

**UNIVERSITAT JAUME I**

**DEPARTAMENT D'ESTUDIS ANGLÉSOS**



**ACADEMIC EVALUATION WITHIN THE  
APPLIED LINGUISTICS 'RESPONSE' ARTICLE:  
AN ANALYSIS OF WRITER-MEDIATED PRAISE  
AND CRITICISM AS RHETORICAL STRATEGIES**

**DOCTORAL DISSERTATION**

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**To my parents.**



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## **CODES USED THROUGHOUT THE STUDY**

AL	Applied Linguistics
AR	Author Reference
B	Boosting
C	Criticism
CS	Concession
CF	Counter-factive
CMLR	Canadian Modern Languages Review
DC	Downtoning Comment
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
F	Factive
H	Hedging
JSLW	Journal of Second Language Writing
MLJ	Modern Languages Journal
NE	Negative Evaluation
P	Praise
PE	Positive Evaluation
PP	Paired-pattern
Q	Question
S	Suggestion
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
WM	Writer Mediation



## **INTRODUCTION**



The process by which writers situate themselves in an academic community involves a dynamic exchange of ideas and points of view with respect to a specific issue of interest. The need for expert writers to position themselves and persuade readers to accept their claims gives rise to the appearance of critical interpretations in academic discourse. To participate in this kind of interaction, writers have to be able to produce appropriate critical comments, which depend on the communities they belong to:

(...) conventions of writing are always embedded in deeper epistemological frameworks that are frequently discipline specific. Each discourse community has unique ways of identifying issues, asking questions, solving problems, addressing its literature, criticising colleagues and presenting arguments (Hyland, 2000: 145).

From this perspective, the present dissertation deals with written academic discourse focusing on the genre of the ‘response’ article. Despite the fact that ‘response’ articles are considered to be a highly influential genre by academics, research has hardly dealt with this kind of written academic discourse. Our main interest in ‘response’ articles derives from the fact that they contribute to the presentation and dissemination of new knowledge. As their purpose is that of evaluating or reviewing the work of fellow academics, they promote interaction among scholars by creating an interactive framework within which discussion can take place. More specifically, the aim of our study is to identify certain rhetorical strategies regarding evaluation that written academic communication involves in a specific disciplinary context.

Research conducted on discourse in academic contexts has followed two main and complementary lines of research. On the one hand, a large number of corpus-based

analyses have focused on the lexico-grammatical patterning of texts and dealt with collocations and phrases that appear in discourse within specific academic registers or genres (Biber and Finegan, 1988, 1989, 1994; Conrad and Biber, 2000; Hunston and Thompson, 2000). A complementary line of research has dealt with functional and rhetorical aspects of texts, thus drawing attention not only to the lexico-grammatical forms that appear in discourse but also to the communicative purposes and production circumstances of the different strategic choices used by writers (Connor *et al.*, 2008; Hyland, 2000; Hyland and Tse, 2004; Tognini-Bonelli and Lungo, 2005). Drawing on a functional point of view, the study of critical discourse extends beyond an examination of lexico-grammatical forms to include other units of analysis such as moves and rhetorical strategies. More specifically, research studies deal with rhetorical evaluation strategies and regard praise and criticism as evaluative rhetorical choices linked to specific genres and disciplines (Bloch, 2003; Gea, 2000; Hyland, 2000; Hyland, F. and Hyland, K. 2001; Hunston, 2005; Martín and Burgess, 2004). In reviewing studies conducted on writers' use of evaluation strategies, it is worth pointing out that they stress the complexity of evaluation, as it often involves striking a balance between positive and negative evaluation in order to mitigate the overall damage that critical comments may cause (Hyland, 2000; Motta-Roth, 1998; Suárez, 2005; Suárez and Moreno, 2006, 2008).

Apart from this, evaluation has also been approached from a metadiscoursal perspective in connection with the notion of writer's 'stance' (Hyland and Tse, 2004; Hyland, 2005). Research has therefore been carried out with regard to several features that may make the writer appear more or less committed, involved, cautious or assertive. First of all, hedges (Fortanet *et al.*, 2001; Hyland, 1998a, 1998b, 2000; Lewin, 1998; Martín, 2003b; Salager-Meyer, 1994; Saz, 2001), boosters (Hyland, 2000;

Hinkel, 2005; Mendiluce and Hernández, 2005; Vassileva, 2001) and stance bundles (Biber *et al.*, 2004; Fortanet, 2004b; Martínez, 2005) have been the focus of attention, since they are regarded as central aspects in relation to how the writer constructs interaction with the reader. Bearing these considerations in mind, the study of variation in relation to how writers express their positions and make their presence explicit in discourse is dealt with across genres and disciplines (Harwood, 2005a, 2005b; Ivanič, 1998; Burgess and Fagan, 2002; Hyland, 2000; Martín and Burgess, 2004; Martínez, 2005), while also taking into account the audience addressed (Kirsch and Roen, 1990; Hoey, 1998; Nwogu, 1991, Varttala, 2001). Hence, the fact that the ‘response’ article implies a direct and critical encounter with another author is considered a crucial aspect as regards the construction of interaction and the writers’ rhetorical choices. Apart from this, evaluation has also been considered from a discursive point of view in relation to how patterns of cohesion and coherence are built in discourse (Hunston and Thompson, 2000; Hyland, 2000; Moreno and Suárez, 2006; Motta-Roth, 1998; Thompson and Zhou, 2000; Vázquez, 2005).

Finally, contrastive rhetoric studies stress the need to study evaluation from a cultural perspective. From this point of view, the way in which writers show their attitudes in specific academic contexts is regarded as a socio-culturally bound feature of interaction (Bloch and Chi, 1995; Connor, 1996; Kaplan, 1996; Taylor and Chen, 1991; Valero-Garcés, 1996). Hence, the fact that writers (either second language learners or novice researchers) need to be aware of different styles of writing has led to the emergence of specialised courses on English for Academic Purposes (EAP). This enables writers to become familiarised with specific rhetorical strategies and evaluation resources in different disciplines and academic communities (Fortanet *et al.*, 2001; Hewins and Hewins, 2002, Hinkel 1997; Hyland 1995, 2001a, 2002b; Ventola and

Mauranen, 1991). Only by being aware of which choices are available may writers be creative and manipulate rhetorical choices for their own purposes.

Concerning the need to analyse different types of evaluative patterns in written academic discourse, our study draws on a generic conception of written text to account for the linguistic choices made by writers that lead to successful and persuasive discourse. With regard to the contributions of our study, some similarities and differences with earlier studies should be noted. On the one hand, previous research has tried to account for variation in relation to certain lexico-grammatical resources intended to convey attitudinal meanings. From this point of view, earlier studies have analysed specific sets of lexical items such as nouns (Charles, 2003; Flowerdew, 2003; Pisanski, 2005; Stotesbury, 2003), pronouns (Cherry, 1998; Fortanet, 2004; Kuo, 1990; Martínez, 1995), adjectives (Hunston and Thompson, 2000; Soler, 2003), verbs (Gea, 1998; Luzón, 1996) or adverbs (Aijmer, 2005; Conrad and Biber, 2000) in relation to specific genres. In addition to this, resources such as hedging (Salager-Meyer, 1994; Fortanet *et al.*, 2001; Lewin, 1995, 1998; Varttala, 2001), boosting (Hyland, 2000, Mendiluce and Hernández, 2005) and stance bundles (Artiga, 2006; Biber *et al.*, 2004; Martínez, 2005) have also been analysed, with the main goal focused on the classification or quantification of the specific set of items investigated.

On the other hand, a complementary line of research has attempted to examine functional categories as the main units of analysis by trying to describe specific strategic preferences of expression (Bloch, 2003; Fagan and Martín, 2002; Hyland, 2000; Hyland, F. and Hyland, K., 2001; Martín and Burgess, 2004). Drawing on this second line of inquiry, our study concentrates primarily on the discourse level and, as a development of this, certain linguistic features are also examined. In this respect, it also needs to be stressed that, concerning the analysis of resources such as hedges, boosters



and stance bundles, our main aim in this study is to examine these resources in relation to the role they play within positive or negative comments, thereby resulting in more or less committed, assertive or personal attitudinal choices. Thus, from a generic perspective, our analysis comprises several levels of analysis, both lexico-grammatical as well as discursive.

A further differentiating feature concerning our study of evaluation in critical discourse regards the genre under study. Whereas several critical genres have already been dealt with, for instance, book reviews (Gea, 2000; Hyland, 2000; Motta-Roth, 1998; North, 1992; Römer, 2005), letters to the editor (Bloch, 2003; Magnet and Carnet, 2006; Vázquez, 2005) and editorials (Flowerdew and Dudley-Evans, 2002; Le, 2004; Vázquez, 2005), our study deals with the genre of the ‘response’ article, which has received hardly any attention from researchers. To our knowledge, Hunston’s (2005) work is the only study that refers to strategies of evaluation conveying consensus or conflict in the genre of the ‘response’ article. Although this study presents a valuable contribution to explain the way in which researchers address published work within a specific genre, its focus is more theoretical than empirical. Therefore, in our study we have attempted to overcome some of the above-mentioned limitations by (1) extending our analysis from a lexico-grammatical to a rhetorical and discursal point of view, and (2) conducting empirical research on a genre which has barely been dealt with, thereby attempting to throw some light upon qualitative as well as quantitative aspects of writers’ evaluative discourse.

With regard to the focus of our study, we deal with praise and criticism strategies as rhetorical strategic choices in a specific academic genre and discipline. More specifically, the strategies selected as units of analysis contain explicit references to the writer or the reviewed author and reflect the personal point of view of the researcher

about the work of another colleague<sup>1</sup>. Based on a corpus of ‘response’ articles, the purpose of the present dissertation is to try to clarify whether there are certain rhetorical strategies and language choices that conform to the accepted standards within specific academic communities. In this respect, we intend to identify a range of rhetorical strategies used to convey evaluation in the genre of the ‘response’ article within the field of applied linguistics. Additionally, as pointed out above, we also seek to examine the ways in which writers’ evaluative choices may be influenced by the use of additional resources such as hedges and boosters, which contribute to mitigate or boost the force of critical comments.

Bearing this purpose in mind, the methodological approach followed in this dissertation combines both a lexico-grammatical and functional approach, by blending elements of corpus and genre-based analysis. Concordancing has therefore been helpful to select stretches of language where explicit reference is made to the writer of the ‘response’ article and the author whose work is being reviewed (through certain personal pronouns and possessive adjectives)<sup>2</sup>. However, with the aim of identifying pragmatic meaning, functional criteria are used in order to see whether a specific stretch of text conveys the writer’s evaluation or other functions, such as the writer’s own opinion or the development of an argument<sup>3</sup>.

After having outlined the various research interests and motivations underlying this study, we will now deal with its general structure. This dissertation is divided into five main chapters. The first three chapters provide an overview of the theoretical

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<sup>1</sup> Following Thompson and Ye (1991), we use the term ‘writer’ to refer to the scholar that produces the ‘response’ article and ‘author’ to refer to the researcher that is reviewed.

<sup>2</sup> Evaluation strategies that contain certain personal pronouns (e.g. ‘I’, ‘we’, ‘he’, or ‘they’) and possessive adjectives (e.g. ‘my’, ‘our’, ‘his’, ‘her’, ‘their’) have been analysed.

<sup>3</sup> It must be stressed that it is the analyst’s task to study the linguistic forms in context in order to decide which ones are evaluative and exclude the rest.

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framework on which our research is based and the remaining two chapters deal with the empirical study that was carried out.

Chapter 1 deals with various approaches to discourse and shows how research developed from its initial directions, when it remained focused on the surface features of language, to recent studies that focus on a genre-based approach to discourse. First of all, a discourse analysis point of view is referred to, as a perspective that contributes to situate the production and interpretation of texts beyond formal features (Brown and Yule, 1983; Coulthard, 1994; Dudley-Evans, 1994; Halliday and Hassan, 1976). In addition, the interrelatedness between text-internal and text-external features of communication is emphasised, since stretches of text need to be interpreted taking into account contextual features. Next, pragmatic and relevance-theoretic approaches to discourse are reviewed, as well as the view they propose as regards the interaction of form and function in specific contextual circumstances (Brown and Levinson, 1987; Grice, 1975; Sperber and Wilson, 1986). In addition, emphasis is placed on genre approaches to written academic discourse and a multi-dimensional conception of genre. As a development of this, an integration of socio-rhetorical (Swales, 1990) and socio-cognitive views (Berkenkotter and Huckin, 1995; Bhatia, 1993, 1995, 2004) into an integrated approach to genre (Hyland, 1997, 1999, 2000) is considered to be the most appropriate analytical framework to deal with academic discourse. Finally, in line with a dynamic conception of genre, we propose a multidimensional model to approach critical discourse within a generic framework.

Chapter 2 deals with metadiscourse as an appropriate framework to deal with features of writer positioning in connection with critical comments. As different models of metadiscourse are reviewed (Crismore *et al.*, 1993; Hyland, 1998a, 2000; Hyland and Tse, 2004; Vande Kopple, 1985), some limitations regarding different taxonomies

are also pointed. As a development of this, the notion of writer's stance is related to that of metadiscourse on the grounds that both concepts involve interpersonal as well as metadiscoursal aspects. In addition, research on resources such as hedging (Hyland, 2000, 2005; Martín, 2003; Salager-Meyer, 1994) and boosting (Hinkel, 2005; Mendiluce and Hernández, 2005; Vassileva, 2001) is reviewed, as these devices play an essential role in creating a framework of interpersonal communication. A further issue of concern regards the writer's presence and intervention in discourse<sup>4</sup> (Burgess and Fagan, 2002; Martín and Burgess, 2004). In this respect, writer-mediation is examined as a way to convey a personal and assertive projection on discourse. In connection with this, stance bundles are signalled as ways of reflecting the writer's opinion, judgement, doubt or assertiveness and thus their role in constructing successful argumentation is emphasised (Fortanet, 2004; Kuo, 1999; Martínez, 2005). On the other hand, the occurrence of explicit references to the reviewed author is pointed out and different types of author bundles<sup>5</sup> are referred to (Hyland, 2000; Thompson and Ye, 1991). In addition, attitude markers are also dealt with in connection with the construction of writers' stance (Hyland, 2005; Moreno and Suárez, 2008a; Stotesbury, 2003). Finally, based on the above considerations, a framework for the study of evaluation within written academic discourse is proposed.

Chapter 3 focuses specifically on the notion of evaluation and the expression of judgement and attitude. The first section explores the concept of evaluation and its interrelated dimensions. In addition, the metadiscoursal dimension of evaluation is also dealt with (Dafouz, 2003; Hunston and Thompson, 2000; Mauranen, 1993). From there, we go on to examine the interaction between the formal properties of evaluation and the

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<sup>4</sup> The notion of 'writer-mediation' used by Martín and Burgess (2004) refers to the responsibility of the writer in relation to the critical comments made.

<sup>5</sup> The distinction between 'writer' and 'author' bundles refers to whether multi-word sequences or units include the explicit mention of the writer of the 'response' article or the researcher who is the target of the review. For instance, in 'I think *he* may have misinterpreted...' both types of bundles appear.

functions it accomplishes in discourse. Bearing in mind that evaluation is linked to specific academic communities, rhetorical strategies of evaluation such as praise and criticism are dealt with as a way to express balanced evaluation in different genres and disciplinary backgrounds (Bloch, 2003; Johnson, 1992; Motta-Roth, 1998). As regards the macro-structure of texts and the organisation of moves, the role of evaluation in building textual coherence and cohesion is also analysed (Gea, 2000; Paltridge, 1994; Vázquez, 2005). From this perspective, with reference to the genre under study, certain features that are common to other evaluative genres, as well as some differences, are suggested. Finally, in the last section of this chapter, we present the research questions that guide our research.

In Chapter 4, we provide an explanation of the methodology followed in our study. First, we describe our corpus and the main criteria employed to compile it. Second, we outline the steps followed to conduct our analysis and the analytical tools used, together with a detailed account of how evaluative rhetorical strategies are identified and classified. In this respect, a taxonomy of rhetorical strategies of evaluation is proposed and some categorisation difficulties are also discussed. Finally, other additional variables such as lexical stance bundles and hedging and boosting resources are also categorised and analysed.

Chapter 5 is devoted to the presentation of the results obtained in this study with regard to the research questions proposed. In addition, a comparison with other previous studies on the issues being examined is also offered, together with a discussion of the main findings.

Finally, we include a general conclusion where the main findings of this study, its limitations, its implications and suggestions for further research are presented. This

conclusion is followed by the Appendix, which includes all the ‘research’ articles that were chosen for the corpus of this study in order to select the data for our analysis.

**1. EXPLORING DISCOURSE: TOWARDS A**  
**GENRE APPROACH TO WRITTEN**  
**ACADEMIC DISCOURSE**





In this chapter, we outline a genre approach to academic discourse as an appropriate framework to deal with the study of written text. First, the contribution of a discourse analysis line of research to the study of academic texts is addressed (Section 1.1), taking into account text-internal as well as text-external features. Within this context, special attention is given to the insights provided by ‘register’ analysis and the field of languages for specific purposes (Section 1.2). In addition to this, pragmatic and relevance-theoretic approaches to the study of discourse are dealt with, and the extent to which these approaches are successfully applied to academic discourse is also considered (Section 1.3). Next, a line of research that approaches discourse as genre is outlined (Section 1.4), and different perspectives such as a socio-rhetorical approach to genre (Section 1.4.1), a socio-cognitive approach (Section 1.4.2) or an integration of socio-rhetorical and cognitive views are also considered (Section 1.4.3). Along these lines, the analysis of discourse as genre is regarded as the most comprehensive framework from which to address academic interaction. Following from here, a multi-dimensional approach to academic discourse is proposed. First, we outline our concept of genre (Section 1.5.1) and then we describe our approach to discourse, which integrates a wide range of aspects that may influence the construction of texts (Section 1.5.2). Finally, in line with a multi-dimensional perspective on genre, some methodological orientations concerning the study of discourse are offered, with emphasis on the need to deal with text-internal as well as text-external dimensions of genre construction in a dynamic way (Section 1.6).

### **1.1 Understanding written text within a discourse analysis framework**

Discourse analysis provides an appropriate framework of analysis to study written academic texts within a discursive network of communication. Within this context, texts are studied not only from a linguistic perspective but also from a communicative point of view as discourse used in specific contexts for a variety of purposes (Brown and Yule, 1983; Stubbs, 1983). Following this line of research, the analysis of texts moves beyond a surface-level formal analysis to a functional examination.

Texts are thus conceived as stretches of language aimed at achieving certain communicative intentions through the use of appropriate forms in different interactional situations (Brown and Yule, 1983). Research findings show that writers' linguistic choices depend on the contexts of use (Brown and Yule, 1983; Fairclough, 1992; Schiffrin, 1994; Stubbs, 1983) and thus the relationship between language and context is foregrounded as one of the key elements that mark a movement from form to function and from grammar to discourse. As Brown and Yule (1983: 1) point out, the analysis of discourse is necessarily the analysis of language in use. From this perspective, whereas linguists may concentrate on determining the formal properties of language, discourse analysts focus specifically on what language is used for. In addition, the concept of context is extended to comprise internal as well as external aspects of written text, thus leading to the conceptualisation of discourse as interaction (Coulthard, 1997; Dudley-Evans, 1994).

In this vein, the functional dimension of systemic-functional grammar aims at describing the role language plays in particular social activities (Halliday, 1985; Richards *et al.*, 1992). Halliday's (1985) functional view of language focuses on an understanding of the interrelatedness of meaning, context and text in order to

understand discourse associated with particular situations. According to Halliday (1985), field (content and nature of the activity), tenor (relationship between the participants) and mode (medium employed for communication) are suggested as the basic variables that influence linguistic choices in communication. Thus, every time language is used, the user is making constant choices in accordance with different situational and contextual features (Richards *et al.*, 1992). Within this framework, a systemic-functional view of grammar addresses language as being made out of systems of choice (Halliday, 1985, 1994; Hasan, 1989; Martin, 1992).

Based on the above considerations and dealing with written discourse, emphasis is placed on an interactive framework of communication, as research notes that the construction and interpretation of texts involves an interaction between the writer and the intended reader (Schiffin, 1994; Widdowson, 1973; Thompson, 2001). In this way, language in specific social circumstances is conceived within an interactive and dynamic framework. Therefore, as pointed out by Schiffin (1994: 360-361), texts are seen as a reflection of the contexts of production:

Discourse organisation and structure is emergent (...). This means that discourse is continually imposing its own contexts and hence its own sources of indeterminacy. What is said is always in response (in some way or another) to what was said before and in anticipation of what comes next.

As the above quotation notes, a view of written texts as a reflection of an underlying framework of interaction leads to consider discourse as inherently interactional in nature. In connection with this, an awareness of the essential role of the audience addressed is linked to the way in which writers organise their texts and anticipate responses on the part of the reader (Thompson, 2001; Widdowson, 1973).

Drawing on the above assumptions and concerning academic discourse, texts are addressed not only in relation to their linguistic features but also as discourse resulting from interaction in specific circumstances. As McCarthy (1994:1) notes, discourse analysis views language from a two-dimensional perspective, dealing with linguistic patterns across stretches of texts and at the same time focusing on the social and cultural contexts underlying discourse. As far as writers' linguistic choices are concerned, they are seen in relation to the purposes of interaction in specific socio-cultural contexts, since textual analyses on their own cannot provide appropriate explanations for certain uses (Brown and Yule, 1983; Bruffee, 1986). Following this line of argument, subsequent research emphasises the role of disciplinary background by considering specific discourse practices and procedures within academic discourse (Bhatia, 2004; Swales, 1990).

Contrastive rhetoric, on the other hand, supports the view that formal resources used by writers are related to specific cultural and linguistic backgrounds. From this perspective, despite the existence of some broad universal features (Widdowson, 1984), texts are regarded as functional parts of dynamic cultural contexts rather than merely static products (Connor, 1996; Kaplan, 1996). As emphasis is placed on the realisation that different styles of writing may be associated to specific languages or cultures (Kaplan, 1966; Mauranen, 1993b), the acknowledgement of socio-culturally dependent features is also extended to academic discourse (Bloch and Chi, 1995; Hyland, 2000; Connor, 1996, 2002; Dahl, 2004; Martín, 2003a; Taylor and Chen, 1991). As Valero-Garcés (1996: 293) observes, writers' rhetorical strategies depend to a great extent on their language background:

The fact that Spanish-speaking writers show a tendency to use several rhetorical strategies, which are more significant in their culture, reveals the importance of the first language (L1) and culture, as they cannot avoid interferences between their own culture and the one they are writing in.

Sharing this view, Hyland (2002b) notes that non-native English writers have certain preconceptions about writing, as the influence of their own culture may cause some difficulties concerning rhetorical strategies and interpersonal features that do not match the expectations of native English speakers. As a result, writers need to acquire an appropriate academic style to be able to achieve successful communication within a specific academic community (Valero-Garcés, 1996; Vold, 2006).

