors of Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, have been interviewed to know their opinion as experts and complement the results obtained on the analysis of both corpora. Their opinion as experts corresponds to the results obtained in this study. Regarding English BRs, Owen reckons that:

Boosters and hedges parallel (to an extent) the extensive use of modal auxiliaries in spoken English, which are frequently employed to signal politeness and to distance the speaker from potentially disagreeable statements. These often appear excessive to Catalan speakers and it's therefore plausible (for me) to suppose that a similar case holds with written language.

Mitigating and intensifying strategies are used in English to avoid conflict and achieve “the purpose of expressing a balanced and informed opinion” in BRs. He also makes an important statement that summarises the results of this study: “It's not that one culture is more polite or respectful than another; it's simply that they have different ways of showing it”. Regarding Catalan BRs, Panyella states that “hi ha una tendència al predomini dels intensificadors positius”, since the Catalan academic community is

small, the use of positive comments and boosters create a pleasant relationship between the author of the book and the reviewer. In Panyella's words: "el judici valoratiu/crític, doncs, degudament argumentat, amb una modalització discursiva adequada que permeti llur acceptació en la comunitat, és una part inherent, absolutament necessària, de qualsevol ressenya".

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Appendices

Appendix 1a. Codification of English book reviews

Appendix 1b. Codification of Catalan book reviews.

Appendix 2a. Interview with Dr David Owen.

Appendix 2b. Interview with Dr Ramon Panyella.

Appendix 1a. Codification of English book reviews.

Code	Journal	Author	Book Reviewed
JPragBR1	Journal of Pragmatics 41 (2009) 1679-1682.	Matthew Clarke. University of New South Wales, Australia.	Discourse as a Cultural Struggle, Si-xu, Ed., University of Hong Kong Press, Hong Kong, 2007.
JPragBR2	Journal of Pragmatics 41 (2009) 1675-1678.	Jill Hallett and Matt Garley. University of Illinois, USA.	Figurative Language: Cross-cultural and cross-linguistic Perspectives, Dobrovol'skij, Dmitrij and Elisabeth Piirainen, Elsevier, Oxford, UK, 2005.
ESPBR1	English for Specific Purposes 30 (2011) 73-83.	Cate Crosby. West Chester University of Pennsylvania, USA.	Connecting speaking and writing in second language writing instruction, Robert Weissberg. University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 2006.
ESPBR2	English for Specific Purposes 29 (2010) 210-220.	Susan Conrad. Portland State University, USA.	Write like a chemist: A guide and resource, Marin Rovinson, Frederika Stoller, Molly Constanza-Robinson. James K. Jones. Oxford University Press, 2008.
DSBR1	Discourse Studies 13 (2011) 267-269.	Alexandra Craven. Loughborough university, UK.	Anna Filipi, Toddler and Parent Interaction. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2009.
DSBR2	Discourse Studies 13 (2011) 389-390.	Kieran A. File. Cambridge University, UK.	Collen Cotter, News Talk. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Appendix1b. Codification of Catalan book reviews.

Code	Journal	Author	Book Reviewed
EMBR1	Els Marges 88 (2009) 119-121.	Maria Pilar Perea. Universitat de Barcelona.	Els inicis del Diccionari català-valencià-balear a través de l'epistolari d'A. M. Alcover i F. de V. Moll amb J. Calveras, Barcelona: Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 2008.
EMBR2	Els Marges 81 (2009) 129-131.	Laia Rosàs i Redondo. Universitat de Barcelona.	Joaquim MARTÍ MESTRE. Diccionari històric del valencià col.loquial (segles XVII, XVIII i XIX). València: Universitat de València (Biblioteca Lingüística Catalana, núm 29), 2006.
LLIDBR1	Revista de Llengua i Dret 55 (2011) 317-230.	Mireia Galindo Solé. Universitat de Barcelona.	Emili Boix-Fuster. Català o castellà amb els fills? La transmission de la llengua en famílies bilingües a Barcelona. San Cugat del Vallès: Editorial Rourich, 2009.
LLIDBR2	Revista de Llengua i Dret 54 (2010) 498-500.	Carles de Rosselló. Universitat de Barcelona.	Josep À. Mas. El morefema ideològic. Una anàlisi crítica dels models de llengua valencians. Benicarló: Onada Edicions, 2008.
LLIUBR1	Revista Técnica de Política Lingüística 48 (2010) 79-84.	Anna Montserrat Ciurana. Universitat Rovira i Virgili.	Pla Nualart, Albert, Això del Català. Podem fer-ho més fàcil? Editorial Columna,

			2010.
LLIUBR2	Revista Técnica de Política Lingüística 46 (2009) 120-123.	Mònica Montserrat Grau. Universitat de Barcelona.	TERMCAT, Centre de Terminologia Bibliografica: Criteris de presentació en els treballs terminològics. Vic: Eumo Editorial; Barcelona: TERMCAT, Centre de Terminologia, 2009.