In addition to social and cultural aspects of context, cognitive elements also need to be taken into account from a psycholinguistic point of view. Within this line of research, an adequate account of an academic culture requires a combination of a discourse-analytic viewpoint with a sociological and cognitive one (Bazerman, 1988; Becher, 1988; Fairclough, 1992). Similarly, the ethnography of communication marks a departure from a linguistic-based description of discourse to a more social and cultural-based one by stressing how members from a particular community and culture share interpretive patterns of communication as part of their shared socio-cultural knowledge (Hymes, 1964). Drawing on these assumptions, other researchers also note that apart from the linguistic context, there are other social and cognitive considerations that need to be accounted for in relation to the contexts of communication (Hatch, 1992; Schiffrin, 1994). In this regard, Hatch (1992: 1) understands the study of discourse as exploring the connection between language, society and the mental processes underlying communication. Similarly, Schiffrin (1994: 364) points out that, as interlocutors interact with one another in various socially and culturally defined situations, they are regarded as people who have social, cultural and personal identities

as well as a set of beliefs and goals. As a result of these views, socio-cultural and socio-cognitive considerations are regarded as contributing to a more comprehensive and socially situated understanding of discourse construction (Bazerman, 1988; Becher, 1989; Bhatia, 1993; Fairclough, 1992; Halliday, 1978; Swales, 1990). Within this line of research, the recognition that extra-linguistic elements influence the construction of discourse leads to an interdependence of internal and external features that is regarded as particularly relevant for the purposes of our study.

### 1.1.1 Text-internal and text-external features

As outlined in the section above, the interaction between text-internal and text-external features is essential in relation to text construction and interpretation (Bhatia, 1993, 2004; Connor, 1996; Halliday, 1985, 1994; Swales, 1990). In this respect, Bhatia (2004) points out that the distinction between these perspectives should not be seen as a clear-cut one but rather as a continuum that ranges from textualisation to contextualisation. On the one hand, textuality implies dealing with texts as stretches of language resulting from writers' awareness of rhetorical organisation, as well as knowledge of rhetorical strategies, to develop arguments in appropriate ways. On the other hand, contextualisation involves dealing with text-external elements that influence the construction of discourse as a complementary perspective.

With regard to the concept of context as internal to the text, it is important to consider not only the co-text of a word or the surrounding sentences, but also larger stretches of discourse or even the whole text (Bhatia, 2004; Coulthard, 1997). Within this framework, one trend of empirical research focuses on the nature of texts in relation to how different elements or structures relate to each other and proposes

different patterns of text organisation in terms of rhetorical structures (Hoey, 1983; Mann *et al.*, 1989; Widdowson, 1984, 1973) or schematic structures (van Dijk, 1977; van Dijk and Kintsch, 1983). While the macrostructure of a text tries to account for the way in which propositions make up discourse by contributing to the overall discourse topic and meaning relations, the superstructure of the text contributes to show conventionalised uses of discourse (Mann *et al.*, 1989; van Dijk and Kintsch, 1983).

Along these lines and concerning academic texts, some conditions are specified for beginning, structuring and ending discourse. In this respect, research focuses mainly on the research article, and deals with sections such as the introduction (Swales, 1981, 1990) or the results and discussion sections (Brett, 1994; Holmes, 1997; Hopkins and Dudley-Evans, 1988, Williams, 1999). A complementary line of research interprets rhetorical structures as regularities conceived in terms of ‘moves’, and links move variability and construction to differences in textualisation in academic discourse (Bhatia, 1993; Swales, 1981, 1990). Within this context, discourse moves are understood as patterns used by members of a discourse community to construct and interpret discourse in specific contexts. In this way, these lower level constituent elements are regarded as defining the information structure of particular genres<sup>6</sup> (Swales, 1990; Bhatia, 1993). As Bhatia (1993: 30) notes, discourse moves have a central communicative intention, which is conveyed through the use of rhetorical strategies:

Just as each genre has a communicative purpose that it tends to serve, similarly, each move also serves a typical communicative intention, which is always subservient to the overall communicative purpose of the genre. In order to realise a particular communicative intention at the level of a move, an individual writer may use different rhetorical strategies.

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<sup>6</sup> See section 1.4 for the study of discourse as genre.

As the above quotation points out, a move is understood as a stretch of discourse, which realises a specific communicative function and represents a stage in the development of the overall structure of information. Moves, in turn, would consist of other sub-functions referred to as 'strategies' (Bhatia, 1993) or 'steps' (Bunton, 1999; Swales, 1990). Subsequent research, such as Lewin *et al.* (2002), distinguishes between 'steps' and 'strategies', depending on whether obligatory sequential elements or non-obligatory ones are regarded to construct 'move cycles'. In addition to this, strategies or steps are in turn implemented by realisation procedures (Ruiz de Mendoza and Otal, 1997: 301), which are the actual linguistic forms used to carry out a strategy. As a result, text-internal features ranging from rhetorical structures (Hoey, 1983; Widdowson, 1984) to moves, rhetorical strategies and realisation procedures (Bhatia, 1993; Ruiz de Mendoza and Otal, 1997; Swales, 1990) constitute textual units that writers need to be aware of in order to achieve successful communication.

A further issue of interest concerns how sequences of coherent micro-texts contribute to the global coherence of a larger text to result in patterns of cohesion and coherence (Askehave and Swales, 2001; Grabe and Kaplan, 1996; Halliday and Hasan, 1976)<sup>7</sup>. Drawing on Halliday and Hasan (1976), cohesion is understood as a surface signal that indicates the relationship between sentences, whereas coherence is associated with organisation, structure and sequence, thus reflecting the underlying relations between propositions. The relationship between both components is one of interdependence and, as Halliday and Hasan (1976: 23) point out, it is linked to extra-linguistic aspects:

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<sup>7</sup> See section 3.4.1 on patterns of cohesion and coherence regarding evaluative discourse and construction of writers' stance.



A text is a passage of discourse, which is coherent in these two regards: it is coherent with respect to the context of the situation, and therefore consistent in register; and it is coherent with respect to itself, and therefore cohesive. Neither of these two conditions is sufficient without the other, nor does the one by necessity entail the other. Just as one can construct passages which seem to hang together in the situational-semantic sense, but fail as texts because they lack cohesion, so also one can construct passages which seem beautifully cohesive but fail as texts because they lack consistency of register – there is no continuity of meaning in relation to the situation.

As noted in the above quotation, Halliday and Hasan (1976) distinguish between cohesion and certain aspects from the context of the situation that shape the coherence of the text. These extra-linguistic elements are mainly of three types, as we outlined above: field (referring to the kind and aims of the interaction), tenor (the interlocutors and the relationship between them) and mode (the channel of communication). Drawing on these assumptions, emphasis is placed on the recognition that extra-linguistic aspects of interaction play an essential role in the construction of coherence.

On the issue of textuality, texts can be examined from a linguistic perspective by regarding them as stretches of language with a structure constituted along linguistic lines. From this point of view, textuality results from internal cohesion and coherence of textual units. However, texts can also be regarded as an integral part of human, psychological and social processes. As research notes, in order to assign coherence to text structure, explicit signals of cohesion within the surface structure of texts are combined with contextual features and readers' mental processes (Bander, 1983; Halliday and Hasan, 1976; Grabe and Kaplan, 1996; Widdowson, 1986). Developing on this view, other researchers conceive coherence relations beyond textual elements as a quality assigned to texts by readers (Beaugrande and Dressler, 1981; Carrell, 1982; Hoey, 1991; Lee, 2002). Whereas Lee (2002) proposes understanding coherence as being internal to the text and internal to the reader, Beaugrande and Dressler (1981)

understand coherence not as a mere feature of texts but rather as the outcome of text users' activating and recovering coherence relations. From this perspective, Hoey (1991) points out that coherence is related to the extent to which a reader finds that the text holds together and makes sense as a unity. In addition to this, according to Carrell (1982), textual coherence must be supplemented by theories that take into account the reader as well as the interactive process that involves the writer and the reader in the creation and comprehension of discourse.

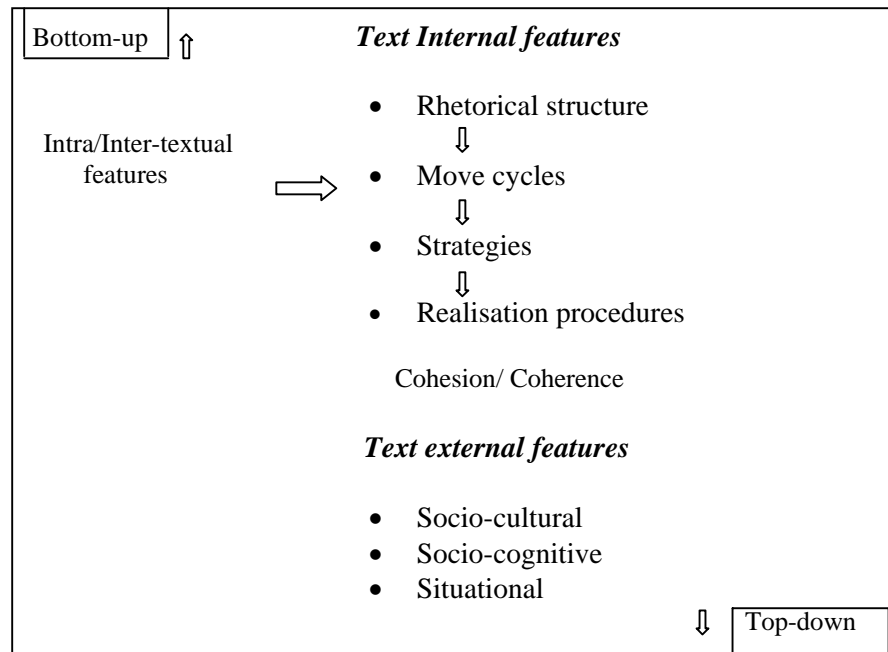
Regarding the study of academic discourse, readers as well as writers are embedded in specific socio-cultural backgrounds and discourse communities, which may influence the way in which discourse is constructed and interpreted. As collective values and procedures are foregrounded, cognitive processes move beyond individuals to be located within genres (Berkenkotter and Huckin, 1995; Johns *et al.*, 2006)<sup>8</sup>. As a result, discourse is embedded in specific socio-cultural backgrounds and discourse communities with their own practices and procedures. In this way, texts are conceived as socially-produced constructs that only have some value when considered in relation to specific social and disciplinary backgrounds (Bhatia, 1993, 2002; Swales, 1990). Taking into account the considerations outlined above, an interdependence of text-internal and text-external features seems the most appropriate framework to undertake the study of academic discourse. As Bhatia (2004: 119) notes, a bottom-up perspective, which focuses on linguistic features of texts as a starting point, needs to be complemented by a top-down approach, which takes external features into account:

Linguistic forms do carry specific generic values, but the only way one can assign the right generic value to any linguistic feature of the genre is by reference to text-external factors. Similarly, any conclusion arrived at purely on the basis of text-external factors needs to be confirmed by reference to text-internal factors.

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<sup>8</sup> See section 1.4.2 for a socio-cognitive approach to genre.

As the above quotation notes, the appropriate interpretation of discourse involves taking into account an interaction of several features. Developing on this and as far as our research is concerned, Figure 1 represents the way in which text-internal and external features interact:



*Figure 1. Interaction of text-internal and text-external features (based on Bhatia, 1993; Ruiz de Mendoza and Ota, 1997 and Swales, 1990)*

As Figure 1 shows, discourse is viewed from a double perspective. On the one hand, texts are addressed as textual structures formed by rhetorical discourse patterns, which develop into move cycles, moves, rhetorical strategies and realisation procedures (Bhatia, 1993; Ruiz de Mendoza and Ota, 1997; Swales, 1990), giving rise to cohesion and coherence in texts (Halliday and Hasan, 1976). As the above model shows, apart from intra-textual relations referring to other parts of the same text, inter-textual ones refer to other texts or authors. In this context, texts are viewed as part of a dynamic process of social production and reception, influenced by other related texts within a particular socio-cultural space. In addition to this, text-external elements (such as socio-

cultural, socio-cognitive and situational features) are taken into account as influencing the construction and appropriate interpretation of discourse (Bhatia, 1993, 2002, 2004; Hyland, 2000). Concerning our research, a dynamic interaction of both internal and external features is regarded as essential, in line with a multi-dimensional model of discourse construction (see Section 1.5 for a detailed account of this view).

## **1.2 Initial approaches to written academic discourse from a register and language for specific and academic purposes perspective**

Developing out of the contributions provided by discourse analysis, there is a new line of research that aims to understand discourse as social interaction and attempts to explain the relationship between forms and functions in specific contexts. In this way, both ‘register’ analysis, on the one hand (Crystal and Davy, 1969; Gustaffsson, 1975; Halliday and Hasan, 1985), and the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) line of research, on the other (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987; Johns and Dudley-Evans, 1991; Swales, 1985; Trimble, 1985), propose to deal with language from a communicative perspective, focusing on function rather than grammar. From different perspectives, both lines of research contribute to further our understanding about why members of specific professional communities use the language the way they do by studying structural and linguistic regularities of particular text-types and the role they accomplish.

One of the earliest approaches to the description of varieties of language use is offered by ‘register’ analysis. The finding that language varies depending on function leads to the description of ‘registers’, which are conceived as comprising an open-ended set of variables (or styles) of language typical of occupational fields, such as the language of legal documents, medical language, technical language, and so forth. At

this initial stage, a number of studies that correlated linguistic features with different varieties of the language were carried out (Barber, 1962; Crystal and Davy, 1969; Gustaffsson, 1975). These studies helped to provide empirical evidence to confirm intuitive statements concerning the presence of certain lexico-grammatical regularities in different registers. However, one of the main problems that register analysis faces has to do with the lack of functional information about those elements in specific discourse varieties. As Bhatia points out, the findings of initial studies remain on the surface level (1993:17):

(...) for many of these studies, a science research article, for example, is as legitimate an instance of scientific English as is an instance from a chemistry lab report. This creates two types of problems. Firstly, it potentially misrepresents not only the communicative purposes of the two genres, but also the relationship between the participants taking part in the linguistic activity, thus obscuring the communicative nature.

As the above quotation points out, the way in which texts are written is influenced to a great extent by the aim and purpose of the exchange. In this respect, subsequent research shows that some specific linguistic features have restricted values in communication and correlations between grammatical choices and rhetorical functions are examined (Selinker *et al.*, 1973). As textual knowledge often remains insufficient to account for functional and structural variation, researchers begin to focus on specialised texts, not as a collection of more or less similar textual objects, but as coded events set within specific communicative processes (Bhatia, 1993; Swales, 1990). In this context, terms such as 'legal' or 'medical' are seen to be misleading since they over-privilege a homogeneity of content at the expense of variation in communicative purpose and addresser-addressee relationships (Swales, 1990). Following on from here, the concepts of register and genre start to be distinguished. While registers are seen to impose

constraints at the linguistic level of vocabulary and syntax, genres are seen to influence the level of discourse structures (Giménez, 2006; Yunick, 1997)

Drawing on these assumptions, research approaches texts as types of goal-directed communicative events embedded in social action and this leads to the conceptualisation of discourse as genre (Martin, 1993; Miller, 1984). Initial research on written academic discourse focuses on how knowledge is constructed within disciplinary groups and foregrounds the fact that academic language cannot be totally objective and impersonal (Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984; Latour and Woolgar, 1979). Within this context the research article is conceived as an ideological instrument of the academic community, where statements reflect forms of culturally determined knowledge (Knorr-Cetina, 1981). This acceptance extends to other fields of knowledge, thus leading to the study of writing as a social act understood with reference to a specific social context. At this stage, there is a move beyond a study of language mainly confined to surface level features to a more comprehensive line of research including sociological, cognitive and cultural aspects.

Another line of research focusing on texts from a functional point of view is that proposed by the ESP field of study, which deals with language use in relation to particular contexts and situations (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987; Johns and Dudley-Evans, 1991). The ESP field has a communicative focus and includes two different perspectives. On the one hand, it may be seen as focusing on the communicative conventions of academic discourse across different disciplinary backgrounds and, on the other, it deals with how writers learn to use knowledge of conventions in specific academic and professional settings (Alcón, 2001; Cheng, 2006b; Fortanet, Palmer and Posteguillo, 2001; Salazar and Usó, 2001; Safont, 2001; Wishnoff, 2000). Within this

approach, an applied pedagogic perspective is regarded as complementary to a more theoretically based line of research.

With regard to different types and levels of specialisation, in order to achieve successful communication academics need to know about specific uses of the language that may involve not only a range of specialised lexico-grammatical choices but also certain shared principles and procedures aimed at facilitating communication among different professionals within a field (Alcaraz, 2000; Gläser, 1995; Garcés and Gómez-Morón, 2001; Fortanet, Posteguillo, Palmer and Coll, 1998; Martínez and Alcón, 2004; Piqué and Viera, 1997; Paltridge, 2001). In connection with this, Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 16) refer to different categories of ESP: English for Science and Technology (EST), English for Business and Economics (EBE) and English for the Social Sciences (ESS). Thus, specialised uses of the language may be conceived as varieties adopted by a specific professional group in relation to the activity they develop (Widdowson, 1998: 3):

The very term English for Specific Purposes implies that it is English, which is somehow peculiar to the range of principles and procedures which define that particular profession; and so we have English which is specific, associated with a kind of institutional activity.

Within this context, the use of English for professional and academic purposes is related to its role as a 'lingua franca' (Alcón, 2007; Bhatia, 1997b; Crystal, 1997, Kanoksilapatham, 2005; Palmer, 2004; Swales and Feak, 2000; Vold, 2006). As English has acquired the status of an international language, becoming one of the main channels for advancing academic knowledge, researchers need to be able to express themselves in appropriate ways as members of the international community. In this way, academic English has an essential role as a means of maintaining and extending a

disciplinary group's knowledge within the conventions defined by specific communities of practice (Herzberg, 1986; Ozturk, 2007; Swales, 1988, 1990).

Developing from here, the mastery of academic discourse implies that not only grammatical aspects or specialised vocabulary need to be taken into account, but also communicative and discourse-oriented issues. From this perspective, research addresses aspects in relation to rhetorical structure and conventionally used strategies (Kanoksilapatham, 2005; Vold, 2006), pragmatic and discursive competence (Dahl, 2004; Fortanet *et al.*, 2001; Hyland, 2004b) as well as cultural issues (Mauranen, 1993a; Melander, 1998). In this respect, bearing in mind the wide range of aspects academics need to master, some researchers point out that whereas writers need to be able to make use of dominant discourse norms, they also have choices that allow them to manifest their own identity as writers (Bhatia, 1993, 2004; Martín, 2003a; Harwood and Hadley, 2004).

As a result, knowledge of academic English includes a wide range of linguistic and discursal aspects that vary in relation to the writer's communicative purpose. Within this context, and as far as our own research is concerned, emphasis is placed upon appropriate linguistic and strategic choices used by writers to be considered as accepted members in academic forums of interaction.

### **1.3 A pragmatic and relevance-theoretic approach to discourse**

Another research line that approaches the study of texts by moving beyond surface forms is proposed by pragmatics (Brown and Levinson, 1987; Grice, 1975; Levinson; 1987) and relevance-theoretic analyses of discourse (Sperber and Wilson, 1986). These complementary lines of research are concerned with the underlying meanings of words



and how intentions and interpretations are recovered on the part of interlocutors. Both discourse perspectives offer some valuable insights into the study of language, although they also present some limitations as applied to the study of written academic discourse, as we outline below (Aguilar, 2002; Hyland, 2000; Varttala, 2001).

First, pragmatics is especially interested in the relationships between language and context, noting that the realisation of form varies according to function (Leech, 1983; Levinson, 1983; Paltridge, 1995). From this perspective, grammatical as well as socio-cultural and cognitive features are addressed. Within the realm of pragmatics, a distinction is made between ‘pragmalinguistics’ and ‘sociopragmatics’ (Thomas, 1983). The former focuses on the use of certain linguistic forms in order to perform specific functions appropriately, while the latter deals with the influence of social factors on the appropriateness of the linguistic forms. Concerning the interpretation of meaning, pragmatics also addresses the relation between what is said and what is meant, while acknowledging that surface forms may have various underlying meanings<sup>9</sup> (Grice, 1975; Levinson, 1987). In connection with this, an inferential model of communication implies that the recognition of the intended meanings by interlocutors follows a Cooperative Principle, which involves various universal maxims, such as ‘cooperation’, ‘relevance’, ‘informativeness’, ‘honesty’ and ‘clarity’ (Grice, 1975). Departure from the main Cooperative Principle may be caused by reasons that have to do with politeness, thus giving rise to pragmatic implications in relation to the principle of politeness in language (Brown and Levinson, 1987; Leech, 1983).

Drawing on the above assumptions, Brown and Levinson (1987) propose a model of interaction based on the notion of politeness that tries to account for particular linguistic choices and realisation strategies as being specifically related to the damaging

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<sup>9</sup> This idea was first suggested by the Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969).

impact of certain claims. When this model is applied to the study of written academic discourse, it is argued that the impositional impact of claims may be redressed so as to reduce their impact on other members of the academic community (Cherry, 1988b; Myers, 1985, 1989; Scollon, R. and Scollon, S., 1995). The notion of impositional impact is also related to the concept of 'face' (Goffman, 1967, 1981), which concerns striking a balance between the desire to be approved of (positive face) and acting without being impeded (negative face). Within this context, strategies such as hedging are interpreted as politeness devices employed to minimise any possible damage that interaction may cause<sup>10</sup>. However, as Hyland (2000) points out, the significance of writers' rhetorical choices in academic discourse cannot be fully explained by this approach.

Taking into account that the politeness framework is based on conversational behaviour, the assumptions deriving from it are not always entirely satisfactory as motivating strategic choices in academic discourse (Hyland, 1997, 2000; Varttala, 2001). As Hyland (2000: 116) also observes, the purposes of interaction in academic discourse and the consequences for participants deriving from it are different:

Engagement in disciplinary forums therefore involves norms of interpersonal behaviour, which are underpinned by the sanctions inherent in a system of academic recognition and rewards that hinges on publication (...). It is undoubtedly correct that academic writers engage in conflict avoidance and that they weigh up the effects of their statements when communicating with their peers, but this is not to say that interaction is based on individual judgements of imposition or entitlements to deference.

As the above quotation notes, the notion of politeness cannot explain the full significance of writers' rhetorical choices. Along the same lines, Varttala (2001: 76)

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<sup>10</sup> Some researchers (Culpeper, 1996; Lakoff, 1989; Tracy, 1990) refer not only to 'politeness' strategies but also to 'impoliteness' strategies within academic discourse.

points out that conventions are a reflection of the discursual norms of the academia, suggesting that hedging, for instance, cannot be accounted for by reference to politeness<sup>11</sup>. As pointed out above, conventions established within a disciplinary or discourse community are seen to have a strong influence on the writer's way of presenting claims and opinions.

Apart from the above-mentioned limitations, Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness framework is also subjected to additional criticism by Slugowski and Turnbull (1998) as these authors point out that this framework does not fully account for the role of affect in language. Similarly, Meier (1997) also criticises the underlying universality of face wants in connection with this conceptualisation and points out that any classification of strategies is culture bound. Moreno (1997) shares this view and emphasises that rhetorical strategies are linked to cultural background and thus they may be perceived as appropriate or inappropriate depending on whether the target audience shares the same attitudes as the writer. In this respect, a further criticism concerns the proposed relation between the notion of politeness and the dimension of indirectness in language (Brown and Levinson, 1987), which is rejected by subsequent research on the grounds that many languages favour direct realisations of politeness (Valero-Garcés, 1996). In this vein, Martín (2003a) points out that a discourse community's expectations are the primary reason for cross-cultural differences in writing styles. As a result, interaction between the writer and the reader needs to be regarded within specific socio-cultural circumstances to be interpreted appropriately. Thus, despite the fact that a pragmatic approach to language raises some relevant issues such as the recognition that interpretation is not always directly recoverable from

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<sup>11</sup> We deal with the notion and role of hedging in Chapter 2, Section 2.2.1.

textual form, this conceptualisation of interaction is considered to be limited when it is applied to the study of academic discourse.

Another view that tries to explain deals how communication takes place is suggested by Sperber and Wilson's (1986) relevance theory. This approach, originally applied to utterance interpretation, is regarded as being embedded within a general theory of human cognition and communication. Regarded as an alternative model for pragmatic inference, relevance theory leaves interpretation open to a shared cognitive environment between interlocutors. In this way, it provides a contrast with pragmatics that establishes some guiding principles to interpret interaction. Regarding the study of academic discourse, this approach tries to account for how effective communication is achieved by describing a contextual framework for maximising effective communication. According to Sperber and Wilson (1986), writers are interested in producing persuasive texts that communicate intended meanings and interpretations with the minimum mental effort required. On the other hand, readers are interested in a productive comprehension of texts within an optimal relevance contextual framework.

However, some points concerning the analysis that this relevance-theoretic framework offers of how academic writers employ discourse are not without certain limitations, as subsequent research has highlighted (Aguilar, 2002; Sperber and Wilson, 2005). First of all, as Aguilar (2002) notes, a major criticism of relevance-theoretic assumptions is that they are based on a cognitive view of interaction and largely disregard social elements of communication. In addition to this, issues such as the writer's purpose of interaction as well as variations concerning the degree of relevance are dealt with in a very general way. It is significant that Sperber and Wilson (1995) themselves modify their first initial view by adding some relevant revisions that assign more realism and specificity to the concept of relevance. Thus, reference is made to

contextual variables such as personal abilities, attitudes and emotions, together with cultural and communal values<sup>12</sup>.

Developing on this issue, several researchers have taken the relevance-theoretic analysis as the starting point of their investigations (Aguilar, 2002; Ifantidou, 2001, 2005). On the one hand, in her study on academic lectures and seminars, Aguilar (2002) tries to overcome the above-mentioned limitations concerning the relevance-theoretic analysis by combining it with a genre approach. Within this context, relevance is located in relation to the notion of 'situated cognition'<sup>13</sup>, cognitive processes being located beyond individuals and in connection with socio-cultural features. In this way, a more realistic picture is provided, where individual and personal features are combined with cultural and communal ones to help specify the concept of relevance. Following this line of research, Ifantidou (2001, 2005) also develops an analysis of metadiscourse devices that focuses on the effect that the presence (or absence) of these elements has on interpretation as far as presumptions of relevance and processing effort are concerned.

Taking into account the above-mentioned difficulties, a relevance-theoretic approach to discourse contributes to highlight inferential processes related to interpretation issues. However, relevance theory on its own cannot fully account for the choices that writers employ in academic discourse. Thus, the role of socio-cultural aspects needs to be taken into account in dealing with academic communication, as they may influence the preferences for certain rhetorical strategies and patterns of interaction.

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<sup>12</sup> See Sperber and Wilson's (1995) additional Postface.

<sup>13</sup> See Section 1.4 for genre approaches to discourse and 1.4.2 for an account of the notion of 'situated cognition'.

#### **1.4 Genre approaches to discourse**

Genre analysis contributes to analyse discourse as the study of situated language behaviour by proposing genres as regularities of staged, goal-oriented social processes (Martin, 1992), types of social and rhetorical action (Miller, 1984; Berkenkotter and Huckin, 1995) or discourse mainly developed out of a consistency of communicative purposes (Swales, 1990; Bhatia, 1993). In whatever way genre analysis is defined, a generic approach to discourse contributes to the study of socially-situated interactions in written academic texts.

Concerning the notion of 'genre', initial terminological difficulties as well as defining criteria concerning genre classifications create some problems (Trosborg, 1997: 3):

How do genres relate to register and text types? How is one genre to be identified and distinguished from other genres? Are the defining criteria text-internal, or is the classification based on text-external criteria, or both? Do we need uni-criterial or multi-criterial classification systems? What are the characteristics of specific genres?

As the above quotation shows, the issue of genre identification is a complex one, since a genre is neither a text type nor a situation but rather the functional relationship established between them. Therefore, in an attempt to account for genre-defining criteria, different approaches are proposed with variations in the emphasis associated with socio-rhetorical, socio-cultural and socio-cognitive aspects that affect the construction of discourse. As Flowerdew (2002: 91) points out, different traditions or ways to approach discourse are related to the degree of emphasis made on linguistic and non-linguistic dimensions:

The ESP and Australian school (...) apply theories of functional grammar and discourse, concentrating on the lexico-grammatical and rhetorical realisation of communicative purposes embodied in a genre, whereas the New Rhetoric group (...) is more focused on situational context – the purposes and functions of genres and the attitudes, beliefs, values and behaviours of the members of the discourse community in which the genres are situated.

Although the views mentioned above share overlapping insights, some differential points may involve the way in which linguistic and socio-cultural dimensions are integrated (Devitt *et al.*, 2004; Flowerdew, 2005; Hyon, 1996). The conception of genre leads to a multi-dimensional approach, which highlights the fact that linguistic and socio-cultural aspects should be regarded as complementary (Bhatia, 2002, 2004). Similarly, Hyland (1997) and Johns *et al.* (2006) emphasise that genre approaches to discourse imply a smooth relationship that involves the text, the context and the writer's purposes.

#### 1.4.1 A socio-rhetorical approach to genre

One of the most influential approaches to genre is that provided by a socio-rhetorical account, according to which textual regularities found in texts may be interpreted as a result of conventions that may influence discourse patterns (Swales, 1990; Bhatia, 1993). Within this framework, target genres are addressed as conventional ways of constructing discourse, since they signal and reflect the norms of a specific discourse community. Developing from here, a socio-rhetorical account of the notion of genre is provided by Swales (1990: 58):

A genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some sets of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognised by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style. Communicative purpose is both a privileged criterion and one that operates to keep the scope of a genre, as here conceived, narrowly focused on comparable rhetorical action. In addition to purpose, exemplars of a genre exhibit various patterns of similarity in terms of structure, style, content and intended audience (...).

As a main defining criterion of a genre, the above definition highlights its communicative purpose that influences choices of content, style and rhetorical structure<sup>14</sup>. Within this framework, in addition to the purpose or aim of the interaction, communicative events are also related to other influential features such as the role of the participants or the circumstances surrounding genre production and reception. Developing on this issue, Swales (1990: 44-55) further elaborates his definition with five additional observations:

- A genre is a class of communicative events.
- The principal criterial feature that turns a collection of communicative events into a genre is some set of communicative purposes.
- Exemplars of instances of genres vary in their prototypicality.
- The rationale behind a genre establishes constraints on allowable contributions in terms of content, positioning and form.
- A discourse community's nomenclature for genres is an important source of insights.

Genres are conceived of as communicative events reflecting a communicative purpose. As Askehave and Swales (2001: 195) point out, genres may often involve not just one but a set of communicative purposes. Therefore, the concept of

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<sup>14</sup> Although Swales' research (1990) mainly focuses on written genres, this definition is a broad one and could be applied to a great variety of genres.



‘communicative purpose’ presents itself as complex, multiple and variable. As regards genre membership, the issue of prototypicality or ‘family resemblance’ is introduced, thereby allowing for different combinations of basic features of the same genre. In this way, it is suggested that texts are spread over a continuum of approximation to prototypical generic exemplars (Swales, 1990). Along these lines, the notion of ‘generic structure potential’ (Hasan, 1989) aims at identifying compulsory or ‘genre defining’ elements as well as optional ones in order to delimit the extent to which a text may be regarded as an exemplar of a specific genre. Similarly, Bhatia’s (2004) notion of ‘generic integrity’ focuses on the issue of closely related and overlapping genres from a more dynamic perspective by dealing with how genres may result from a mixture of communicative purposes.

Within this framework, the relation between texts and participants is understood within a particular discursive space and linked to the notion of ‘discourse community’ as a way of contextualising discourse within a socio-rhetorical framework. Thus, Swales (1990: 24-27) offers some criteria as to what a discursive space implies and suggests that a discourse community shares some set of common public goals and conventions recognised by the members of the community. In this respect, communicative needs linked to discourse purposes or goals are regarded as influencing the construction of texts to a greater extent than other needs such as socialisation or group solidarity, which are viewed as secondary. The use of specific lexis corresponding to specialist topics, together with mechanisms for intercommunication and participation among the community members are considered to contribute to maintain and extend the group’s knowledge. Within this context, the role of participant writers is linked to the survival of the community in relation to the ways expert and novice writers respond to the community’s conventions.

Taking the above assumptions into consideration, Swales' (1981, 1988, 1990) approach is one of the most influential of those put forward to help explain how discourse is constructed in specific contexts. Subsequent research also conceives discourse communities as socio-rhetorical disciplinary networks that organise their members around common goals and values (Motta-Roth, 1998; Hyland, 2000), thereby highlighting the role of writers in relation to the development of conventions and innovations (Bhatia, 2002, 2004; Hyland, 1977; Prior, 1998). Following on from here, a further contribution of Swales' (1990) proposal concerns 'move' analysis, which is used to propose an explanation of how structural patterns in texts result in complete textual units. In this way, optional and obligatory structural elements are focused on as well as their relation to communicative purpose. Drawing on this proposal of interpreting discourse in terms of 'moves', Swales (1990) develops the CARS (Create a Research Space) model and applies it to the study of research article abstracts.

Along these lines, subsequent research has used the 'move' methodological analysis to provide valuable insights into the rhetorical structure of individual sections of research articles, including abstracts (Hyland, 2000; Martín, 2003a; Samraj, 2005), results (Brett, 1994; Williams, 1999) or discussions and conclusions (Holmes, 1997; Yang and Allison, 2003). Drawing on these assumptions, other researchers apply the above-mentioned 'move analysis' framework to the study of academic discourse in order to study allowable move order and construction (Anthony, 1999; Bhatia, 1993, Dudley-Evans, 1994; Kwan, 2006; Peacock, 2002; Samraj, 2002). Furthermore, move variability is studied across disciplines (Crossley, 2006; Kanoksilapatham, 2005; Henry and Roseberry, 2001; Hwa, 2006; Kwan, 2006; Mungra, 2007; Peacock, 2002; Samraj, 2002, 2005) and even sub-disciplines within a specific field (Ozturk, 2007)<sup>15</sup>. Thus,

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<sup>15</sup> Ozturk (2007) reports differences concerning move construction in two sub-disciplines within applied linguistics.

possible variations in move construction are regarded as contributing to build patterns of rhetorical structure, which in turn relate to higher level ‘move’ cycles (Bhatia, 1993; Peacock, 2002).

However, despite having generated a great deal of research, there are also certain limitations and difficulties involved in the ‘move’ identification criteria<sup>16</sup>. First of all, the absence of explicit rules to mark move boundaries raises some limitations concerning this kind of analysis (Holmes, 2001; Lewin and Fine, 1996). As research notes, the subjectivity of the researcher plays a crucial role concerning interpretation, since moves are mainly identified from a semantic point of view (Hyland, 2000; Paltridge, 1994). Thus, several criteria for intra-coder and inter-coder reliability are proposed by Crookes (1986) in an attempt to reduce the degree of subjectivity implied by this type of analysis. Despite the limitations outlined here, Swales’ (1990) analytical framework is, in our view, one of the strongest descriptions of text structure that provides valuable insights about the way in which texts are constructed in specific rhetorical situations. By highlighting the importance of the purpose of communication, Swales (1990, 2004a) emphasises that differences among genres are due to features such as the rhetorical purpose, the degree of cultural-specific tendencies or the extent to which producers are expected to consider the intended audience. Thus, although move analysis may pose some difficulties for the analyst, the rhetorical structure of texts is considered crucial as regards to the way persuasion is achieved.

Along these lines and as far as our purposes are concerned, Swales’ (1990) approach provides a relevant framework for contextualising our study of writers’ evaluative choices, which tries to shed some light on how meaning is constructed through textual patterns. However, one aspect that differentiates our line of research

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<sup>16</sup> Later revised by Swales (2004a), where reference is made to some of the difficulties that ‘move’ analysis implies.

from Swales' analysis is related to the fact that our investigation is concerned with rhetorical strategies and their realisation procedures rather than 'moves' (or higher level rhetorical units). Within this framework, writers' rhetorical choices are explained as a reflection of a specific discourse community's conventionalised norms and practices.

#### 1.4.2 A Socio-cognitive approach to genre

Drawing on Swales' (1990) conception of genre, a socio-cognitive approach to discourse contributes to create a more comprehensive view of genre in which cognitive features as well as socio-rhetorical considerations are taken into account (Bhatia, 1993, 1995, 2002, 2004)<sup>17</sup>. According to Bhatia (1993: 13), Swales' (1990) conception of genre is lacking in the development of a socio-cognitive dimension and thus the following definition of genre is proposed:

(...) it is a recognisable communicative event characterised by a set of communicative purpose(s) identified and mutually understood by the members of the professional or academic community in which it regularly occurs. Most often, it is highly structured and conventionalised with constraints on allowable contributions in terms of their intent, positioning, form and functional value. These constraints, however, are often exploited by the expert members of the discourse community to achieve private intentions within the framework of socially recognised purpose(s).

As the above quotation shows, there are some overlapping features with Swales' (1990) conception, such as the emphasis on a specific set of communicative goals or conventions. However, Bhatia's (1993: 15-16) conceptualisation differs from Swales' (1990) in that it includes a cognitive level of genre construction:

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<sup>17</sup> As noted in Section 1.4, differences among different approaches have to do with how context and text are integrated as complementary dimensions.

Swales offers a good fusion of linguistic and sociological factors in his definition of genre; however, he underplays psychological factors, thus undermining the importance of tactical aspects of genre construction, which play a significant role in the concept of genre as a dynamic social process against a static one.

From this perspective (Bhatia, 1993), genre is understood as a system where multiple beliefs and practices overlap within a dynamic framework. While Swales' (1990) approach is regarded as static to a certain extent, Bhatia's (2002, 2004) conception fully develops a more dynamic view of genre and presents a multi-dimensional model of discourse that takes into account textual as well as socio-cognitive dimensions. The following figure illustrates this conception of genre, which has been developed out of a socio-cognitive domain and structured taking into account different planes of discourse and knowledge perspectives:

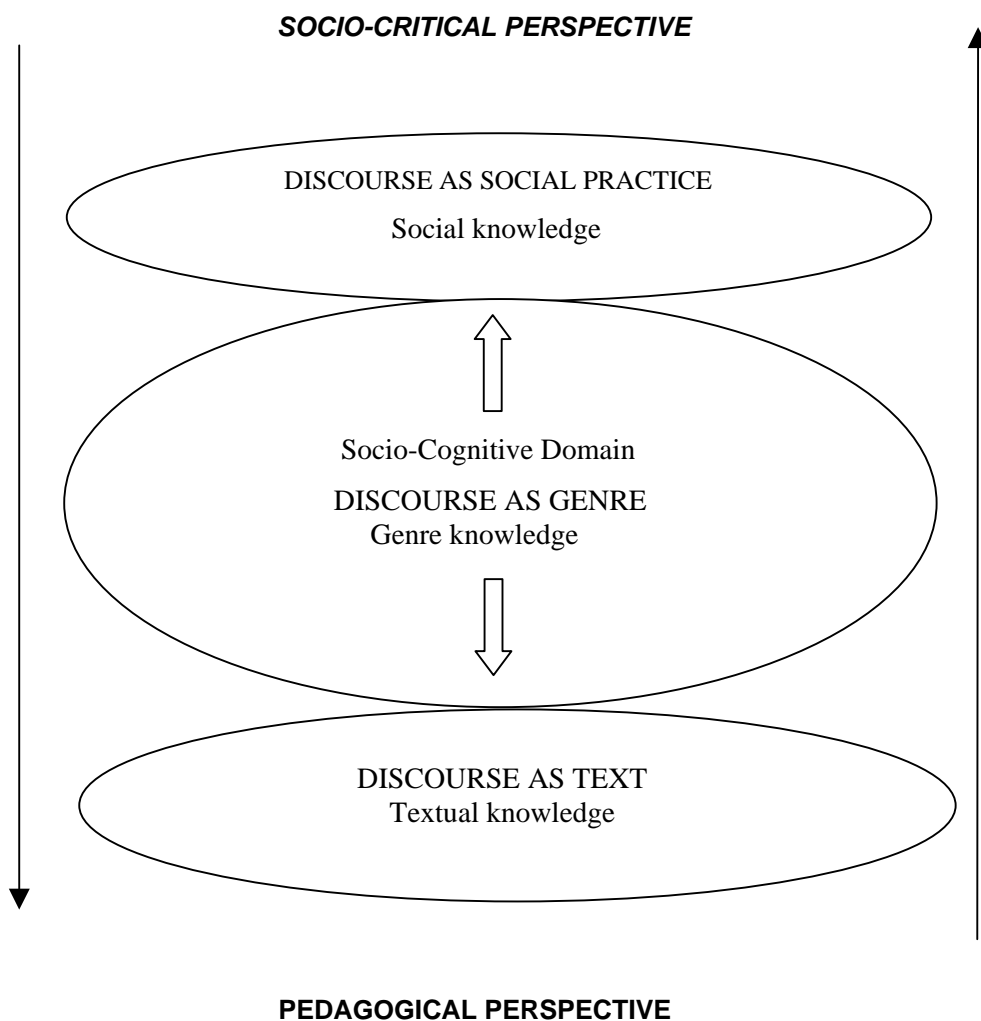


Figure 2. *Genre knowledge and perspectives on written discourse (based on Bhatia, 2002, 2004)*

As the figure above shows, Bhatia's (2002, 2004) representation of discourse aims at proposing an appropriate framework to analyse written text that comprises different dimensions, types of knowledge and perspectives<sup>18</sup>. On the one hand, 'discourse as text' refers to the textual dimension of discourse, which focuses on the properties associated with the construction of texts rather than on their interpretation or use. On the other hand, besides a textual dimension, other features such as social and socio-

<sup>18</sup> This framework of analysis (Bhatia, 2002, 2004) applied to written discourse may be extended to a great variety of genres.

cognitive factors are referred to as influencing communication. In this way, knowledge on textual patterning and rhetorical structures as well as socio-cultural and socio-cognitive features of genre construction are regarded as interrelated. As the outlined model shows, discourse is understood as 'genre', thus accounting not only for the way a text is constructed but also for the way it is interpreted and used. From this point of view, discourse moves beyond the textual product to incorporate context in a broader sense. In addition to highlighting different discourse dimensions, Bhatia's approach (2004) also contributes to dealing with texts from different perspectives. Hence, whereas a socio-linguist might initially address how social context may influence texts, an applied linguist may follow the opposite direction by focusing first on the textual construction of discourse as a way to explain certain linguistic choices. As Bhatia (2002, 2004) points out, the focus of genre investigation may vary from a close linguistic study of text as product to a study into the dynamic complexity of communicative practices of professional and academic communities. In connection with this, a socio-critical perspective aimed at interpreting genres in real life as well as a pedagogical perspective (dealing with the teaching and learning of genres) are also considered as possible orientations.

Drawing on the above assumptions, one of the main contributions of Bhatia's (1993, 2002, 2004) approach concerns a dynamic view of the notion of genre, which deals with how the writer's own voice interacts with the discourse community's conventions and values in a dynamic way. Within this view, discursive practices (such as choice of appropriate genres) and discursive procedures (different ways of carrying out disciplinary activities) shared by discourse communities are also constantly being reconstructed. In this way, new forms of communication may emerge as a result of the fact that generic practices and conventions evolve over time, thus giving rise to

complex communicative realities. For instance, recent Internet forums of academic exchange (Hyland, 2002e) may be regarded as an example of the intercommunication process that takes place among scholars within an academic community, together with other genres such as review articles or book reviews. In connection with this, Bhatia (1995, 1997b, 2004) notes that expert writers may exploit generic conventions successfully by combining writer identity with socially recognised purposes and conventions. Developing further on this issue, other researchers point out that conventions should be viewed as possibilities rather than constraints and favour an interaction between conventions and individual expression (Hyland, 2000; Motta-Roth, 1998).

A further issue of interest concerns the difficulties raised by genre identification and delimitation of generic boundaries, since the communicative intentions within a professional or academic world may be complex (Bhatia, 1997a):

First, to what extent can genres, and therefore generic forms and conventions, be exploited or taken liberties with in order to introduce innovations to achieve more complex communicative purposes in response to novel communicative situations? Secondly, to what extent can one do it safely without opting out of the genre? Thirdly, are there any crucial boundaries? If so, how can these boundaries be defined?

The question of what kinds of conventions can be safely exploited or what kind of private intentions may be compatible with socially recognised ones is a crucial issue. With reference to generic integrity and genre identification, Bhatia (1993) deals with how major or minor changes, as far as communicative purpose is concerned, may influence genre membership. In this way, whereas minor changes in communicative purpose(s) are likely to result in sub-genres within the same genre, a major change tends to result in a different genre. With regard to this issue, Bhatia (1993) refers to



‘discriminative’ and ‘non-discriminative strategies’, depending on whether they introduce (or not) additional considerations in the communicative purpose of texts that may influence genre significantly.

Regarding communicative intentions, Bhatia (1997a, 2004) also notes some terminological difficulties. For instance, it is not uncommon for different names to be used to refer to the same genre, thus raising questions as to its main communicative purpose. In this way, regarding introductory genres, different titles such as ‘introduction’, ‘foreword’, ‘preface’ or ‘overview’ are used. An additional example referring to the ‘response’ article also illustrates this point with references to this genre by means of names such as ‘forum’, ‘point-counter-point’ or ‘a response to ... article’. Regarding the different titles that may be observed, despite the high degree of overlap in communicative purpose, title variation may be related to a number of minor communicative purposes incorporated in each genre (Bhatia, 1997a). In connection with this issue, a dynamic way of interpreting these slight differences may be in relation to the concept of ‘colony of genres’, which is conceived as a set of interrelated generic forms that present similar communicative purposes (Bhatia, 2004). Within this framework, these variations may be linked to essential or peripheral elements of a colony. Issues concerning generic integrity and generic boundaries often result in complex hybrid, mixed and embedded genres where genre-mixing is distinguished from genre-embedding by the extent of involvement of one genre into another (Bhatia, 1998, 2002, 2004). The concept of ‘genre colony’ has been applied by researchers such as Ruiz (2004) and Luzón (2005) to deal with a variety of report-writing genres.