Appendix 2a. Interview with Dr. David Owen.



Dr David Owen, professor at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

1. Taking into account your knowledge and experience in English linguistics and literature, what sociopragmatic strategy is more frequently used in English Book Reviews: *hedges* or *boosters*?

Unfortunately, I don't think I can say anything very valuable in answer to this question as it's currently stated. Book reviews are multiple and diverse; may be undertaken anonymously or by a named (and possibly reputable) specialist, and will—at all events—correspond in some part at least to the rhetorical traditions and conventions of the particular ambit to which they belong. It's possible, perhaps, to argue that a positive review might contain a higher number of boosters, whereas the nature of a negative review might be attenuated by a higher number of hedges. This is a plausible hypothesis, but without a corpus review, it would be difficult to take further...

2. Do you think that it is more common to find this sociopragmatic strategy (the one you considered the most frequently used in question 1) in English book reviews than in Catalan book reviews? Why?

Again, I'm not sure that, without specifying more closely what ambit of reviews you are considering, and—crucially—whether the review is positive or not, I can really give a useful answer here. My inclination would be towards thinking that English contained a higher number of both strategies. I'd say, in support of this, that boosters and hedges

parallel (to an extent) the extensive use of modal auxiliaries in spoken English, which are frequently employed to signal politeness and to distance the speaker from potentially disagreeable statements. These often appear excessive to Catalan speakers, and it's therefore plausible (for me) to suppose that a similar case holds with written language.

3. The results of my TFG suggest that English book reviews contain more negative comments, the use of hedges is higher and that the author establishes more distance with the author of the book. By contrast, Catalan BRs contain more positive criticism, a higher use of boosters and the author gets personally involved in the BR. Do you agree with these results? Could you give a cultural explanation for these findings?

There are certain key features of your research (corpus/typology/academic ambit/national vs international target audience/age, gender and job of reviewer, etc.) that I'd have to be familiar with before making any meaningful comment. In addition to that, as I've indicated in questions 1 & 2, the very general nature of the observations make them (in my view) difficult to either challenge or support. But, at least initially, I find these results intriguing. If it's the case that there is a higher level of negative content, however, I could suggest another cultural parallel. In political journalism (press and broadcasting), the so-called *Anglo-Saxon* model of presenting news and interviewing even people like very senior politicians is highly pugnacious, highly adversarial. Very little concession is given to such figures, and they are expected to accept such treatment as "the public's right to be informed". I am often surprised by how gentle Catalan and Spanish journalism treats comparative figures. This presumably corresponds to a cultural tradition that requires respect to be shown in ways that are distinct from in the UK or the US, for example. It's not that

one culture is more polite or respectful than another; it's simply that they have different ways of showing it. This, I suggest, might partly explain your findings.

4. What are the characteristics of a well-written book review in the English academic community?

Again, this would depend vitally on the academic ambit. The Humanities have certain expectations; the Social Sciences have others; and the Sciences are a case apart. If any general characteristics are transversally applicable, these would be (I assume) clarity; relevance; balanced and justified opinions; technical understanding; comprehension of the consequences of the reviewed work; praise or criticism sufficiently unambiguous to give the reader a clear insight into the reviewer's opinion.

5. Would the lack of use of hedges and boosters affect the quality of the book review? Will the book review be considered badly-written? Will the lack of use of hedges and boosters have negative consequences for the author of the book review in the English academic community?

Boosters and hedges are necessary components in the effective communication of meaning. They are, as it were, navigationally significant elements between writer and reader. Are they strictly essential? No, of course not (neither are the words "please" and "thank you"). But their absence would probably result in an overly direct text that might actually fail in its primary communicative purpose of expressing a balanced and informed opinion, as it could mislead the reader into interpreting the reviewer as too viscerally positive or negative. Badly written? Almost certainly (though that also depends on the specific academic community that the review is intended for). Negative consequences? That depends, but a review that is considered badly written will, in almost any ambit, be considered poor work, and that can hardly be to the advantage of the writer.