In addition to the issues outlined above, and as far as the textual dimension of generic construction is concerned, the move analysis approach proposed by Swales (1990) is also employed within Bhatia’s (1993) analysis. It aims at dealing with the

construction of rhetorical patterns by focusing on how rhetorical structure varies to adapt and meet particular demands in specific academic genres and disciplines. Hence, regarding research on related genres, Bhatia (2004) proposes the notion of ‘genre sets’, which is conceived of as a set of interdependent related genres. For instance, Samraj (2005) applies this concept to the study of abstracts and introductions as forming a set of two related genres across different disciplines.

In our view, Bhatia’s (1993, 2002, 2004) approach contributes to the study of genre by proposing a dynamic view of genre and stressing the role of socio-cognitive features in the construction and interpretation of texts. The notion of genre is understood as a multi-dimensional concept, comprising complementary perspectives and different kinds of knowledge. In this way, genres are regarded as complex communicative realities in which writers’ expressive values are combined with communal ones. Concerning our research, as we specifically examine the use of evaluative resources, the view outlined above provides a suitable context within which to analyse how the writer’s personal voice is conveyed. Additionally, a generic approach to discourse helps to shed some light into how the interaction is established with the reader within a specific disciplinary field to create discourse that is at the same time appropriate and persuasive.

A further elaboration and extension on the socio-cognitive dimension of genre is provided by Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995). As genres are conceived of as regularities of goal-oriented social processes, this view emphasises the social and cognitive aspects of discourse communities<sup>19</sup>. Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995) develop a socio-cognitive theory of genre, which places emphasis upon the role of the community within which interaction takes place. According to Berkenkotter and Huckin’s (1995) theory of *situated cognition*, genres are understood as inherently dynamic rhetorical structures

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<sup>19</sup> A socio-cognitive view to discourse does not imply that rhetorical aspects are not taken into account. As outlined in Section 1.4, different approaches place a different degree of emphasis concerning linguistic and non-linguistic dimensions.

that can be manipulated according to the conditions of use. In this way, genre knowledge is best conceptualised as a form of situated cognition embedded in disciplinary cultures<sup>20</sup>. In order to develop their concept of genre, Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995) propose a theoretical framework consisting of five principles:

- *Dynamism*: quality of genres of being dynamic rhetorical forms that serve to stabilise experience and give it coherence and meaning, while changing over time in response to their users' socio-cognitive means.
- *Situatedness*: form of situated cognition derived from and embedded in the participation in communicative activities within disciplinary communities.
- *Form and Content*: content of the field and the forms used, including a sense of what is appropriate to a particular purpose in a particular situation.
- *Duality of structure*: the two directions in which genre conventions operate by constituting social structures and at the same time reproducing them.
- *Community ownership*: information about the textual dynamics of the discourse communities involved, which is obtained by exploring the genres of professional and disciplinary communication.

As the above principles show, Berkenkotter and Huckin's (1995) approach presents many points in common with Bhatia's (1993, 2004) view, which was outlined above, in that it emphasises dynamism and the socio-cognitive dimension of genre. Additionally, attention to formal rhetorical structures as well as contextual features are taken into account. Within this framework, knowledge about genre is grounded within disciplinary communities as a way to construct and reproduce the community's social

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<sup>20</sup> Becher (1989) and Lave and Wenger (1991) also refer to the notion of 'disciplinary cultures'.

practices. The notion of 'situated cognition' emphasises that language, cognition and culture are sociologically and ideologically related. In contrast to Bhatia's (1993, 2002, 2004) view, a differential point concerning this line of research is related to where the cognitive processes are located. Whereas in Bhatia's approach a greater degree of emphasis is placed on writers and the possibilities they have to deal with generic conventions, in Berkenkotter and Huckin's (1995) view, emphasis is placed on the community of practice.

Along these lines, other researchers place emphasis on socio-cognitive features of genre construction. From this perspective, Bazerman (1988: 6, 62) conceives genres as locations within which meaning is constructed by creating social interaction:

A genre consists of something beyond simple similarity of formal characteristics among a number of texts. A genre is socially recognised, repeated strategy for achieving similar goals in situations socially recognised as being similar. A genre provides a writer with a way of formulating responses in certain circumstances and a reader a way of recognising the kind of message being transmitted (...) Thus the formal features that are shared by the corpus of texts in a genre and by which we usually recognise a text's inclusion in a genre are the linguistic/symbolic solution to a problem in social interaction.

Genres contribute to shape writers' thoughts and the interactions that are created. Thus, an adequate account of an academic culture requires an understanding of how discourse features represent and reproduce disciplinary behaviours and knowledge in a social context (Bazerman, 1997; Fairclough, 1995). Drawing on these assumptions, research relates genres to certain 'cognitive schemata', understood as common mental and conceptual sets of associated information, which are predictable expectations of formal patterns in particular communities of language users (Paltridge, 1994; Tannen and Wallat, 1999; Yule, 1996). In this regard, research argues that the discourse

practices of a community are sociologically determined (Fernández, 2000; Fillmore, 2004; Hyland, 2000). Fernández, (2000: 44) suggests the need for a socio-cognitive model of genre within a framework in which 'genre schemata' are related to the production and comprehension of genre types in a discourse community. Along these lines, Fillmore (2004) suggests that, to be successful, writers need to acquire a metacognitive awareness of forms and contexts as well as the discursal strategies needed to engage in interactions and accomplish roles in the target community. Moreover, further research (Hyland, 2000) points out that these disciplinary conventions may not only be recoverable from the textual level, but they may be present in implicit ways and be inferred through a set of established expectations.

As a conclusion, in our view, socio-cognitive approaches to genre offer relevant insights concerning the analysis of discourse, since they deal with cognitive processes located within a generic framework by means of which writers discover what content to include or how to structure it. As far as our research is concerned, as cognitive processes are beyond the scope of our analysis, we address the resulting linguistic and rhetorical choices as realisations of social and ideological influences within a specific discourse community.

#### 1.4.3 An integration of socio-rhetorical and socio-cognitive approaches: understanding social interactions and disciplinary discourses

Developing from the assumptions outlined in the previous section, an approach to genre that integrates socio-rhetorical and socio-cognitive features is needed in order to be able to fully account for what motivates interactions in academic writing, what linguistic features realise these interactions, as well as what strategies and principles are involved. Hence, Hyland (2000) proposes to approach the analysis of genres as multi-

dimensional constructs in which generic practices are understood as ‘disciplinary discourses’. Although this approach presents some overlapping areas with previous views, it particularly emphasises the interaction between ‘registers’, ‘genres’ and ‘disciplines’, thus providing relevant insights concerning the construction of academic discourse. As Hyland (1997) points out, whereas previous approaches to genre, such as those by Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993), explain the interactions between text producers and their discourse communities to a great extent, they are more limited in accounting for how discursive practices are derived from and constrained by scientific cultures, since they remain at a descriptive rather than an explanatory level.

A first issue of interest concerning this integration of views focuses on the relationship between genres and disciplines, with special emphasis on their interdependence. Regarding the dynamic complexity and variation within and across academic disciplines, genre theory is regarded as accounting for discourse across generic boundaries, on the one hand, and also as being sensitive to disciplinary variation, on the other (Hyland, 1997, 2000). Developing on this point, research on this complex interaction between disciplines and genres represents a crucial issue. In this regard, the genre of the research article is studied across different disciplinary fields such as scientific and medical discourse (Hyland, 1998b; Luzón, 1996; Salager-Meyer, 2000, Salager-Meyer and Alcaraz, 2003; Salager-Meyer *et al.*, 2003; Varttala, 2001), social sciences (Martín and Burgess, 2004; Hyland, 2000), applied linguistics (Hyland, 1998a, 2000; Ruiying and Allison, 2004), economics (Bondi, 1999; Burgess and Fagan, 2001; Mauranen, 2003b; Valero-Garcés, 1996; Varttala, 2001) or technology (Fortanet, Palmer and Posteguillo, 2001; Gil *et al.*, 2000; Posteguillo, 1996, 1999). In addition to this, within this view that approaches social interactions as ‘disciplinary discourses’, the

role of the discourse community is foregrounded, thus marking a movement beyond the individual to the collective.

Discourse communities are regarded as sharing particular ways of thinking and constructing knowledge, as well as methodologies and practices, among their community members, which in turn influence how discourse is constructed. Hence, texts are conceived as actions of socially situated writers, which are persuasive only when they employ the social and linguistic conventions used for those specific purposes in the community (Hyland, 1997, 2000, 2002d). Within this context and regarding the interdependence between forms and functions, Hyland (2000) favours an inquiry into how particular functions are expressed through forms to reveal disciplinary preferences of meaning and expression. With reference to levels of analysis, focusing on moves, rhetorical strategies or lexico-grammatical features may depend on the aims of the research. Hyland (1997, 2002d) views the relation between textual form and the underlying contextual features as one of interdependence, in contrast to other genre approaches to discourse that focus on one of these dimensions to a greater extent than the others. On the one hand, informational, rhetorical and stylistic organisation of texts and, on the other hand, socially constructed knowledge are regarded as complementary on the grounds that to be able to account for the selection of particular rhetorical and linguistic choices, extra-textual elements need to be considered.

Developing further on this issue, Hyland (1999a: 5) emphasises the study of academic discourse as interaction and stresses the role of the intended audience in the construction of discourse:

Implicit in every act of academic communication is the writer's awareness of the social context and professional consequences of the writing. Features of discourse are always relative to a particular audience and social purpose and the effectiveness of writers' attempts to communicate depends on their success in analysing and accommodating the needs of readers.

Interaction between the writer and reader is regarded as essential in order to establish an appropriate framework of interaction. As the interactional dimension of discourse is foregrounded, different lines of research focus on issues such as how the audience addressed influences discourse choices (Aguilar, 2002; Kirsch and Roen, 1990; Nwogu, 1991; Parkinson and Adendorff, 2004; Varttala, 2001) and how persuasion is achieved (Hyland, 1998a, 2001b, 2002c; Hyland and Tse, 2004; Thompson, 2001).

On the whole, Hyland's (2000) approach contributes to the study of genre by integrating elements from a rhetorical, a social and a cognitive dimension and represents, in our view, the most comprehensive and appropriate framework to deal with written academic discourse. Thus, for the purposes of our study, we address both formal features of texts and the social functions they accomplish within a disciplinary community. In this way, writers' evaluative strategies in the genre of the 'response' article are dealt with by taking into account how contextual and interactional features influence the strategic choices used by writers.

### **1.5 A multi-dimensional approach to written academic discourse within a generic perspective**

For the purposes of our research, a multi-dimensional conception of genre in which textual, rhetorical and social dimensions of discourse are integrated is regarded as the most appropriate way of dealing with academic discourse. Drawing on the genre theories outlined above, several features are seen as influencing genre construction to different degrees. As research shows, features such as communicative purpose, form, content, social or interactional context may lead to genre variation (Swales, 1990; Bhatia, 1993, 2002, 2004; Hyland, 2000). As a result, and based on a combination of research lines, we propose a multi-dimensional concept of genre.



### 1.5.1 A multi-dimensional concept of genre

One of the basic influences regarding the way discourse is constructed involves communicative purpose. The recognition that genres comprise a system for accomplishing social purposes by verbal means is highlighted by research (Bhatia, 1993; Hyland, 2000; Swales, 1990). Thus, communicative purpose guides language activities in a discourse community. However, as Askehave and Swales (2001: 195) point out, genres may often involve not just one but a set of communicative purposes. In relation to this, Bhatia (1993) considers how certain changes may influence genre membership and acknowledges that clearly defined criteria with which to distinguish satisfactorily between genres and sub-genres are often difficult to set up. Related and overlapping genres (such as 'mixed' or 'embedded' forms) therefore emerge, thus leading to an understanding of any form of discourse as being dynamic and flexible. On this issue, recent research by Ruiying and Allison (2005) also suggests that variations concerning overall communicative purpose may give rise to sub-genres within a specific genre. Thus, in their study of research articles, a theoretical type of article is distinguished from an argumentative one. As these researchers point out differences in communicative function also parallel differences in form, since two organisational models are found: the IMRD (introduction-method-research-discussion) model in contrast to an introduction-argumentation-conclusion model. As a result, the purpose of communication influences how discourse is constructed.

Apart from this, other sources of variation include content, form or contextual elements (socio-cultural or situational context) as complementary aspects that influence the construction of genres. As far as content and form are concerned, writers need to be aware of what type of information is relevant and should be provided in specific

academic areas as well as how to organise it throughout discourse. In this regard, dealing specifically with the activity of reviewing, Hyland (2000) refers to a set of issues that writers tend to focus on, such as the validity and relevance of findings, the appropriateness of the methodological design or the writing style. In connection with this, Motta-Roth (1998) also points out that specific types of discourse develop different 'content schemata'.

In addition to content, form is also considered to play an essential role in discourse, particularly an awareness of how to construct rhetorical patterns. As research points out, how structural patterns are constructed and realised may have relevant consequences concerning the degree of persuasion achieved (Hyland, 2005; Swales, 2004). However, as Paltridge (2000: 114) argues, not every instance of a particular genre must share the same basic structure:

(...) a genre could be identified as containing certain key elements, but it cannot be identified on the basis of its structural organisation (alone). (...) genres may have certain conventional characteristic structures, but it is by no means the case that every instance of the genre is required to have a certain textual structure in order to be considered an instance of that particular genre.

Similarly, Posteguillo (1996) points out that the traditional pattern of IMRD organisation is not used in computing, where there seems to be a consistent use of the introduction and conclusion sections, while the central parts are left open to variation. It is pointed out that this variation is inherent to the notion of genres, which adapt themselves dynamically to meet particular rhetorical demands by researchers in specific disciplines. Thus, structural organisation provides one more relevant dimension in order to deal with the study of genres.

Additional influences on genre construction have to do with features such as socio-cultural and interactional context. The influence of socio-cultural context may refer to several factors such as the disciplinary field or the language background involved. First of all, disciplinary communities are considered to influence genre construction to a great extent (Bhatia, 2004; Flowerdew, 2005; Hyland, 2000). As recent research suggests, variation is observed not only across different disciplines but also between related disciplines or sub-disciplines. Thus, Ozturk, (2007) finds variability in the structure of research article introductions within two disciplines of applied linguistics (second language acquisition and second language writing), which are explained in relation to the concepts of 'established' and 'emerging' fields of research. Secondly, research also highlights the influence of socio-cultural language background (Bloch and Chi, 1995; Martín, 2003a; Moreno, 1997; Salager-Meyer and Alcaraz, 2003). Here, recent research also suggests that socio-cultural and linguistic background often interact with variations in disciplinary context. Thus, Dahl (2004) and Vold (2006) report on the interaction between language and disciplinary background concerning textual structure and epistemic modality markers in research articles, respectively.

A further aspect of variation related to contextual features concerns the situational and interactional framework of discourse. First, features such as participatory mechanisms in a discourse community may vary as a result of changes affecting the context of interaction. For instance, as Pérez-Llantada and Plo (1998: 84) note, the interactive framework of e-mail communication influences the way language is used as well as the interaction created between the addresser and the addressee:

(...) these new discourse typologies are thus featured by a more colloquial and less strict style, the reason being that the language used in this particular context becomes so distended, friendly and relaxed that it resembles to a great extent the patterns of oral conversation.

Along these lines, other researchers (Bhatia, 2004; Gains, 1998; Hyland, 2000) also point out that the mode (or channel) of communication is seen to influence the linguistic forms and strategies used in texts.

In addition to the channel of communication, the interactional relationship established between the writer and the reader also points to another source of variation. Research carried out within and across genres, addressing different audiences, has proved that there is a connection between features of discourse and the particular audiences addressed (Aguilar, 2002; Nwogu, 1991; Varttala, 2001). Whereas Aguilar (2002) suggests that metadiscourse shows significant variations in relation to two distinct situational and communicative contexts such as lectures and seminars, Nwogu (1991) and Varttala (2001) point out that discourse forms and structures vary depending on whether the articles examined are regarded as having a scientific level or a popular scientific character (referred to as ‘science popularisations’).

For our purposes, Bhatia’s (2004) framework that emphasises the interplay between text-internal and text-external aspects of generic integrity, is regarded as a way of providing a more comprehensive view of the multiple sources that may influence the construction of discourse. As ‘text-internal’ features concern lexico-grammatical and rhetorical aspects of texts, text-external features of generic integrity refer to contextual elements, including different socio-cultural and disciplinary backgrounds. According to Bhatia (2004: 123), the relation between text-internal and text-external features is one of interdependence and thus generic integrity should be understood as:

(...) a socially constructed typical constellation of form-function correlations representing a specific professional, academic or institutional communicative construct realising a specific communicative purpose of the genre in question. (...) It is possible to characterise it in terms of text-internal and/or text-external or a combination of such features.

The study of texts cannot be understood without taking into account contextual features related to particular situations and discourse communities. As far as our study on academic discourse is concerned, texts are regarded as units of language, which are socially and contextually dependent. As a result of this complex interaction of features, genres are conceived as dynamic forms representing rhetorical responses in specific disciplinary or cultural backgrounds.

#### 1.5.2 Our approach to written academic discourse

Drawing on the above assumptions, we understand genres as multi-dimensional constructs integrating different features that influence the construction of discourse and thus lead to genre variation. As genre dimensions interact and overlap, the writer needs knowledge to manipulate them for particular purposes. As a way to represent this conceptualisation, Figure 3 below shows the different dimensions of genre and genre knowledge that we need to take into account in order to create appropriate rhetorical responses to specific situations:

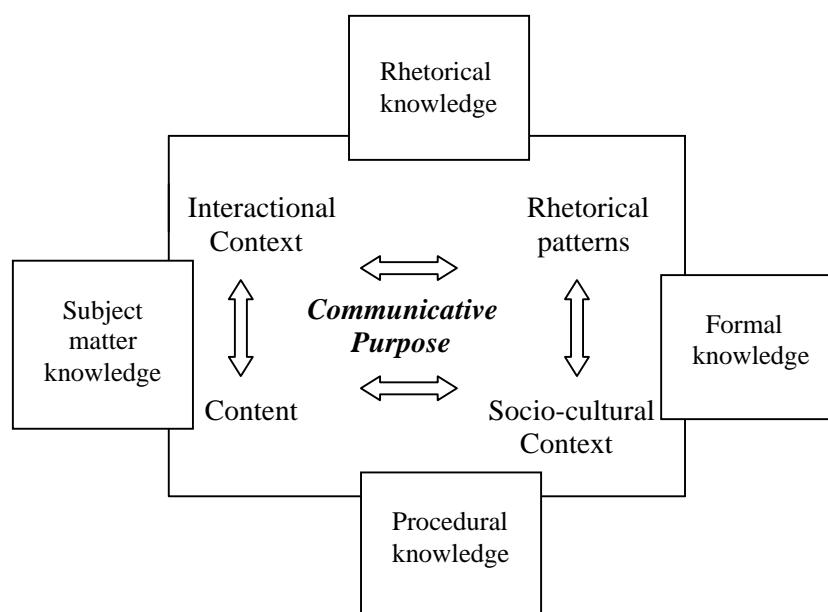
**Genre knowledge**

Figure 3. A multi-dimensional model of genre: genre variation and knowledge (based on Flowerdew, 2005 and Johns et al., 2006)

Genres may be similar or different with respect to one or more dimensions, such as content, structural and rhetorical patterns or socio-cultural and interactional context. Concerning the study of written academic discourse, a multi-dimensional model seems to be the most relevant one to define genre. On the one hand, rhetorical knowledge is needed to be able to create a text that conveys a communicative purpose as a response to a particular situation. Subject matter as well as formal knowledge are crucial in order to be able to create texts which are appropriate from an informational and a formal point of view. In addition to this, procedural knowledge accounts for ways in which different discursive procedures and practices are carried out in specific discourse communities. These knowledge domains interact and overlap to give rise to the

knowledge an expert genre user needs in order to manipulate genres for particular purposes.

In our study, the multi-dimensional model described above is taken into account as we focus on evaluative discourse in ‘response’ articles and explore how particular functions are expressed through forms that reveal disciplinary preferences of meaning. Within this framework, the rhetorical strategies and linguistic means employed to structure discourse are seen to reflect the conventional norms in a given disciplinary community. Thus, our study is in line with a dynamic conception of discourse in which genres are presented as a way to integrate texts and the context in which those texts are produced as a response to a specific rhetorical situation. Thus, our analysis approaches texts as communicative acts within a discursive network. As a result from the assumptions outlined above, we view genres as complex multi-faceted constructs and approach the study of written academic discourse from a dynamic and comprehensive point of view.

### **1.6 Methodological approaches to written discourse**

Following on from the previous section and taking into account the multi-dimensional nature of genres, a relevant issue of concern relates to methodological considerations as to how different approaches deal with this complex interaction of features. As different methodological perspectives have been applied to the study of written academic discourse, they offer different contributions for the analyst. Corpus-based and genre-based analyses are regarded as the two main analytical approaches that provide helpful insights into the study of written academic discourse. As research

emphasises, they do not need to be seen as exclusive perspectives but rather they may be considered as complementary (Drew, 2004; Hyland, 2000; Flowerdew, 2005).

The use of corpora in the study of lexico-grammatical resources in specialised texts attempts to identify and determine the frequency of specific lexico-grammatical resources across fields or genres (Biber and Finegan, 1994; Biber, Conrad and Reppen, 1998; Campoy, 2001; Flowerdew, 2004; Stubbs, 1996). Apart from this, a corpus-based approach may also provide useful information about collocations that occur in the context of a word (Butler, 2003; Campoy, 2001; Gledhill, 2000; Hunston and Sinclair, 2000; Luzón, 2000b; Oakey, 2005; Stubbs and Barth, 2003). However, several limitations have been raised concerning corpus-based approaches used to provide specific functional information, when dealing with rhetorical stages such as 'move' analysis (Holmes, 2001; Peacock, 2002) or pragmatic features of texts (Flowerdew, 2005; Hyland, 2000). Corpus analysis is seen as being limited since the interpretation of corpus data also depends on contextual features (Hunston, 2002; Swales, 2002; Widdowson, 1998). In this regard, the absence of social context for the interpretation of concordance lines is seen as a serious drawback and thus an integration of genre analysis and corpus-based investigations is proposed to examine academic discourse (Flowerdew, 2005; Hyland, 2000; Paltridge, 2000).

Following this line of research, several researchers have conducted corpus-based studies from a genre point of view and have devised discourse tagging systems as a way of relating form to functional content (Connor, Pretch and Upton, 2002; Flowerdew and Dudley-Evans, 2002; Henry and Roseberry, 2001; Kwan, 2006; Peacock, 2002; Upton and Connor, 2001). The variety of phenomena studied is represented by a wide range of research proposals, such as analysing move structure patterning across several sections of written academic texts (Brett, 1994; Holmes, 2001; Kanoksilapatham, 2005; Kwan,



2006; Peacock, 2002), dealing specifically with politeness strategies in relation to cross-cultural differences (Connor, Pretch and Upton, 2002; Upton and Connor, 2001) or addressing interpersonal information in relation to discourse bundles (Biber, Conrad and Cortés, 2004; Cortés, 2004; Hyland, 2008). In addition to this, phraseologies of words are examined and correlated with specific sections or sub-sections of texts, the results of which indicate that the location of a particular item in a text may be of relevance in relation to the overall rhetorical structure (Gea, 2000; Gledhill, 2000; Luzón, 2000b).

Research on evaluation has been approached by applying a corpus analysis integrated with a genre approach as a way to provide explanations for the distribution and use of forms (Hunston and Sinclair, 2000; Oakey, 2005). In this regard, several resources linked to the construction of stance have been examined, including hedging (Hyland, 1998a, 2000; Hyland and Tse, 2004; Fortanet, Palmer and Posteguillo, 2001), self-mentions (Artiga, 2006; Biber *et al.*, 2004; Cortés, 2004; Fortanet, 2004b), attitude markers (Biber and Finegan, 1988, 1989; Conrad and Biber, 2000; Charles, 2003; Gea, 2000, 2004; Gil *et al.*, 2001; Soler, 2002; Stotesbury, 2003) or reporting and attribution clauses (Charles, 2006; Hunston, 2005; Hyland and Tse, 2005; Thompson and Ye, 1991).

However, whenever language is regarded from a functional point of view, the analyst faces several difficulties derived from the 'multi-functionality' of language (Hyland, 2000, 2004; Bhatia, 1993, 2004). As far as form-function correlations are concerned, it is noted that one-to-one correlations are not often possible and the role of subjectivity in interpreting these correlations is foregrounded by research (Holmes, 2001; Paltridge, 1994; Peacock, 2002). Certain restrictions related to the use of discourse tags also reflect additional difficulties (McEnery and Wilson, 1996). In

connection with these limitations, many corpus-based studies also include specialist informants or interviews with experienced writers in the field in order to ensure a faithful interpretation of devices. For instance, Hyland's (1998b) study on hedging in a corpus of research articles includes the reactions of experienced researchers and writers in the academic community regarding the understanding of specific underlined features in the text. In addition to this, group discussions concerning why the forms employed are appropriate are also included. In addition, the use of self-compiled corpora (Biber and Conrad, 2001; Campoy, 2001; Flowerdew, 2005; Lee and Swales, 2006) allows the analyst to work with specialised texts while being familiar with the wider socio-cultural context in which discourse was created. Concerning validation of results, Crookes (1986) also proposed incorporating an inter-coder and intra-coder reliability measure.

Taking these assumptions into account, an integration of approaches is suggested by research as the most suitable way to ensure an appropriate interpretation of corpus data concerning written academic discourse (Drew, 2004; Flowerdew, 2005; Hyland, 2000). In this way, a quantitative interpretation (represented by a corpus approach) is combined with a qualitative one, in line with a multi-dimensional conception of genre (Johns *et al.*, 2006; Devitt *et al.*, 2004). Thus, corpus-based methodologies may be complemented by generic approaches in the same way genre theories can benefit from corpus-based methodologies. According to Hyland (2000: 137):

The quantitative studies allow us to see the extent of variation and similarity in texts and to examine the complex interactions among linguistic features, while the more qualitative interpretations encourage us to understand the communicative functions they serve for the users of these texts.

As far as our purposes are concerned, a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches is especially relevant since, dealing specifically with writers' evaluative

choices, text-internal features need to be interpreted taking into account contextual and situational factors.

To sum up, quantitative as well as qualitative dimensions need to be taken into account and regarded as complementary. As far as our research is concerned and dealing with the genre of the 'response' article, we focus on some specific rhetorical strategies which are seen as recurrent as well as certain lexico-grammatical features such as hedges, boosters and stance bundles. In our view, text-internal and text-external aspects of texts need to be considered. In this way a corpus-based approach may be combined with a generic perspective.



**2. METADISCOURSE AND WRITER' S**  
**STANCE: INTERACTION IN ACADEMIC**  
**DISCOURSE**



In this chapter, we deal with the contribution made by metadiscourse to provide a suitable contextual framework to account for the writer's positioning and evaluative choices. First, we focus on the notion of metadiscourse and how it has been approached by research, with special emphasis on the link between discourse and metadiscourse (Section 2.1). In addition to this, we deal with different metadiscourse models and their contributions to our study (Section 2.1.1). Our research focuses specifically on the construction of writers' stance through the use of interactional metadiscourse devices as ways of conveying evaluation and projecting the writer's personal voice into discourse (Section 2.2). In the following sections, we focus on hedging and boosting devices as ways of negotiating and constructing academic interaction (Section 2.2.1). Taking into account that hedging is a multi-faceted phenomenon, we also deal with the interpretation of hedging as a socio-rhetorical pragmatic strategy (Section 2.2.1.1) and review different taxonomies on hedging devices (Section 2.2.1.1.1). On the other hand, boosters are examined together with hedging devices, as they also play a significant role in constructing interaction (Section 2.2.1.2). Second, stance bundles used to construct writers' positioning are examined in Section 2.2.2, which focuses on the role of bundles to convey the writer's point of view (Section 2.2.2.1) and how writer's stance is constructed through lexical bundles in academic discourse (Section 2.2.2.2). Third, the role of attitude markers in relation to evaluation is examined in Section 2.2.3. Finally, Section 2.4 proposes an approach for the study of stance within a metadiscourse framework and in accordance with a generic view of discourse.

## **2.1 The notion of metadiscourse**

Focusing specifically on the expression of interpersonal choices, metadiscourse constitutes a socio-pragmatic and rhetorical strategy used to convey a particular position within a specific genre and academic community (Alejo, 2005; Dafouz, 2003; Hyland, 1998a; Hyland and Tse, 2004; Luzón, 2000c; Mauranen, 1997). From this perspective, metadiscourse choices include different linguistic and rhetorical resources that help the writer to construct a personal authorial voice.

Initial interest in metadiscourse dates back to the 1980s, when a number of researchers and writing instructors focused on the role that certain linguistic categories play in the organisation of discourse and in the expression of interpersonal values (Crismore, 1989; Crismore, Markkanen and Steffensen, 1993; Vande Kopple, 1985; Williams, 1981). In contrast to some initial views on metadiscourse, which downplay its role by considering it as unnecessary or even counter-productive, research has proved its useful and beneficial role (Crismore and Fansworth, 1990; Crismore, Markkanen and Steffensen, 1993). Thus, although some style guides advise to avoid the expression of the writer's personal opinions (Arnaudet and Barret, 1984; Spencer and Arbon, 1996), research shows that the appropriate use of resources such as first person pronouns or hedging devices is positively interpreted as a measure of honesty in relation to controversial claims (Crismore and Farnsworth, 1990; Crismore and Vande Kopple, 1988; Crismore and Vande Kopple, 1997). Along the same lines, subsequent research supports this view as it regards metadiscourse as a typical feature of academic discourse in both its written (Bunton, 1999; Carter and Sánchez, 1998; Luzón, 2000c) and spoken forms (Aguilar, 2002; Mauranen, 2002; Recski, 2005; Thompson, 2003).



From this perspective, initial issues on the status of metadiscourse start with discussions about whether metadiscourse should be regarded as some kind of secondary discourse with reference to propositional content. Williams (1981: 211) defines metadiscourse as 'writing about writing' and, along the same lines, Vande Kopple (1985: 83) offers the following definition:

On one level we supply information about the subject of the text. On this level we expand propositional content. On the other level, the level of metadiscourse, we do not add propositional material but help our readers organise, classify, interpret, evaluate and react to such material. Metadiscourse, therefore, is discourse about discourse or communication about communication.

Vande Kopple's (1985) definition draws a firm line separating metadiscourse from propositional matter. However, this traditional view is rejected by many researchers on the grounds that metadiscourse is not empty of meaning, and regard it as a crucial element of textual meaning and interpretation (Mao, 1993; Mauranen, 1993b). Mauranen (1993) asserts that metadiscourse should be seen as an integral part of texts and criticises traditional studies (such as Crismore and Fansworth, 1990; Lautamatti, 1987; Vande Kopple, 1985) on the grounds that the primary propositional communicative content of discourse is separated from metadiscourse. In this vein, Mao (1993) claims that metadiscourse should not be separated from its rhetorical context, and acknowledges that metadiscourse markers are context sensitive. Research carried out on this issue emphasises that distinguishing between the two levels of meaning may present some difficulties since both propositional and metadiscoursal elements occur together in texts and often the same form may comprise both levels of meaning (Ifantidou, 2005; Hyland, 2000; Hyland and Tse, 2004; Luzón, 2000c). For instance, conjunctive relations mark transitions between clauses at the same time that they

express connections between ideas (Blakemore, 2002; Hyland and Tse, 2004; Johns, 1990). Sharing this view, Ifantidou (2005) notes that many metadiscourse expressions contribute to communicate propositional content and facilitate interpretation in essential ways. Thus, an adverb such as 'obviously' influences the truth-conditional meaning of a given stretch of text while also contributing to textual structure. Similarly, Aguilar (2002: 113) refers to both discourse and metadiscourse, within a theoretic-relevance framework<sup>21</sup>, as integrated in a dynamic way to achieve appropriate communication:

Both discourse and metadiscourse adapt and are dynamically formed within contexts (...). Communication is seen to take place in a constant flux where primary discourse/metadiscourse combine and intermingle in such a way that optimal relevance is achieved.

Aguilar's (2002) conceptualisation of discourse and metadiscourse is represented by a dynamic integration of planes, which adapt to negotiate meaning in ways that are appropriate and meaningful within specific disciplinary communities<sup>22</sup>. In connection with this, Luzón (2000c: 283) notes that metadiscourse should not be seen as a separate plane or kind of discourse but as a strategy that reflects the writer's mental processes, the adoption of a particular position (cautious, certain, evaluative) or the inclusion of a personal quality. As a result, the integration of both discourse and metadiscourse should be regarded, in our view, as an appropriate framework within which interpretation may be achieved, thus offering a more comprehensive view of academic interaction.

A second issue of concern regarding the notion of metadiscourse is related to the distinction between textual and interpersonal metadiscourse resources. According to

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<sup>21</sup> See Chapter 1 (Section 1.3) for an account on relevance-theoretic views on discourse.

<sup>22</sup> This dynamic conceptualisation is represented by referring to the blades of a fan that dynamically adapt, fold and unfold and sometimes overlap (Aguilar, 2002).

some researchers, metadiscourse categories are divided into textual and interpersonal devices, depending on whether their role is regarded as essential to the organisation of discourse or the expression of interpersonal values (Crismore *et al.*, 1993; Crismore and Fansworth, 1990; Markkanen *et al.*, 1990; Vande Kopple and Crismore, 1988). However, Dafouz (2003) questions such a firm distinction between traditionally considered textual and interpersonal metadiscourse categories by suggesting that this distinction should not be seen as clear-cut but rather as a continuum of choices. From this perspective, Dafouz (2003: 23) proposes a continuum of explicitness that connects both forms of metadiscourse:

The main difference between interpersonal and textual metadiscourse is the degree of explicitness with which they pursue their aim. In other words while textual metadiscourse appears to be less explicit in its search of persuasion and uses indirect methods to do so, interpersonal metadiscourse clearly states the author's attitude (...) A text which is well-structured, cohesive and progresses smoothly from one paragraph to the next (through metadiscourse categories) is possibly in the first stage of the persuasion continuum.

According to Dafouz (2003) and Luzón (2000c), textual metadiscourse is conceived as a rhetorical means of presenting ideas and arguments in a clear and comprehensible way. Taking this assumption into account, textual as well as evaluative rhetorical strategies are regarded as having a significant role in showing writers' positioning. In agreement with this view, Hyland (2005: 177) emphasises that successful presentation of information lies at the first stage of persuasion, since it leads to arguments that are clearly structured and are thus more likely to be convincing:

It should be borne in mind that evaluation is expressed in a wide range of ways (...) While writers can mark their perspectives explicitly through lexical items (such as unfortunately, possible, interesting, etc.), they can also code them less obviously through conjunction, subordination repetition, contrast, etc.

As suggested in the above quotation, textual metadiscourse is conceived as the result of decisions taken by the writer to highlight certain relationships so as to guide readers' understanding towards persuasion. Drawing on these assumptions, Hyland and Tse (2004: 164) lend further support to the blurring of the distinction between interpersonal and textual features:

We should see text as a process in which writers are simultaneously creating propositional content, interpersonal engagement and the flow of text as they write, which means that their linguistic choices often perform more than one function (...) In sum, because it overlooks the ways that meanings can overlap and contribute to academic arguments in different ways, the distinction between textual and interpersonal metadiscourse is unhelpful and misleading.

In their revision of the concept of metadiscourse (outlined in previous studies by Hyland, 1998a and Hyland, 2000), Hyland and Tse (2004) suggest that all metadiscourse is interpersonal and that both functions can be realised simultaneously. Developing from here, recent research on metadiscourse also follows this line of research (Luzón, 2000c; Dafouz, 2003; Ifantidou, 2005).

As far as definitions of metadiscourse are concerned, as the concept of metadiscourse evolves, definitions also gradually move from a linguistic level to a pragmatic and socio-rhetorical one. From this perspective, metadiscourse is defined by Hyland (2005) as the cover term for personal choices and strategies used to negotiate interactional meanings in a text, thus assisting the writer (or the speaker) to express a viewpoint and engage with readers as members of a particular community. In addition

to this, metadiscourse is also regarded as a contextually dependent stylistic device that is linked to the norms of particular socio-cultural communities. Taking into account these considerations, Hyland (1998a: 438) refers to metadiscourse as integrated with contextual features:

It is integral to the contexts in which it occurs and is intimately linked to the norms and expectations of particular cultural and professional communities. Writing is a culturally situated social activity and effective metadiscourse use is critically dependent on a rhetorical context and the writer's observation of appropriate interpersonal and intertextual relationships

In this respect, metadiscourse is seen as reflecting writers' attempts to negotiate academic knowledge in ways that are meaningful and appropriate within a particular disciplinary community and with reference to a specific genre. As Luzón (2000c: 286) notes, metadiscourse items are facilitators of the interaction between the participants in a genre and their specific function in a text depends to a great extent on the genre to which the text belongs.

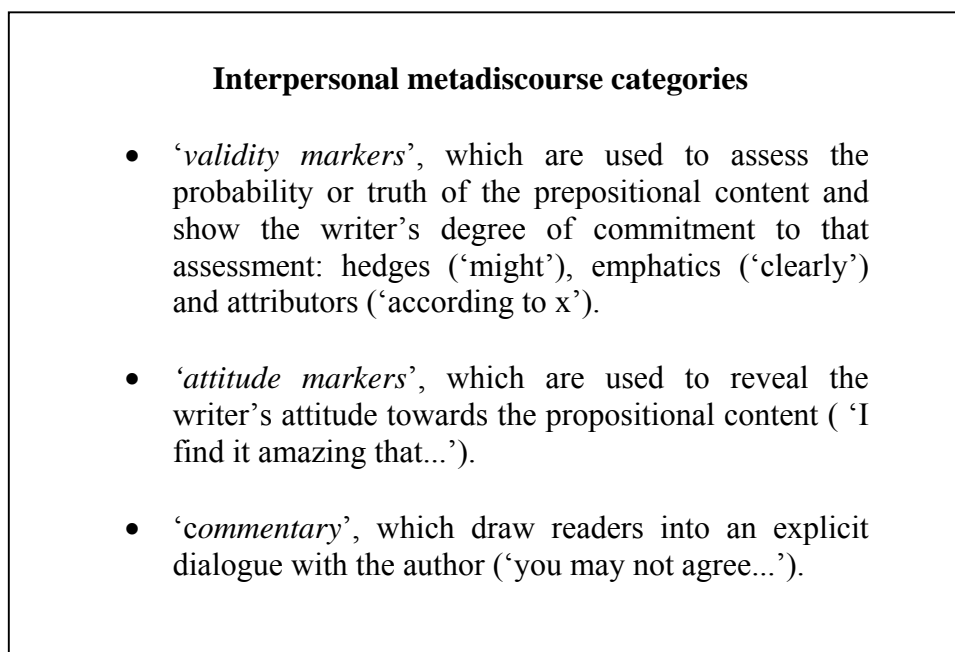
In this line, we regard metadiscourse as an important persuasive resource to convey communication and maintain social groups. In addition to this, we favour an integrative approach to metadiscourse since, as noted above, both interpersonal values as well as textual ones integrate to construct the way in which the writers reflect their personal voice.

### 2.1.1 Models of metadiscourse

Drawing on an integrative conception of metadiscourse (outlined in the previous section), different models or typologies are suggested (Crismore *et al.*, 1993; Vande Kopple, 1985; Hyland, 1998a, 2000; Hyland and Tse, 2004). In this section, we review

some of the proposed models, with special attention paid to the expression of interpersonal values for the purposes of our research.

Dealing specifically with writers' evaluative choices, we will focus on those metadiscourse items that reflect the writer's point of view in discourse. First, Vande Kopple's (1985) system of classification for interpersonal metadiscourse consists of three main categories, as shown in Figure 4:



*Figure 4. Vande Kopple's (1985) classification of interpersonal metadiscourse*

Interpersonal metadiscourse includes categories conveying the writer's commitment as well as attitude, while at the same time acknowledging the role of ‘commentary’ in establishing a dialogue between the writer and the reader. Based on this classification, Crismore *et al.*, (2003) propose the following revised model:

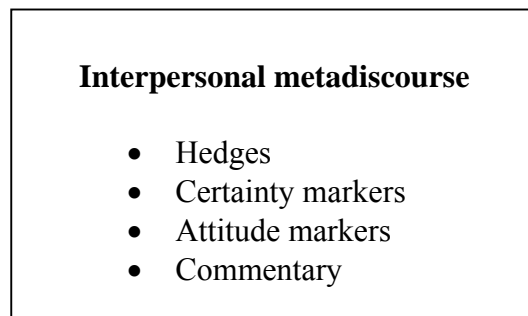


Figure 5. Crismore *et al.*'s (1993: 47) classification of interpersonal metadiscourse

Crismore *et al.*, (1993) view hedges and 'certainty markers' as two independent categories. In contrast to this, in Vande Kopple's (1985) earlier classification they are both included under the category termed 'validity markers'. Both the categories of 'attitude markers' and 'commentary' are maintained.

To sum up, both models of metadiscourse, Vande Kopple's (1985) and Crismore *et al.*'s (1993) establish a similar framework of reference for the classification of interpersonal metadiscourse categories. These models represent a relevant starting point in dealing with devices that reflect the writer's positioning and foreground the interaction established with the reader. However, despite the value of these attempts, subsequent research (Hyland, 2000; Hyland and Tse, 2004) points out a number of limitations or classification difficulties inherent to typologies of multi-functional categories such as those of metadiscourse. Thus, it is acknowledged that offering a classification in which metadiscourse items have been sorted into clear-cut categories represents discourse reality in a partial and artificial way, since distinguishing between categories (and sub-categories) reveals itself as a complex issue. In this regard, it may be the case that the same item may be classified as belonging to one category or another, depending on a specific author's model or as a consequence of a particular conceptual division between categories. Similarly, Crismore *et al.*, (1993: 54) also

acknowledge certain difficulties related to the degree of subjectivity and impreciseness implied by metadiscourse categories. Despite the above-mentioned limitation, in our view, Crismore *et al.*, (1993) and Vande Kopple (1985) provide significant insights by acknowledging the essential role of metadiscourse in discourse interpretation as well as noting the multi-functionality of metadiscourse.

Along the same lines, and drawing on Crismore *et al.*, (1993), Hyland's (1998a, 2000) model of metadiscourse includes categories such as 'hedging', 'emphatics' and 'attitude markers', but the category of 'commentary' is replaced by two independent sub-categories called 'relational' and 'person markers'. The following figure outlines Hyland's (1998a, 2000) model of interpersonal metadiscourse resources:

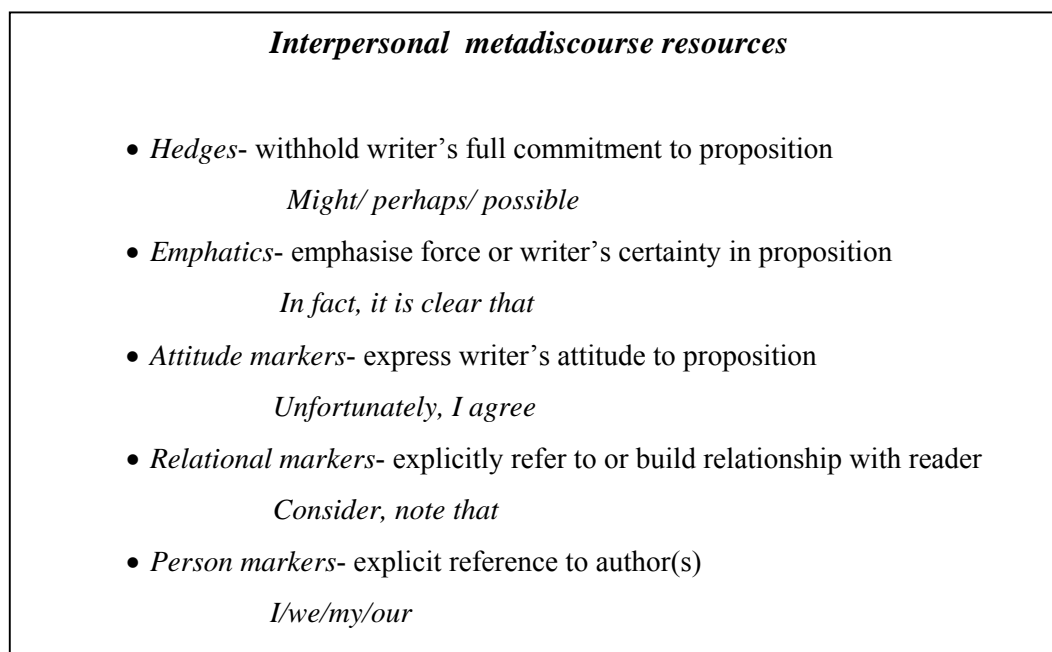


Figure 6. Hyland's (1998a, 2000) classification of interpersonal metadiscourse devices

In the case of 'relational markers' the focus is on how reader participation is brought into the discourse, while with regard to 'person markers' we are interested in



examining how the writer's presence is reflected in discourse. As far as classification difficulties are concerned, Hyland (1998a, 2000) notes that the taxonomy outlined above is not without limitations. For instance, although Hyland (1998a, 2000) proposes some of the same categories as those suggested by Crismore *et al.* (1993), their meaning may not fully coincide. In this way, Crismore *et al.*, (1993: 50) refer to 'hedges' as linguistic items the writer uses to show lack of commitment to the truth-value of propositions, thus restricting their meaning to this context in contrast to other uses that involve softening the illocutionary force of claims. In contrast to this restrictive view, Hyland's (1998a, 2000) model views 'hedges' as contributing not only to mark statements as provisional but also to show deference to other members of the discourse community. As Hyland (1998a) notes, hedges cannot be classified exclusively as uncertainty markers since they also reflect an attitudinal overtone. As a result, difficulties arise because of the polypragmatic nature of metadiscourse that causes difficulties for the analyst.