Appendix 2b. Interview with Dr. Ramon Panyella Ferreres.



Dr Ramon Panyella, professor at Univesitat Autònoma de Barcelona

1. Tenint en compte el teu coneixement i la teva experiència en literatura i lingüística catalana, quina és l'estratègia sociopragmàtica més utilitzada a les ressenyes de llibres en català: *hedges* (mitigadors) o *boosters* (intensificadors)?

No es pot respondre de manera concloent a la pregunta. El factor diacrònic (moment històric), el context sociocultural, la identitat del ressenyador o la mena de publicació on es produeix el discurs (en aquest cas la ressenya) són factors que incideixen en el predomini d'una o altra estratègia. De totes maneres, la meva impressió, validada per l'experiència com a lector i redactor d'aquest tipus de discurs, és que, en l'àmbit de les ressenyes en llengua catalana, hi ha una tendència al predomini dels intensificadors positius (un bon exemple, seria les ressenyes que es publiquen a una revista com Serra d'Or). Dit això, però, el recurs a estratègies mitigadores (o "atenuadores") de la crítica també forma part de les normes d'ús estilístiques de la majoria de ressenyadors. Aquests, amb major o menor traça, les incorporen en el seu discurs com una forma de modalització necessària quan els cal discrepar, civilitzadament, d'algun punt del text que ressenyen. Un bon estudi a fer (que jo no he fet, és clar) seria inventariar-les,

2. Creus que és més comú trobar aquest tipus d'estratègies sociopràgmiques en català que en anglès? Per què?

No conec el món anglosaxó i, per tant, no puc respondre a aquesta pregunta. Ho podria fer des de la intuïció, però el valor de les meves conclusions seria poc rellevant. Si se'm permet, però, apunto una idea, pensant sobre tot en el cas del català: com més petita és una comunitat nacional, social o científica més probable és que dominin aquestes estratègies sociopragmàtiques en les ressenyes, és a dir, en la crítica o comentari d'obres d'altri. La llibertat de dir el que es vulgui en comunitats petites (i més vulnerables, doncs) ja sabem que és més limitada. Foucault ja ho deia en el seu magnífic assaig *L'ordre del discurs*, que no tots els discursos poden funcionar en una societat i, si ho fan, molt sovint és al preu de dir sense dir, sobretot quan del que es tractaria és de preservar algun bé superior. Segurament, doncs, en l'àmbit cultural i literari català hi ha una certa tendència a l'autocensura en aquesta mena de discursos que anomenem ressenya i, inversament, una forta inclinació a destacar i amplificar les virtuts de l'obra ressenyada.

En aquests contextos com el català, només uns pocs, els qui tenen una posició de poder reconeguda o els qui actuen com a portaveu d'escola o corrent acadèmic/científic constituït (i, per tant, en confrontació amb d'altres poders constituïts), estan en disposició de poder trencar les regles d'aquesta educació discursiva que generalment el ressenyador compleixen. Quan aquesta norma d'ús es trenca i el comentari és una crítica sagnant d'una obra, significativament el ressenyador –sabedor de la “infracció”–, signa el seu text amb un pseudònim, (algunes ressenyes publicades a la revista *Els Marges* utilitzen aquest procediment, vell com el mateix gènere, d'altra banda).

3. Els resultats del meu estudi suggereixen que les ressenyes de llibre en català contenen majoritàriament comentaris positius i els autors s'impliquen personalment a la ressenya, mentre que les ressenyes en anglès contenen més comentaris negatius i són més directes. Hi estàs d'acord? Podries donar una explicació cultural?

Hi estic d'acord. Algunes de les raons –sembla que m'hi he avançat– s'exposen en la resposta al punt interior, que sintetitzo: les comunitats culturals petites i minoritzades – com la catalana- que senten com una amenaça a llur supervivència la pressió d'altres llengües, ergo, de comunitats més fortes, tendeixen a generar mecanismes d'autoprotecció i defensa. La ressenya positiva seria, doncs, una manifestació d'aquesta mentalitat resistencialista que, sense ser la dels anys 60 i 70 (en què el mot d'ordre era aplaudir qualsevol llibre en català), encara perviu en la nostra cultura, per bé que aquesta, no cal dir-ho, ha esdevingut plural i hi conviuen grups acadèmics i científics amb interessos i concepcions oposats, que, ben sovint, es dirimeixen en el camp de batalla simbòlic de la controvèrsia discursiva (ressenyes, articles...).