Drawing on Hyland's (1998a, 2000) earlier model, Hyland and Tse (2004: 169) propose a revised model of interactional metadiscourse resources, as the following figure shows:

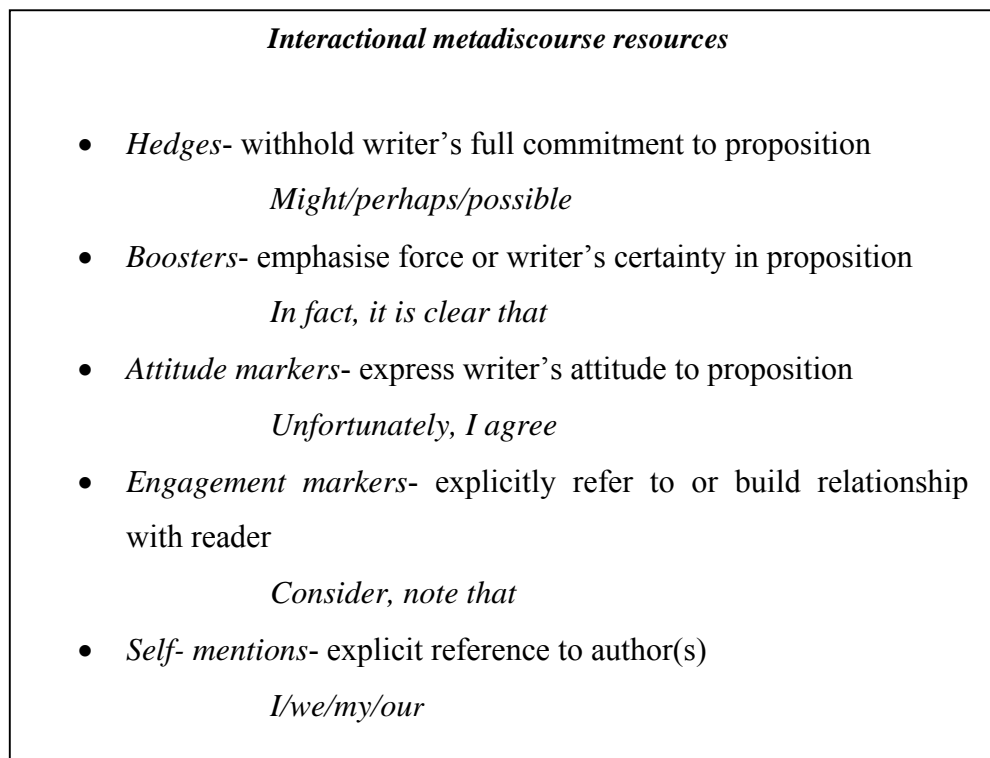


Figure 7. Hyland and Tse's (2004) classification of interactional metadiscourse

The above classification reflects significant terminological differences concerning metadiscourse resources. In this way, the preference for the term 'interactional' instead of 'interpersonal' foregrounds the role of metadiscourse devices in interaction. Taking into account that the traditional distinction between 'textual' and 'interpersonal' devices (Crismore *et al.*, 1993; Vande Kopple, 1985) does not account for the fact that all devices imply interaction, in Hyland and Tse (2004) substitute these terms by 'interactive' and 'interactional' respectively. In addition to this, minor changes are also introduced, such as the use of the term 'boosters' instead of 'emphatics', 'engagement markers' instead of 'relational markers' and 'self-mentions' instead of 'person markers'. Despite these terminological changes, the semantic and pragmatic meaning of these devices remains the same. In relation to the category of 'self mentions' and

'engagement markers', Hyland's (2005) revised framework of interaction<sup>23</sup> highlights the fact that whereas self-mentions convey the writer's stance (in combination with other devices such as hedges, boosters and attitude markers), 'engagement markers' refer to the construction of engagement as a complementary dimension to stance. Thus, although both categories refer to the interactive framework of communication, they are introduced as complementary resources. For our purposes, our main interest is to examine how the writer's stance is created. Within this framework, based on the considerations outlined above, it should be emphasised that metadiscourse resources are multi-functional, and thus pragmatic overlap may often occur in discourse (Hyland, 1998a, 2000; Hyland and Tse, 2004).

In our view, the above classifications of interactional metadiscourse categories provide a valid way of focusing on these resources, despite the fact that limitations may arise as a consequence of trying to impose categories upon the fluidity of discourse. Drawing on the above assumptions and taking into account the polypragmatic nature of metadiscourse markers, interpretation needs to be linked to actual discourse contexts. Thus, as far as written academic discourse is concerned, we combine a formal analysis of items with a functional one, as a way of achieving appropriate interpretations regarding the expression of evaluative meanings in discourse.

## **2.2 Stance and features of writer positioning within a metadiscourse framework**

Although the models of metadiscourse outlined in the previous section contribute to focus on how interaction is constructed, Hyland's (2005) model of stance sets up a relevant framework to study academic interaction as deriving specifically from the

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<sup>23</sup> See section 2.2 for an extended account of this model and the notion of writer's stance.

study of written academic texts themselves<sup>24</sup>. Hyland's (2004a, 2005) conceptualisation distinguishes between the dimensions of 'stance' and 'engagement' in academic discourse in an attempt to include within these two dimensions key resources of interaction (referred to under the heading of 'metadiscourse resources' in earlier models, such as Hyland, 1998a and Hyland, 2000). As far as the purposes of our research are concerned, since we are dealing specifically with writers' evaluative choices, the notion of stance offers a relevant way to contextualise those devices used by writers to display convincing arguments and present a successful personal voice. As Hyland (2005: 176) notes, the features comprised by stance have a main purpose:

They express a textual 'voice' or community recognised personality which, following others, I shall call *stance*. This can be seen as an attitudinal dimension and includes features which refer to the ways writers present themselves and convey their judgements, opinions and commitments.

As we can see, the notion of stance involves an attitudinal dimension related to evaluative choices and ways in which writers intervene personally in their discourse<sup>25</sup>. According to Hyland (2005), the writer's stance is related to 'engagement' as a complementary dimension. On the one hand, stance features comprise devices used by writers to convey commitment, attitude or opinion and, on the other hand, engagement features concern how the writer draws readers into the discourse, thereby constructing a framework of interaction. Taking these assumptions into account, interaction is managed by writers from two main perspectives and in ways that are considered appropriate in specific academic and disciplinary contexts.

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<sup>24</sup> Hyland's (2005) study on academic discourse includes research articles from eight different disciplines (such as social sciences and applied linguistics, among others).

<sup>25</sup> The term 'stance' is also referred to by other researchers such as Artiga (2006), Biber *et al.* (2004) and Fortanet (2004b).

Apart from this and regarding the polypragmatic nature of these devices, it must also be noted that stance and engagement dimensions show some areas of overlap, as they are conceived as two sides of the same coin (Hyland, 2001b, 2004a, 2005). As a result, classification difficulties may arise concerning whether certain features belong to one or the other dimension. For instance, by using questions, writers present their points of view and establish a dialogue with readers at the same time (Hyland, 2002a). These areas of overlap are accounted for by the multi-functional nature of discourse, and result in forms that perform more than one function simultaneously, thereby expressing attitudinal value and setting out a framework of interaction (Hyland, 2004a, 2005).

Bearing these considerations in mind and concerning the focus of our study, which deals specifically with how writer's stance is constructed, our conceptualisation of stance (based on Hyland, 2005) is represented by the following figure:

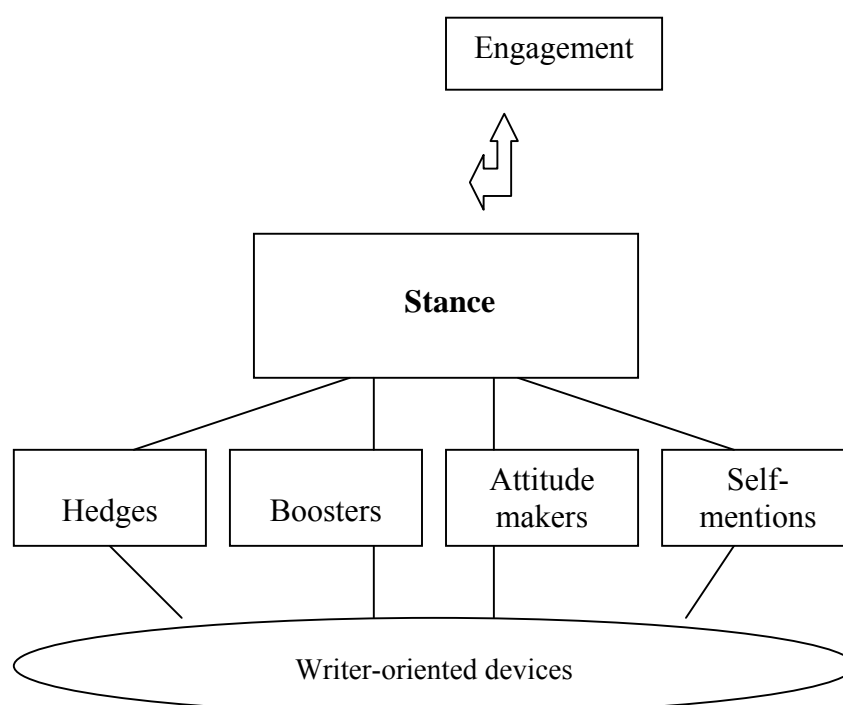


Figure 8. Key resources of academic stance (based on Hyland, 2005)

As the above figure shows, we focus on writer's stance and the writer-oriented devices that it includes<sup>26</sup>. From this perspective, hedges, boosters, attitude markers and self-mentions are regarded as essential ways in which stance is conveyed. Conceiving these resources as writer-oriented features and based on Hyland (2005: 178), we regard them under the categories of 'evidentiality', 'affect' and 'presence':

Evidentiality refers to the writer's expressed commitment to the reliability of the propositions (...) and their potential impact on the reader; affect, involves a broad range of personal and professional attitudes towards what is said, including emotions, perspectives and beliefs; and presence simply concerns the extent to which the writer chooses to project him or herself into the text.

<sup>26</sup> For the purposes of our research, we consider the engagement dimension of stance as a complementary one, and thus the discourse markers related to it lie outside the scope of our attention.

In our study, writer's stance is understood as the way writers convey commitment, judgements or opinions and it plays an essential role with regard to the way evaluation is carried out. Here, it should be stressed that evaluation is inherent to academic writing within the 'response' article. Thus, Hyland's (2005) view provides an appropriate way of contextualising our analysis, since it foregrounds the role of evaluation within the context of written academic discourse (Hyland, 2005: 174):

As this view gains greater currency, more researchers have turned their attention to the concept of evaluation and how it is realised in academic texts (...). However, we do not yet have a model of interpersonal discourse that unites and integrates these features and that it emerges from the study of academic writing itself. How do academic writers use a language to express a stance and relate to their readers?

Our purpose is in line with that of Hyland (2005) and aims at answering the last question posed about academic writing by exploring specific academic texts. As Hyland (2005) notes, work on evaluation and stance has concentrated on mass audience texts such as journalism, politics and media discourses, thus offering writers far more freedom to position themselves interpersonally in contrast to academic genres. In this regard, concerning the genre of the 'response' article (which is under study here) the values or meanings related to 'attitude' as well as the role of hedging and boosting devices need to emerge from the exploration of actual language use.

Based on these considerations and regarding the framework of academic interaction outlined above as the most suitable one for our purposes, we deal with how writers convey evaluation in academic writing and focus on the following issues:

- (a) the way in which commitment as well as judgements and opinions are recognised as ways of expressing an authorial voice or 'stance' (Biber *et al.*, 2004; Fortanet, 2004b; Hyland, 2004a, 2005; Hyland and Tse, 2004).
- (b) the way in which attitude is conveyed and, more specifically, how evaluation is modified by means of hedging and/or boosting devices, which contribute to qualify the force of evaluative comments (Bloch, 2003; Hyland, 1998a, 2000, 2002b; Hyland, 2005).
- (c) how the writer's presence is projected into the discourse by foregrounding personal attribution through 'self-mention' and first person pronouns (Hyland, 1998a, 2000; Hyland and Tse, 2004; Hyland, 2005; Artiga, 2006; Biber *et al.*, 2004; Fortanet, 2004b; Fagan and Martín, 2004).
- (d) how the interaction with the target author is constructed and, more specifically, the role of factive and counter-factive explicit references and their contribution to the construction of stance in the 'response' article (Hyland, 2004a, 2005; Hyland and Tse, 2004; Thompson, 2001).

Following from the above issues of concern, our aim is to shed some light on the model of evaluative discourse that emerges from the study of academic writing itself within the genre of the 'response' article. From this perspective, our objective is to point out not only which features are possible but also which ones are typical in the genre under study here.



### 2.2.1 Hedging and boosting: negotiation and construction of academic interaction

As far as academic writing is concerned, the role of hedging and boosting devices is especially relevant. Hedges and boosters are regarded as interpersonal aspects of language use that contribute to the way in which writers intervene in their discourse and engage with readers to manipulate the strength of commitment to claims and the writer's deference to the academic community (Hyland, 1998a, 1998b; Martín, 2003b; Salager-Meyer, 1994, 1997, Saz, 2001). Whereas hedges have received a greater amount of attention, interest in boosters has been more limited, although there are research studies that deal with both phenomena (Holmes, 1982, 1984; Hyland, 2000; Mendiluce and Hernández, 2005; Suau, 2005; Vassileva, 2001). The combined use of these devices represents a way of conveying a balance between assertion and tentativeness on the part of the writer. Moreover, the use of hedges and boosters points to discourse conventions, embodying particular sets of values, practices and beliefs that shape and define particular disciplinary communities and genres. In our research, we conceive hedges and boosters as communicative resources that are used to construct appropriate rhetorical and interactive discourse choices in relation to the expression of opinions and points of view.

#### 2.2.1.1 The notion of hedging: a multi-functional and multi-faceted phenomenon

Hedges are considered as essential devices in academic discourse that draw attention to the fact that statements do not just communicate ideas but also convey the writer's attitude to them. Since the concept of hedging emerged, there has been no clear agreement on what the term means and, thus, it is not uncommon for different analysts

to interpret hedges in different ways and from different perspectives. Additionally, research shows that there is a wide variety of forms which are regarded as conveying hedging in specific contexts (Markkanen and Schröder, 1987; Martín, 2003b; Vold, 2006).

Initial views on hedges considered them as unhelpful and unnecessary devices on the grounds that they provide empty information or contribute to diminish the objectiveness of discourse, which led to their being referred to as 'empty phrases' (Hacker, 1985: 93), 'unnecessary words' (Yarber, 1985: 188), 'deadwood' (Mahaney, 1985: 364) or 'wasteful signposting' (Smith, 1985: 92). In contrast to this, subsequent studies emphasise the essential role of hedging in relation to discourse construction and interpretation (Borrough-Boenish, 2005; Ifantidou, 2005; Luzón, 2000c; Crismore, 1989; Crismore and Vande Kopple, 1988, 1997; Markkanen and Schröder, 1997).

From a functional point of view, hedging is regarded as a multi-functional phenomenon that conveys the writer's degree of commitment to claims or deference towards the discourse community. First of all, in relation to the expression of writers' commitment to claims, research regards hedging as a rhetorical strategy used by writers to indicate lack of complete commitment to the truth value of a proposition or a desire not to express that commitment categorically (Crismore *et al.*, 1993; Crompton, 1997). In connection with this view, hedging overlaps with expressions of epistemic modality used to explicitly qualify the truth value of propositions (Lyons, 1977). Several explanations are put forward to account for the meanings of uncertainty and vagueness in relation to hedges. On the one hand, avoidance of commitment is related to remaining vague, thus showing that writers often do not have the final word on a specific subject or issue of concern (Markkanen and Schröder, 1987; Salager-Meyer, 1994). In this respect, hedges are used with the aim of being more precise, thereby

reflecting writers' assertion and credibility in academic texts (Harwood, 2005a, Harwood, 2005b; Kreutz and Harres, 1997). On the other hand, it should be noted that certain meanings of uncertainty may conform to a conventionalised academic writing style (Mauranen, 1997; Myers, 1989, 1997; Vold, 2007). Along these lines, researchers refer to strategic or conventional hedges that do not express real uncertainty but are part of the conventions of a specific discourse community. For instance, Diani's (2004) research in academic English reveals that the use of the phrase 'I don't know' is produced in a context where the interlocutor is able to produce the actual information, suggesting that the pragmatic motivation behind its production concerns conventional norms of use. Concerning the issue of 'real' and 'conventionalised' hedges, the analyst lacks the ability to distinguish between them in many contexts, and thus some researchers recommend leaving these aspects that belong to the writer's mental processes outside the scope of the analysis (Crompton, 1998; Lewin, 2005; Vold, 2006).

Developing on this issue, for the purposes of our research, we are interested in the role of hedges as they contribute to convey writers' deference to the academic community in contexts where evaluation of other researchers' work is carried out (Fortanet *et al.*, 2001; Hyland, 2000; Martín, 2003b; Saz, 2001). Within this context, the role of hedging is related to its mitigating effects that help to soften criticism. Hedges are therefore regarded as essential in determining how writers express attitudes and opinions as well as how they handle complex interpersonal communication. From this perspective, the role of hedging is related to presenting claims or opinions in a way that shows deference to the academic community, that is to say, that reflects cautious criticism of fellow researchers. As a result, research relates hedging not only to epistemic but also interpersonal meanings by foregrounding the writer's presentation of

propositions as opinions rather than facts (Hyland, 1998a, 2000; Lewin, 1998, Saz, 2001). Taking these considerations into account, hedging should be conceived as a central aspect of academic argumentation.

Concerning the role of hedging as a socio-cultural rhetorical strategy, research shows that the use of hedging is linked to academic discourse of specific disciplines and language groups rather than to academic discourse in general (Hyland, 2000; Vold, 2006). Hedging is regarded as a socio-pragmatic rhetorical strategy that needs to be explored by taking into account specific contexts of use. Thus, variation concerning writing style is affected by variables such as genre, discipline or cultural background. In this regard, research on hedging and academic criticism reports that some genres are more heavily hedged than others (Hyland, 2000; Salager-Meyer and Alcaraz, 2003). As far as the aim of discourse and role of the writer is concerned, Salager-Meyer and Alcaraz (2003) analyse the frequency of occurrence of hedging devices across genres such as research articles, review articles and editorials, showing that editorials and review articles are more heavily hedged than research papers.

Additionally, research (Hyland, 1998c) points out that, despite individual personality factors such as self-confidence and experience, hedges are shaped and constrained by the possibilities made available within discourse communities. Hyland's (1998c) investigation on research articles reveals that hedges are far more frequent in the social sciences and humanities. Regarding the different kinds of hedging devices used, Hyland's (1998c) analysis also shows that hedging resources differ across disciplines. In this respect, a higher proportion of hedging is conveyed by modal verbs in the 'hard knowledge' disciplines compared to the 'soft areas'<sup>27</sup>. As a way of accounting for this difference (Hyland, 1998c: 371), it is suggested that modal verbs are

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<sup>27</sup> By means of the tags 'hard' and 'soft' disciplines, Hyland (1998c) refers to scientific disciplines (such as medicine) in contrast to social sciences (such as linguistics).

less specific in attributing a source to a viewpoint and convey a more impersonal view (in contrast to the expression of subjectivity displayed through the use of personal attribution).

Finally, the influence of cultural background is reported to play a crucial role in the frequency and distribution of hedges (Abdi, 2002; Kreutz and Harres, 1997; Salager-Meyer *et al.*, 2003; Salager-Meyer, 1994) as well as the ways in which they are realised (Bloch and Chi, 1995; Vassileva, 2001; Ventola and Mauranen, 1996; Vold, 2006). As regards diachronic changes reflected in the use of hedging, in their study on medical articles, Salager-Meyer *et al.* (2003) establish a link between hedginess and socio-cultural context, indicating that French and Spanish scientists tend to be more blunt and personal in their evaluations than Anglo-Saxon researchers, who adopt a more veiled tone. However, from the 1990s onwards, this blunt style moves towards a more veiled discourse, thus showing that the passing of time has an influence on writers' rhetorical style that reflects the evolution of increasingly competitive scientific research.

In our research, we consider the pragmatics of hedging as rhetorically and contextually bound within a specific community of use. From this perspective, our aim is to study the mitigating role of hedging in evaluative discourse as a way to soften lack of consensus. An additional issue of concern has to do with how cautious claims in relation to other researchers' work become part of an established writing style in a specific discipline and genre. In sum, academic writing through the exploration of 'response' articles reflects patterns of regularities that offer insights into how knowledge is constructed and evaluated in specific disciplinary communities.

#### 2.2.1.1.1 Towards a taxonomy of hedging devices: from lexico-grammatical to strategic hedging realisations

As outlined in the previous section, hedging is a multi-faceted resource that accomplishes different functions in discourse. If we consider formal realisations of hedging, the multiplicity of forms that hedges may take is one of the main difficulties addressed in research (Crompton, 1997; Hyland, 1998b; Salager-Meyer, 1994, 1998b; Saz, 2001). Furthermore, the value of hedging typologies is limited since, as research points out, there are no clear linguistic criteria to delimit hedging categories (Crompton, 1998; Martín, 2003b). Moreover, any item may be interpreted as a hedge depending on the context of occurrence. Following this line of argument, Crompton (1998) claims that hedging might be better described starting from the sentence patterns where hedges commonly occur in. Subsequent research (Martín, 2003b) points out that no item is inherently 'hedgy' but may acquire this quality depending on the communicative context.

The concept of 'hedge' was first introduced by Lakoff (1972), who focused on the semantic vagueness and fuzziness of certain items and was concerned with their logical meaning rather than their communicative value. However, since Lakoff's (1972) initial work, the scope of hedging and thus of hedging realisations, has widened considerably. One of the earliest initial attempts at classifying hedges is represented by Prince *et al.*'s (1982) distinction between 'approximators' and 'shields', which refers to whether hedging affects the truth conditions of propositions or it concerns the degree of the writer's commitment in relation to them<sup>28</sup>. However, this distinction raises some difficulties regarding its application in analyses of authentic language use, since both

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<sup>28</sup>A similar distinction was put forward by Hübler (1983).

types of indetermination may be suggested by the same linguistic items (Markkanen and Schröder, 1997; Varttala, 2001)<sup>29</sup>.

Taking into account Prince *et al.*'s (1982) model, Salager-Meyer (1994) proposes the following classification of hedging devices:

1. *Shields*, such as modal verbs expressing possibility, semi-auxiliaries ('appear'), epistemic verbs ('suggest'), probability adverbs ('probably') and their derivative adjectives
2. *Approximators* of quantity, degree, frequency and type ('roughly', 'somewhat', 'often')
3. *Expressions* such as 'I believe', 'to our knowledge', which express the author's personal doubt and direct involvement
4. *Emotionally charged intensifiers* such as 'extremely difficult/ interesting', 'particularly encouraging', etc.
5. *Compound hedges*, such as 'it could be suggested that', 'it would be somewhat unlikely that', etc.

Salager-Meyer's (1994) classification constitutes a valuable attempt at trying to distinguish and classify different types of hedging realisations. Nevertheless, it presents some of the problems mentioned above, such as the distinction concerning 'approximators' and 'shields'. An additional difficulty is related to the fact that many of the items listed in the category of 'shields' may also be interpreted as belonging to the third category, that is, they convey the writer's personal doubt and direct involvement (Varttala, 2001). Other researchers question whether the devices listed under the heading of 'emotionally-charged intensifiers' may be considered as hedging realisations. For instance, Hyland (1998a, 2000) points out that the meanings conveyed by these 'emotionally-charged' intensifiers as well as the contexts in which they are used are quite distinct from those conveyed by items classified within the first two

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<sup>29</sup> For instance in 'I suspect that John is sort of in love', it may be difficult to say whether 'sort of' involves a degree of reservation due to the speaker's uncertainty about John's true state of mind or whether this device merely indicates the difficulty in determining whether John's state of mind is in conceptual correspondence with what is generally meant by 'in love' (Varttala, 2001).

categories. Thus, Hyland (1998a, 2000) claims that these items would belong to the category of 'attitude markers', as the greater degree of subjectivity that is conveyed marks a difference in the evaluative character of these items, which connects them to attitudinal values. In addition, the category of 'compound hedges' creates a number of difficulties since, according to Varttala (2001), items belonging to this category may also be included in some of the other categories.

Despite these difficulties, Salager-Meyer's (1994) classification raises some significant insights concerning the phenomenon of hedging and its formal realisations. The fact that a wide variety of linguistic forms may be perceived as hedges in certain contexts points to the limitations of hedging classifications, which should be seen as open and flexible. In this respect, Salager-Meyer (1994) regards hedging as the product of a mental attitude and acknowledges that describing hedging on the basis of specific linguistic categories presents some difficulties. Sharing this view, other attempts at classifying hedging devices stress the fact that the semantic potential expressed by hedging can be realised by a wide variety of surface forms, which allow different degrees of tentativeness to be expressed in communication (Hyland, 1998b; Martín, 2003; Markkanen and Schröder, 1997; Salager-Meyer, 1994, 1998b). In addition, Salager-Meyer (1994) also points out that hedging devices may appear not just as individual items but also as clusters of lexico-grammatical items, combined in strings of hedges. Similarly, Hyland (2000) also emphasises the idea that hedges tend to cluster together, running through a series of clauses, sentences, and even stretches of text.

From a functional perspective, Hyland (1999) suggests a content-oriented and reader-oriented classification of hedges. Within this model, hedging is seen as a device that contributes to convey the writer's responsibility for claims and opinions. It is subdivided into two dimensions. The first, content-oriented hedging, refers to accuracy and



is related to some adequacy and acceptability conditions concerning propositions. Reader-oriented hedging, on the other hand, incorporates awareness of interpersonal aspects. However, this model also has its difficulties, since although from a theoretical point of view it may be possible to identify typical cases of content- or reader-oriented hedges, in actual discourse a hedge may be related to both kinds of interpretation. In this respect, Zadeh (1972) points out that trying to apply theoretical distinctions to actual discourse often raises some interpretation difficulties and proposes a theory of fuzzy-sets, which introduces flexibility through a conception of gradual transitions. Despite the above-mentioned limitations, the notion of reader-oriented hedging has been successfully applied in research on academic discourse<sup>30</sup>.

To sum up, research on hedging devices emphasises that classifications, far from trying to establish any exhaustive delimitation, should be open-ended and to a certain extent flexible (Hyland, 1998a; Martín, 1993b; Saz, 2001). Within this framework, the hedging function of different resources is dealt with (Hyland, 2000; Luukka and Markkannen, 1977; Garcés and Sánchez, 1998; Markkannen and Schröder, 1997; Saz, 2001). As Martín (2003b) points out, the difficulty with functional conceptions of hedging is that almost any linguistic item may be interpreted as a hedge depending on how it is used, which therefore shows that hedging is a contextually dependent phenomenon. From this perspective, researchers (Hyland, 2000; Martín, 2003b; Saz, 2001) indicate that, as a functional perspective is being adopted increasingly more frequently, the ways in which hedging may be realised also expand. Additionally, attention is drawn to the fact that hedging realisations include not only lexicogrammatical resources but also complex strategic choices intended to show deference in a specific discourse community (Bloch, 2003; Gea, 2000; Hyland, 2000; Luzón, 1996).

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<sup>30</sup> For instance, Saz (2001) uses this notion in her study of reader-oriented hedges.

Strategic choices that convey hedging may include the use of clauses signalling research limitations (Hyland, 1994, 1998b) as well as the use of paired-patterns, such as praise-criticism or concession-criticism pairs (Hyland, 2000; Hyland, F. and Hyland, K., 2001)<sup>31</sup>. Hence, the effect of individual hedging resources is often reinforced by the combination of lexico-grammatical devices and strategic hedging.

In our study, we aim to examine the ways in which evaluation is modified by means of hedging by drawing on lexico-grammatical categories (Hyland, 1998a, 2000; Martín, 2003b) as well as rhetorical hedging strategies (Bloch, 2003; Gea, 2000; Luzón, 1996; Hyland, 2000). Moreover, and taking into account that hedging presents considerable difficulties when actual analysis of discourse is undertaken, our research emphasises the importance of analysing hedging in a specific context within a particular social activity. Based on these considerations, our aim is to provide some insights about hedging devices and strategies that are typical and recurrent in 'response' articles within applied linguistics.

#### 2.2.1.2 Boosters and solidarity negotiation

Research on academic writing shows that boosters appear alongside hedges as two interrelated aspects that contribute to construct academic discourse (Abdi, 2002; Holmes, 1983, 1988c; Hinkel, 2005; Hyland, 1998a, 2000; Mendiluce and Hernández, 2005). Although boosters have received less attention in academic writing, compared to hedging devices, they nevertheless play an important role in creating a solidarity framework of communication. As far as terminology is concerned, a wide variety of terms such as 'boosters' (Hyland and Tse, 2004), 'emphatics' (Hyland, 1998a, 2000) or

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<sup>31</sup> See Chapter 3 (Section 3.3) on writer's strategic choices.

'certainty markers' (Vande Kopple, 1985) are used to refer to these devices. Some researchers, such as Biber and Finegan (1989) and Hinkel (2005), refer to 'intensifiers' and further sub-divide them into 'amplifiers' and 'emphatics', depending on whether they boost the force of a proposition to indicate its reliability in positive terms (such as 'completely' or 'extremely') or whether they simply mark the presence of certainty towards a proposition (such as 'certainly' or 'in fact').

From a functional point of view, boosters are considered to be interpersonal aspects of language use by means of which writers project themselves into their discourse. Within this context, boosters are used to mark conviction, involvement and solidarity with the audience. Concerning their distribution, the use of boosters is regarded as being higher in the soft disciplines, being related to the writer's personal involvement in specific disciplines and genres (Hunston, 2005; Hyland, 1998c, 2005). Moreover, from a functional perspective, research (Hyland, 2000; Hyland, F. and Hyland, K., 2001) reports on how boosters may be combined with hedges to balance the parts of an argument, thus serving to mark the validity of some part of it at the time that other questionable arguments are presented. In connection with evaluative discourse, boosters mark certainty and emphasise its force, whereas hedges minimise the possible damage critical comments may cause. Thus, according to Aguilar (2002) and Hyland (1998b, 2000), boosters may work together with hedges in 'modally harmonic' and 'non-harmonic combinations', depending on whether these devices are of the same or distinct kind. These clusters therefore display a kind of concord through discourse by increasing or reducing the force of what is said.

Drawing on the above considerations, the interpretation of boosters is linked to the context in which these devices occur. In this regard, their value may be related to assertiveness, thus emphasising the degree of the writer's commitment with regard to

evaluation. However, as pointed out by Abdi (2002), boosters are not always used in assertive contexts. For instance, 'of course' or 'obviously' are often used in a concessive context, signalling the writer's assumption of shared knowledge and contributing to establish a dialogue with readers by including them in a context of shared understanding. In this way, boosters play a significant role in persuasion by seeking to convince the reader of an argument. In addition to meanings of assertiveness and persuasion, research (Hinkel, 2005; Hyland, 2000; Mendiluce and Hernández, 2005) has shown that boosters may convey affective meanings in certain contexts, thereby giving rise to a more personal and subjective discourse tone<sup>32</sup>.

In our research, we will focus on the role played by hedging and boosting devices in relation to how they modify rhetorical evaluation strategies as well as their role in pointing to authorial involvement in the construction of discourse, where they convey a balance between assertion and tentativeness.

### 2.2.2 Writer's intervention and positioning

The creation of an authorial voice or stance is a phenomenon that extends throughout discourse and is realised by means of a wide range of lexico-grammatical items and rhetorical strategies. Within an evaluative context, certain resources that are found to be useful instruments for authorial intervention include first person pronouns (Hyland, 1999a, 2001a, 2002b; Ivanič, 1998; Ivanič and Camps, 2001; Martínez, 2005; Kuo, 1999), verbal stance bundles (Artiga, 2006; Biber *et al.*, 2004; Cortés, 2004; Thompson and Ye, 1991) attitude markers and resources such as hedges and boosters (Hunston, 1994, 2000, 2005; Hyland, 1998a, 2000).

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<sup>32</sup> In this sense, Hinkel (2005) also relates this use to more informal registers.

### 2.2.2.1 Writer's presence, personal stance and subjectivity

As far as the writer's presence is concerned, research focuses on authorial intervention and the choices that writers employ for the construction of an authoritative self to show how writers and researchers position themselves. Within this context, writers' choices of first person pronouns are related to aspects such as the actual context of discourse in a specific disciplinary community and the view of the relationship between writers and readers or peer researchers.

Research (Artiga, 2006; Biber *et al.*, 2004; Cortés, 2004; Fortanet, 2004a; Harwood, 2005b; Hyland, 2001a, 2002b; Kuo, 1999; Martínez, 2005) has shown that the presence or absence of explicit writer references is a conscious choice made by writers in order to adopt a particular stance. Concerning reference and first person pronouns, 'self-mention' may have a variety of referents. The personal pronouns 'I' or 'we' may be used to refer to single- or multiple-authored texts respectively in a context where a personal stance is favoured. However, when the writing activity is carried out by a single writer, the pronoun 'we' may also be used in specific contexts and for different reasons depending on genre conventions. In this way, it may appear in research articles according to the conventional norms of academic interaction. It may also be used in single-authored 'response' articles to include the reader within the reference, drawing him/her into the argument (e.g. 'We have the problem of partial interpretation for I cannot myself recall...'). The literature refers to this use as 'inclusive' we (Biber *et al.*, 1999; Fortanet, 2004a; Kuo, 1999; Harwood, 2005a) and associates it with a hedging function since it is linked to a diminishing degree of writer's presence (Martín and Burgess, 2004; Saz, 2001). In contrast, cases of 'exclusive' we exclude the reader from the reference and may refer to both the writer of the article and the reviewed author

(e.g. 'I think it likely that *we* agree more than disagree on our views...') or the writer and the academia as a whole (e.g. '*We* as TESOL professionals should welcome this proposal...'). Therefore, the presence of the writer in the text and his/her presentation depends to a large extent on the assumed role, the purposes of the interaction and the relationship created between the writer and the reader. The marking of stance and the writer's self-mention are therefore a highly contextual matter.

Regarding a variety of discourse fields, research (Harwood, 2005a; Hyland, 1998a, 2000, 2005; Kuo, 1999; Martinez, 2005) shows that, in single-authored research articles, the use of the first person singular pronoun 'I' (in contrast to 'we') is not uncommon in the fields of business and management, computer science and economics, natural sciences (such as biology) or social sciences and linguistics. Accordingly, as highlighted in the literature (Bamford, 2005; Bloch, 2003; Poudat and Louiseau, 2005), a 'subjective' stance is favoured in contrast to an 'objective' one, as writers (far from being neutral) choose to include their attitudes towards the information shown. As far as variation with regard to disciplinary contexts is concerned, Hyland (2005: 181) points out that:

In the sciences it is common for writers to downplay their personal role to highlight the phenomena under study (...). In the humanities and social sciences, in contrast, the use of the first person is closely related to the desire to both strongly identify oneself with a particular argument and to gain credit for an individual perspective.

A discursal self is created in specific disciplinary fields, thereby reflecting the interpersonal dimension of academic writing. Hyland (2000, 2002b, 2005) states that, in humanities and social sciences, writers are likely to convey their involvement by means of personal attribution such as the use of first person stance bundles (e.g. 'I believe' or

‘in my view’), which convey the writer’s involvement and responsibility for claims and interpretations. In contrast to this, the use of other resources such as nominalisations, ‘abstract rhetors’<sup>33</sup> and passives contributes to diminish the writer’s responsibility for the claims made.

Additionally, on the matter of writer’s authority and responsibility for claims, the presence of self-mention is regarded as playing a significant role in persuasion. Thus, with respect to the soft science fields, Hyland (2002b) stresses that:

Experienced writers select rhetorical options for projecting authority and engaging with readers that reflect the epistemological assumptions and social practices of their fields, with more explicit authorial involvement in the soft disciplines. Because the criteria of acceptability for interpretation are less clear-cut and variables less precisely measurable than in the hard fields, the writer’s personal presence and authority is an important rhetorical resource for gaining approval for one’s work.

Some fields of study, thus favour personalisation strategies, which help to foreground the writer’s voice, over impersonalisation ones, which seek to establish a distance from interpretations and present a more objective view of research. Similarly, in relation to personal stance and specific disciplinary contexts, Dahl (2004) claims that there is a link between the stance adopted by the writer and its role in argumentation<sup>34</sup>. According to this author, disciplines such as linguistics and social sciences involve a higher degree of subjectiveness in data interpretation. As a consequence, the results are to a large extent created through argument, which implies a more visible presence of the writer. In connection with this, it is also observed that, whereas in the disciplines of

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<sup>33</sup> This practice refers to the convention of giving prominence to procedures and data in order to diminish writers’ responsibility for the claims made (e.g. ‘*The analysis of the data shows that this impression is simplistic...*’).

<sup>34</sup> Dahl’s (2004) study deals with textual metadiscourse in different disciplines such as economics, linguistics, social sciences and medicine.

linguistics and economics, patterns of textual metatext are less stable or formalised, in disciplines such as medicine a uniformity of patterns is observed. As suggested by Vold (2006) and Hyland and Tse (2005), academic discourse is not only informative and content-oriented but also aimed at persuasion. Argumentation is therefore regarded as an essential part of the knowledge construction process.

From this perspective, writers' intervention in discourse is dealt with by focusing not only on how findings are presented but also on how points of view are conveyed to build a relationship with readers. Within this context, research also refers to the purpose of the communicative encounter in connection with the writer's aim (Tang and John, 1999; Cherry, 1988). As research notes, personal references that include first person markers (or self-mentions) are common when the work of other researchers is evaluated in genres such book reviews, letters to the editor or 'response' articles (Bloch, 2003; Hunston, 2005; Motta-Roth, 1998). In these cases, the use of first person markers signals that there may be other possible interpretations concerning a specific issue. Following this line of argument, research emphasises that, far from being neutral, academic texts are the result of a collection of conventions that can be explained in terms of the norms of particular academic communities or genres (Bloch, 2003; Harwood, 2005b; Hunston, 2005; Hyland, 1999a; Martínez, 2005).

From a functional point of view, the use of first person references is also influenced by how experienced and non-experienced writers use them. In his study of authorial identity in a corpus of research articles and a corpus of undergraduate theses, Hyland (2002b) points out that the use of first person references varies significantly. In this respect, a notable under-use of first person markers by non-native English writers is observed in contexts that involve signalling commitment to an interpretation or claim (Hyland, 2002b). Similarly, Martínez (2005) also shares Hyland's (2002b) view and



notes that first person pronouns are used differently depending on the purposes they accomplish and according to the different sections of the papers examined. As Martínez (2005) observes, non-experienced writers commonly introduce first person markers to signal metatextual aspects (such as stating a purpose or explaining a procedure). However, they tend to avoid self-mentions when dealing with interpretations or evaluations. Along these lines, research by Flowerdew (2001), Petch-Tyson (1998) and Ventola and Mauranen (1996) shows that difficulties appear because writers must be able to present their views in a challenging way that is regarded as appropriate and deferential in a specific community. Writers must therefore be aware of the norms concerning personal stance and how to convey it in specific disciplinary contexts, depending on the purpose of the discourse and the genre conventions underlying it.

The presentation of a discorsal self therefore emerges as an essential feature of the writing process. In the genre of the 'response' article, a discourse role is created in relation to the identity that a writer acquires by choosing certain ways of participating in a specific discourse community. In our study, since we are dealing with evaluative discourse, this is especially relevant because the writer evaluates another researcher's work and conveys a personal and subjective stance as part of a successful academic interaction.

#### 2.2.2.2 Writer's stance and lexical bundles

Stance bundles appear as typical formal realisations of the way in which members of a discourse community indicate the degree of commitment to propositions, evaluate findings and comment on them. In our study, we regard lexical bundles as essential discourse elements used specifically to convey interpersonal meanings that differ from

the writer's point of view. In addition to this, the meanings of stance bundles are linked to the role of conventions in specific academic communities. Discourse bundles are regarded by researchers (Artiga, 2006; Biber *et al.*, 2004; Cortés, 2004; Fortanet, 2004b) as unique linguistic constructs, which are not complete structural units but instead fragmented phrases or clauses that function as the basic building blocks of discourse. As pointed out by Swales (2008), the use of these extended collocations helps to shape meanings in specific contexts, although the extent to which they differ from one discipline to another remains an open question. Following Swales (2008), we regard bundles as being central to the creation of academic discourse, since they constitute an important means of differentiating written texts according to the discipline involved.

Regarding terminology, these extended collocations termed from a formal point of view 'lexical bundles' (Artiga, 2006; Fortanet, 2004b), may also be called 'stance bundles' (Biber *et al.*, 2004; Cortés, 2004) from a functional perspective, when they contribute to express the writer's opinion or viewpoint. According to Biber *et al.*, (2004), depending on the meanings and purposes they accomplish, bundles may be subdivided into 'stance expressions', used to express attitudes, 'discourse organisers', and 'referential expressions', used by writers to organise discourse, provide cohesion and structure ideational meaning. Additionally, from a semantic point of view, these combinations of words may be of a personal or an impersonal kind, depending on whether they are overtly attributed to the writer (e.g. 'I don't think...') or not (e.g. 'are more likely to...'). Within this context, and for the purposes of our study, we focus on personal stance bundles, since we are concerned with how writer's stance is constructed in academic discourse.

With regard to the pragmatic nature of stance bundles (Artiga, 2006), the range of relative force, the assertiveness or mitigation conveyed by them is regarded as being context-dependent. Following this line of research, several studies contribute to show how specific types of discourse favour the use of particular stance bundles. Fortanet (2004b) points out that the actual evaluative context affects the construction of bundles. Sharing this view, other studies establish correlations between different types of bundles and stance marking (Cortés, 2004; Poudat and Louiseau, 2005).

Developing further on the meanings conveyed by stance bundles, research (Biber and Finegan, 1989; Biber *et al.*, 2004; Hunston, 2000) relates the value system reflected by lexical stance bundles to epistemic and attitudinal stance, depending on whether certainty or doubt is expressed towards propositions (epistemic stance) or personal attitudes or feelings are conveyed (attitudinal stance). However, according to Hunston (2000) and Hyland (2000), these meanings overlap in actual discourse and, thus, this distinction presents certain difficulties. This is especially relevant with respect to evaluative texts since a recurrent blending of both dimensions extends over the discourse. In this regard, these recurrent bundles encode judgements and evaluation on the part of the writer, which can be very varied and range from certainty and doubt to caution or tentativeness. Writers use them to project themselves into discourse and maintain appropriate relationships with readers.

Along these lines, Artiga (2006) also refers to 'stance bundles' as formal realisations of the writer's personal authority, commitment to propositions and personal opinions. By using stance bundles the writers limit their claims to their personal opinions, thereby giving their audience freedom to refute or disagree with them. In this way, the use of different verbal stance bundles allows writers to introduce evaluation in

varying degrees by balancing caution with commitment<sup>35</sup>. Following this line of research, several researchers (Hyland, 2000; Martín, 2004b, Saz, 2001) refer to personal attribution as being associated with a hedging function, noting that the expression of personal opinion leaves open the possibility that there may be other interpretations. In addition, the influence of hedging and boosting devices may also significantly modify the way in which the writer assumes responsibility for claims or evaluations (e.g. 'I absolutely agree/'I largely agree with the proposal...')<sup>36</sup>. From this perspective, Artiga (2006) proposes a semantic-pragmatic interface where the use of stance bundles is aimed at avoiding categorical assertions, showing cautious positions and tentativeness, making criticism milder, giving advice or recommendations or simply appearing vague or ambiguous.

A further issue of concern regards the polypragmatic nature of stance bundles in relation to the meanings of assertiveness or mitigation mentioned above. As research highlights, some bundles may not only convey certainty and conviction but also display appropriate consideration for other researchers' opinions. For instance, Silver (2003) draws attention to the fact that the use of first person pronouns may appear related to a context of assertion and mitigation of the evaluative force, thereby leading to a blending of attitudinal and epistemic values. Supporting this view, Harwood (2005b) highlights the role of verbs of thinking and emotion (such as 'think', 'believe', 'feel') as contributing to show the writer's conviction and authority as well as deference for other researchers' views. However, in order to account for an appropriate interpretation meanings, the role of context is regarded as essential (Fortanet, 2004b; Martín and Burgess, 2004; Silver, 2003; Thompson and Ye, 1991).

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<sup>35</sup> For instance, 'I disagree with...' conveys a more overt stance and direct evaluation than 'I have some reservations about...'.  
<sup>36</sup> As mentioned above, these devices may also be employed at the same time (e.g. 'I'm not at all sure that...').

From a formal point of view, Fortanet (2004b) points out that these recurrent structural patterns may be linked to grammatical correlates and related to corresponding semantic meanings and functional categories. In this way, the author singles out the use of first person pronouns accompanied by verbs as one of the most widely extended collocations that contributes to the marking of stance in academic discourse. Regarding the wide variety of verbs that writers may use, verbs belonging to the category of 'cognition' (Hyland, 2000) or 'mental' verbs (Thompson and Ye, 1991) are often used (e.g. 'think', 'believe') are frequently employed in evaluative contexts. According to Martín and Burgess (2004), lexical bundles in which first person pronouns co-occur with verbs of cognition express not only personal opinion but also display appropriate respect for other researchers' views. Apart from these mental process verbs, Hyland (2000) and Thompson and Ye (1991) also refer to other choices that may appear, including 'discourse' or 'textual' verbs (such as 'argue'), which may be used with an evaluative purpose and need to be interpreted in context. Moreover, Thompson and Ye (1991) and Artiga (2006) refer to explicit attitudinal verbs (e.g. 'agree') and verbs conveying affective or emotional stance (e.g. 'feel'), noting that these verbs convey a blending of connotations between opinion and feeling. Finally, research also refers to meanings of obligation ('I have to disagree on the grounds that...') and the occurrence of stance bundles to offer recommendations, which often involve other participants (e.g. 'We all, including Carter, would do well to consider...'). According to Martín and Burgess (2004), the feature that personal stance bundles have in common is that they incorporate a personal marker, which they term 'writer-mediation', to signal the writer's responsibility for the claims or evaluations made.