Per altra banda, en un món petit –que vol dir també menys revistes i publicacions culturals, científiques i acadèmiques–, les possibilitats i ocasions per publicar també són menors. No es tracta, doncs, que els ressenyadors (que també són autors que han de publicar els seus articles, llibres, etc) es tanquin portes amb ressenyes que no puguin ser ben rebudes. Per tant, els interessos professionals del ressenyador també compten a l'hora de plantejar llurs comentaris i ressenyes. I només actua de polemista professional si pot comptar, com he dit més amunt, amb l'empareda del seu propi prestigi indiscutit o de la del grup (acadèmic/científic) al qual pertany.

4. Quines són les característiques que hauria de tenir una ressenya d'un llibre en Català per poder considerar que està ben escrita?

Segurament, les característiques que ha de tenir una ressenya d'un llibre en català són, *tout court*, les que ha de tenir la de qualsevol llibre, sense que importi la llengua: discursivament i pragmàticament adequada al context, és a dir, als objectius i als destinataris, i lingüísticament coherent. Preciso tot completant:

Recordem, en primer lloc, que una ressenya ha d'acomplir un doble objectiu: d'una banda, la funció estrictament explicativa –“fer comprendre”–, això és, donar a conèixer de forma selectiva i resumida el contingut d'una obra a uns lectors que, majoritàriament, no la coneixen directament: què s'hi explica (de rellevant) i com s'hi explica són les dues preguntes fonamentals (n'hi ha d'altres) a què ha de poder donar compte una ressenya. Per altra banda, una bona ressenya també és la que orienta el lector sobre les virtuts, les qualitats positives, i els defectes, les mancances, de l'obra ressenyada. El judici valoratiu/crític, doncs, degudament argumentat, amb una modalització discursiva adequada (ja se n'ha parlat a bastament en les respostes a les preguntes anteriors) que permeti llur acceptació en la comunitat, és una part inherent, absolutament necessària, de qualsevol ressenya. És raonable pensar que una ressenya ben plantejada equilibra aquests dos pols (Explicació/judici de l'obra), tot i que l'estil del ressenyador, els tics d'escola (de revista), etc. puguin fer prevaldre, en ocasions, una dimensió per sobre de l'altra.

No cal dir que la coherència estructural i la claredat d'estil, com en qualsevol discurs, són també ingredients indispensables del gènere. Fer-se llegir, no només fer-se comprendre.

5. Quina sensació provocaria una ressenya lingüística que no en la qual no es fessin servir hedges (mitigadors) ni boosters (intensificadors)? Tindria conseqüències negatives per l'autor de la ressenya?

Tot dependria de com estigués escrita i plantejada la crítica, i del grau de fonamentació veraç d'aquesta. Redactada per una persona hàbil i intel·ligent, bona coneixedora de la matèria a jutjar, una ressenya “sagnant” podria escandalitzar i generar molta polèmica,

sens dubte, però caldria reconèixer-li el fons de veritat que poguessin contenir els seus judicis severos i poc “educats”.

Com he dit més amunt, només es prescindeix de les normes d’ús (també les discursives, doncs) si és té poder. Algú que s’exposi a fer una ressenya prescindint de modalitzadors discursius és algú amb poder per fer i dir dins l’àmbit de coneixement o la disciplina científica en què se situa l’obra ressenyada, per tant, les conseqüències negatives per a aquest, d’existir, serien pràcticament inexistents. No afectarien gens, crec, ni la seva posició de poder ni tampoc el seu prestigi –més aviat sospito que seria el contrari: el reforçarien.

Altra cosa és que algú molt ingenu o arrogant, sense les condicions de poder esmentades, desafïés aquestes normes d’ús i prescindís de la cortesia pragmàtica. De totes maneres, considero altament improbable que una ressenya “sagnant” d’aquest imaginari ressenyador passarell passés els filtres dels comitès de redacció de les publicacions, que si que vetllen per la cortesia i l’educació discursives i no tan sols per la qualitat científica dels productes que publiquen.