Following on from here and regarding further aspects concerning variation from a formal point of view, research (Fortanet, 2004b; Thompson and Ye, 1991) has shown that the construction of lexical bundles also includes clusters formed by a copula and an adjective (e.g. 'I'm sure that...') or noun and prepositional phrases (e.g. 'My problem with this interpretation...', 'in my view...'). Besides, according to Thompson and Ye (1991), a further additional source of variation concerns elements such as the use of negation (e.g. 'I don't think...') or modal verbs (e.g. 'I would advocate...'). On the subject of modality, Posteguillo and Piqué (2004) point out that apart from epistemic modality, which is traditionally acknowledged as part of academic papers, deontic modality is also present in academic discourse, depending on the specific field of study<sup>37</sup>. Moreover, other additional resources that modify the force of evaluation are hedges or boosters (e.g. 'We *do seem to* have evidence to suggest that...'). In these cases, it is usual for a blend of epistemic and attitudinal connotations to appear.

Within this framework, research focuses on how certain stretches of discourse foreground the writer's attitudes or ideas. For instance, according to Hyland and Tse (2005: 124) 'that-clauses' allow the attitudinal meaning to be projected as the starting point of the message:

By realising attitudinal meaning as a proposition on its own, separate from what is evaluated, this structure turns such evaluations into an explicit statement of opinion with the potential for elaboration and further discussion. This provides writers with more evaluative options than the use of a single modal verb or lexical item.

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<sup>37</sup> Deontic modality is conveyed through modalised statements containing obligation or directive bundles (Posteguillo and Piqué, 2004).

Finally, from the point of view of formal construction, the verb tense employed in stance bundles is also pointed out as a resource that influences interpersonal meanings (Hinkel, 2004; Malcolm, 1987; Salager-Meyer, 1992). Research also notes that most verbs introducing evaluation are in the present tense (Gea, 1998; Luzón, 1996; Thompson and Ye, 1991; Thompson and Ye, 1991). In this respect, stance bundles help to construct a distinct discoursal and generic stance.

In our study, lexical stance bundles are regarded as essential elements by means of which the writer conveys interpersonal meanings, thereby building an appropriate interaction with the reader. From this perspective, we are concerned about the variety of personal stance bundles that appear in the 'response' article to present the writer's attitude and evaluation. In this respect, we are concerned with the specific value system that is reflected through the use of different stance bundles.

### **2.2.3 Attitude markers**

Drawing on the considerations outlined above, the creation of an appropriate writer's stance is a phenomenon that extends throughout discourse and covers a wide range of linguistic resources. The use of attitude markers contributes to the construction of the writer's stance by reflecting distinct values, which depend on specific discourse communities and genres (Gea, 2004; Gil *et al.*, 2001; Hunston, 2005; Moreno and Suárez, 2008a, 2008b; Stotesbury, 2003). Concerning ways in which attitude is realised in academic discourse, the literature points out a wide variety of choices that are involved in the construction of stance, such as the appearance of first person markers (Fortanet, 2004a, 2004b; Hyland, 2000, 2002b, 2002f, 2005; Kuo, 1990; Martínez, 1995; Vassileva, 1998), nouns (Montero, 1995; Charles, 2003; Flowerdew, 2003;

Stotesbury, 2003; Pisanski, 2005), adverbs (Aijmer, 2005; Conrad and Biber, 2000; Silver, 2003), adjectives (Gil *et al.*, 2001, Soler, 2002; Gea, 2000) or verbal markers (Luzón, 1996; Burrough-Boenish, 2003; Thomas and Hawes, 1994).

Regarding the interpretation of attitude markers, the essential role of context is emphasised by research. For instance, Aijmer (2005) focuses on the interpretation of 'really' and Silver (2003) deals with the adverb 'evidently', relating their meanings to the contexts in which they are used. Following this line of research, other studies focus on 'collocational' properties of words and their most common phraseological tendencies (Hunston and Sinclair, 2000; Oakey, 2005; Luzón, 2000b). Moreover, interpretation of attitude markers is also related to structural or positional variation, since they convey specific values derived from structural placement in discourse. In this regard, according to Thompson and Thou (2000), the traditionally called evaluative disjuncts, such as 'unfortunately' or 'surprising', play an essential role in constructing evaluative coherence. Thus, choices that contribute to reflect writers' positioning move beyond grammatical conceptualisations (Hunston, 2000; Pisanski, 2005; Recski, 2005).

As far as evaluative discourse is concerned, the personal and subjective dimension of academic discourse is foregrounded within critical academic discourse (Bamford, 2005; Bloch, 2003; Hunston, 2005). Writers, far from being neutral towards the information conveyed, tend to include attitudinal and affective meanings in discourse, according to the conventions followed within a specific genre or field of study. In this respect, Stotesbury's (2003) cross-disciplinary study of attitude markers shows that humanities and social sciences often use evaluative attributes, whereas in natural science disciplines writers tend to employ other resources such as modality as a way of expressing authorial stance. From this perspective, attitude markers and evaluative items in general are understood as constructing and reflecting a system that members of



specific disciplinary communities recognise and share. According to Hyland (2005), a distinct and specific value system is conveyed by writers' judgements of epistemic probability, value estimations and affective meanings in academic discourse. Within this context, a prominence of certain types of 'attitude' markers over others leads to a distinct discourse tone.

As the writer's affective attitude and evaluation is foregrounded, distinct and unique features appear in written academic discourse. Thus, according to Hunston (2005), the discourse of the 'response' article contrasts with that of traditional academic research papers in that it reflects considerable differences as to the degree and type of attitudinal devices employed. As reported by Hunston (2005), arguments are more usually evaluated negatively in the 'response' or 'conflict' articles<sup>38</sup> compared to the corpus of research papers examined. In connection with this higher frequency of evaluative markers, negative comments are directed at particular researchers and the outcomes of their research. Within this context, research shows that the realisation of attitude markers is highly influenced by the interactional framework constructed through discourse. For instance, Hunston, (2005) and Hyland (2000) report on the occurrence of distinct patterns of attribution in discourse, noting that evaluative language makes greater use of reporting verbs that interpret and evaluate at the same time. Similarly, the use of negation (Hunston, 2005; Webber, 2004) and hedging resources (either lexicogrammatical or strategic (Hyland, 2000; Martín and Burgess, 2004), reflects distinct rhetorical patterns conforming to the norms and values of this type of academic interaction. Thus, concerning our research, we regard attitude markers as part of the writer's evaluative choices that contribute to construct an interactive and interpersonal dimension of discourse.

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<sup>38</sup> Hunston (2005) chooses the term 'conflict' article to refer to what we call a 'response article' in our study.

### **2.3 A framework for the study of stance in written academic discourse from a generic and metadiscourse perspective**

In our study, an analysis of the construction of the writer's stance in academic written discourse is addressed from a genre perspective. In addition (as we outline in the previous section), the writer's interpersonal metadiscourse choices are regarded as central in the construction of stance, thus leading to different patterns of academic interaction within specific genres. Hence, since metadiscourse elements are used for particular purposes in different genres, academic discourse needs to be approached from a generic perspective.

Our model for the study of academic discourse establishes a link between genres and metadiscourse, since the different features that may influence academic discourse genres also underlie the construction of the writer's stance and the metadiscourse resources used. Bearing in mind that the construction of discourse may involve a wide variety of features that extend from socio-rhetorical, cultural and socio-cognitive to affective and situational ones, we propose the following model to examine academic discourse from a genre perspective:

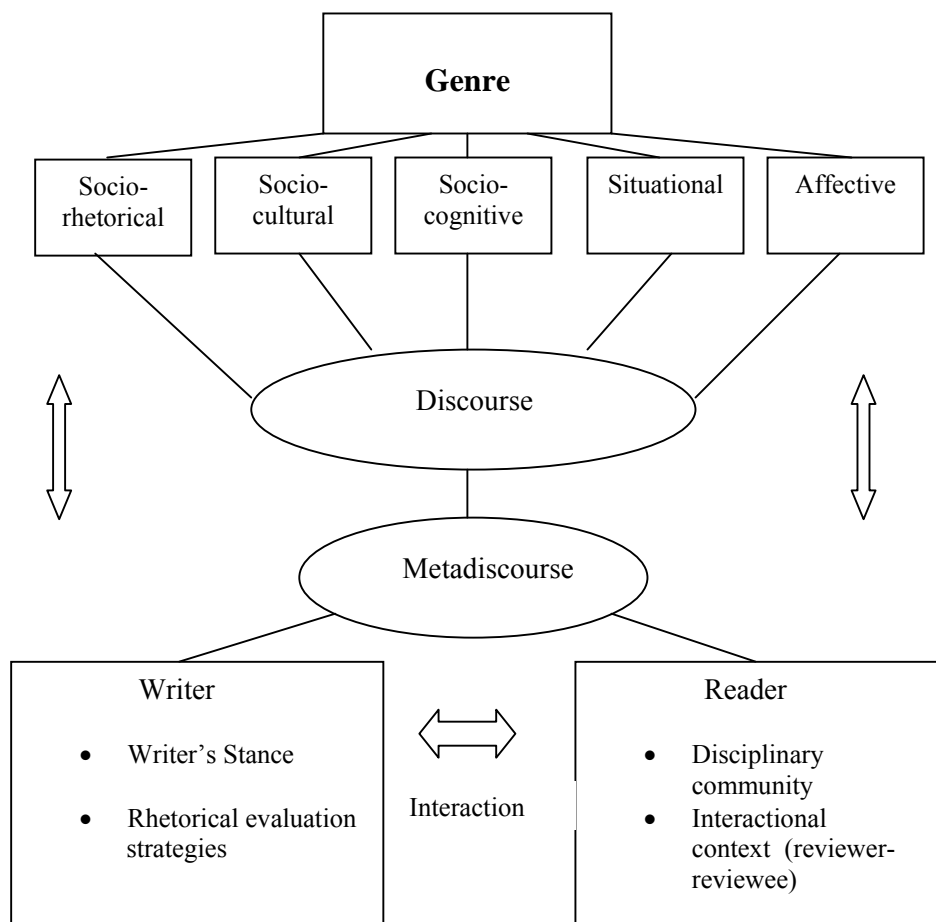


Figure 9. A Framework for the study of academic discourse (based on Bhatia, 1993; Luzón, 2000c; Hyland, 2000; Hyland and Tse, 2004 and Swales, 1990)

As suggested by the figure above, a genre approach to discourse provides a framework where the influence of a wide variety of features is taken into account in order to provide a suitable picture of the construction of discourse within a specific disciplinary context. Thus, based on previous research (Bhatia, 1993; Hyland, 2000 and Swales, 1990), we aim to examine a corpus of ‘response’ articles taking into account different socio-rhetorical and contextual constraints that underlie the way in which academics engage in professional interaction. In addition to this, for the purposes of our study, metadiscourse resources are also linked to generic discourse features, drawing on the arguments proposed by Hyland (2000), Hyland and Tse (2004) and Luzón (2000c).

From this perspective, we regard metadiscourse as a socio-rhetorical and interactive strategy that helps to construct the writer's stance and influences the rhetorical evaluation strategies employed in particular discourse communities. Thus, the variation in the use of resources such as self-mentions, hedging and boosting devices and attitude markers are regarded as crucial in relation to the way in which writers present their views as regards other colleagues' works. From an interactional point of view, metadiscourse represents a key strategy aimed at directing the dialogic encounter and achieving persuasion.

Based on these considerations, we focus on the analysis of evaluative rhetorical strategies in the applied linguistics 'response' article. Our study deals with the variety and frequency of strategies conventionally used to convey academic evaluation in this genre. Our motivation here lies in the fact that, whereas a great deal of research has been carried out on the research article (Bhatia, 1993, 2004; Swales, 1990) and evaluative genres such as the book review (Hyland, 2000; Motta-Roth, 1998; Salager-Meyer and Ariza, 2003) or the letter to the editor (Bloch, 2003; Magnet and Carnet, 2006), there are few studies dealing with the genre of the 'response' article (with the exception of Hunston, 2005). Additionally, we examine how evaluation is modified by means of devices such as hedging or boosting and consider the extent to which they may be regarded as typical or conventional features across a variety of discourse contexts. Thus, rhetorical evaluation strategies are considered to be the result of the writers' personal choices and a set of conventionalised norms in a specific disciplinary community. Finally, an interactional perspective is foregrounded, since the genre of the 'response' article represents an overt interaction between the reviewer and the reviewee within an academic community. In this context, we address the fact that in the 'response' article the evaluation is directed at a specific target author, thus creating a

distinct interpersonal relationship between the interlocutors reflected by both the discourse and metadiscourse patterns created. In sum, the framework outlined above allows us to address how stance and evaluation are created in written academic texts, thus reflecting insights into the rhetorical preferences of specific disciplinary communities.



### **3. EVALUATION IN ACADEMIC DISCOURSE**





In this chapter we focus on evaluation in academic discourse, regarding it as a multi-layered notion involving different parameters that interact to convey evaluative meanings. First, we will deal with terminological difficulties and different approaches to this notion (Section 3.1). A further issue of concern addresses evaluation as integrated within a metadiscourse framework conveying positioning and creating an interpersonal interaction with readers (Section 3.1.1). From this perspective, in connection with the multi-functionality of evaluation, we consider the relation between its rhetorical communicative purpose and its formal linguistic realisations (Section 3.2). Developing on this issue, we address the role of rhetorical strategies in academic discourse, dealing specifically with their interpersonal role in conveying critical stance (Section 3.3). In this context, we refer to how patterns of praise and criticism are built as interpersonal evaluative choices linked to specific academic and disciplinary contexts (Section 3.3.1). In addition to this, rhetorical organisation is considered from the point of view of macro-structure, which contributes to create an appropriate framework of interaction within a generic perspective (Section 3.4). With regard to patterns of cohesion and coherence, we also focus on how meaning is constructed in written academic discourse (Section 3.4.1). Based on the assumptions outlined in the above sections, we are also concerned with how critical discourse and writer's stance is linked to specific genres (Section 3.5). As a development of this, the genre of the 'response' article is examined in relation to its main characterising features, the communication purposes accomplished and the role assumed by writers (Section 3.5.1). Finally, taking into account the motivation for the present study and drawing on research carried out in evaluation (Section 3.6), a set of research questions are proposed (Section 3.6.1).

### **3.1 The notion of evaluation: expressing personal judgement and attitude**

As academic writing has gradually lost its traditional tag of being an objective and impersonal form of discourse, interpersonal aspects of academic writing have been addressed, in relation to how writers present and evaluate findings (Bamford, 2005; Hunston, 2005; Hyland, 2004a, 2005; Hyland and Tse, 2004). Evaluation has been addressed from different points of view, being regarded as a complex notion that comprises different layers of meaning. Hence, researchers have turned their attention to the concept of evaluation and how it is realised in academic texts (Conrad and Biber, 2000; Gea, 2000; Luzón, 1996; Hunston, 1994, 2000; Thompson and Hunston, 2000).

With regard to the conceptualisation of evaluation, the variety of terminological items associated to it reflects its complexity. Hunston and Thompson (2000) use the term 'evaluation' to refer to the speaker's or writer's attitude, judgements, viewpoint on or feelings about the information given in a stretch of text. However, other terms have also been used, such as attitude (Halliday, 1994), modality<sup>39</sup> (Stubbs, 1996), appraisal (Martin, 2000; White, 2003) and stance (Biber and Finegan, 1989; Conrad and Biber, 2000; Hyland, 2004a, 2005). Within this context, drawing on Hunston and Thompson (2000) the concept of 'evaluation' includes two basic types of attitude. On the one hand, evaluative comments may refer to the possibility that an interpretation, explanation or claim should be true and, on the other hand, it may concern the value of a specific study in terms of quality, with regard to aspects such as its usefulness, appropriacy or the achievement of a successful result. In the first case, evaluation relates to different degrees of certainty and cuts across the notion of modality as traditionally understood to refer to the writer's opinion (Halliday, 1994; Perkins, 1983).

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<sup>39</sup> The notion of modality overlaps with that of 'evidentiality' (Chafe and Nichols, 1986).

In the second case, evaluation relates to a wide range of meanings such as attitudes, feelings, value judgements and expectations. According to Thompson and Hunston (2000: 4), there are two main ways of understanding the relationship between these two basic dimensions:

There are two basic options: one emphasises the differences, gives each type a separate label, and analyses them in the main as separate phenomena; the other emphasises the similarities, includes both under a single label (though usually with a label for each at the next step down in delicacy), and analyses them at least partly, if not chiefly as aspects of the same phenomenon.

In this regard, the relation between both dimensions of evaluation has been dealt with by previous research. On the one hand, some research studies deal with modality and attitudinal meaning independently, although placing both of them in the category of interpersonal meanings (Halliday, 1994). Within this perspective, drawing on Halliday's (1994) view, the 'grammar of modality' is explored by Stubbs (1996), who understands 'modal grammar' as a way to convey the speaker's or writer's personal beliefs and positions such as agreement, disagreement as well as commitment or desire to remain vague or uncommitted. Apart from this, Stubbs (1996) also argues for an investigation into the interaction of grammar, lexis and pragmatic meaning, including lexical structures and expressions, which are close to attitudinal meaning. It must also be noted that the notion of modality has also been successfully applied to recent research (He, 1993; Posteguillo and Piqué, 2004; Recski, 2006; Ventola, 1997). In this respect, He (1993) and Ventola (1997) explore the role of modality in institutional interactions and academic writing respectively. In addition, Posteguillo and Piqué (2004) deal with modalised statements in a variety of disciplinary contexts in academic

discourse<sup>40</sup>, whereas Recski (2006) expands on the study of modality regarding it from a structural point of view and showing that, as a ‘macro-modality’ unfolds in discourse, it helps to create cohesion and coherence. On the other hand, a complementary line of research focuses primarily on attitudinal meaning and addresses evaluation in connection with quality judgements and the expression of ‘affective’ personal values. Hence, the term ‘appraisal’ is used (Eggins and Slade, 1997; Martin, 2000) and it is further sub-divided into the expression of affect, judgement and appreciation. Other researchers also use the term ‘affect’ (Besnier, 1993; Ochs, 1989) to focus on the perspective of the language user and the interpersonal meanings created<sup>41</sup>.

Taking into account the views outlined above and according to Thompson and Hunston (2000), a research line that favours a ‘combining’ approach is regarded as the most appropriate one to address the interaction between these dimensions of evaluative meanings. As these researchers suggest, modality and attitudinal meaning can easily occur together in the same stretch of language, performing complementary functions. According to this perspective, both types of evaluative dimensions are comprised under the label of ‘evaluation’. Hunston (2000) refers to these basic evaluative meanings as ‘status’ and ‘value’ and considers them to be two interrelated parameters of evaluation. As we have outlined above, whereas ‘status’ is conceived of as referring to the writer’s degree of certainty and commitment towards a proposition, ‘value’ involves judgements made in terms of quality or achievement of a successful result. Many researchers set out from this view to analyse both types of evaluative meanings under a single label. In this regard, Conrad and Biber (2000) use the term ‘stance’ as a cover term for what they

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<sup>40</sup> This study suggests that not only is epistemic modality used in academic papers (as traditionally acknowledged) but also deontic modality, with a distribution that depends on the disciplinary field.

<sup>41</sup> Affective meaning also results from the extension of the traditionally used term ‘connotation’ (Leech, 1974; Lyons, 1977).

refer to as epistemic and attitudinal stance, drawing on Biber and Finnegan (1989), where the terms ‘evidentiality’ and ‘affect’ are used as styles of stance. Sharing this view, Hyland (2004a, 2005) also uses the term ‘stance’ and favours an integrated approach to evaluation. As Hyland (2000) points out, both kinds of meaning often appear together in discourse, thus carrying out several objectives simultaneously. Following this line of argument, Ifantidou (2005), for instance, claims that adverbs such as ‘obviously’ or ‘clearly’ reflect attitude but also relate to truth conditions. Similarly, Hyland and Tse (2004: 175) acknowledge that the use of labels, although useful from an analytical point of view, is inevitably limited and unable to capture the fluidity of actual discourse, since evaluation of ‘status’ often overlaps with evaluation of ‘value’.

Regarding the above-mentioned evaluative meanings, research points out that the higher relevance of one or the other may depend on the genre and the disciplinary community involved (Hyland, 2000). Sharing this view, Thompson and Hunston (2000: 24) suggest that the relation between these two main parameters of evaluation is linked to the purposes of communication in different genres. For instance, in academic research articles, evaluation along the certainty parameter is considered especially relevant whereas in genres whose central activity is that of reviewing, evaluation of value becomes more significant. In the same vein, Hunston (2005) points out that genres such as the ‘response’ article favour ways of engaging in arguments that are more overt, personal and controversial than the ones found in typical research articles. From this perspective, although these major types of evaluation are regarded as complementary, certain genres may favour one kind of evaluation over the other. In addition to this, research also shows that the values favoured by a specific genre or discourse community are linked to a specific socio-pragmatic and situational context. In this regard, Hyland (2005) points out that the evaluation patterns in academic genres

are different to that of public genres such as journalism or media discourse, which tend to offer writers far more freedom to position themselves interpersonally.

A further issue of interest relates to the structuring role of evaluation in discourse, which gives rise to a third parameter of evaluation referred to as 'evaluation of relevance'. Hunston (1993) refers to the essential role of the preceding or the following stretches of text in relation to a specific argument in discourse. From this point of view, evaluation is regarded as a pervasive feature working at the discourse level of a text. In this line, Shaw (2004) points out that any sentence in a text may be understood as evaluative since it comments on the preceding one and/or predicts the development of discourse. Research shows that evaluation plays a structuring role in discourse by contributing to the creation of coherence and cohesion in texts (Hunston, 1994; Pisanski, 2005; Recski, 2006; Silver, 2003; Suárez and Moreno, 2006; Thompson and Zhou, 2000). Thus, it is suggested that interpersonal meanings are able to structure texts as much as ideational ones. Drawing on Halliday's (1994) view, the ideational, interpersonal and textual components of meaning are not understood as separate structures but as part of a single structural line. Following on from there, evaluation of relevance (Hunston and Thompson, 2000) plays an essential role by providing information about how the text progresses and how the information presented contributes to the final assertion.

In this respect, evaluation of relevance is related to the 'textual' plane of discourse, in contrast to the 'autonomous' plane, which refers to the writer's attitude towards the reality or the value of what is being said. Hence, two differing orientations are distinguished by Hunston and Thompson (2000: 24):

Evaluations of certainty and goodness seem to be primarily 'real-world-oriented': they express the writer's/ speaker's view of the status of propositions and entities. Evaluations of importance and expectedness, on the other hand, have an added 'text-oriented' function: they can serve to guide readers or listeners towards the intended coherence of what they are reading or hearing. Evaluation along the importance parameter appears to play a key role in the organisation of texts.

As suggested above, evaluation involves two planes of discourse: an autonomous or real-world orientation (involving comments on certainty and goodness) and a text-internal one (contributing to discourse coherence). Similarly, several researchers (Cooper, 1983; Francis, 1986; Sinclair, 1981) distinguish an autonomous and an interactive plane of discourse, depending on the way language is used in each of them. Whereas in the autonomous plane, language is used for conveying experience, the interactive plane is concerned with how negotiation and interaction is established. Regarding the autonomous plane of evaluation, Hyland (2000) points out that whereas some stretches of text may convey the writer's attitude, others are non-evaluative according to this dimension. For instance, book reviews cannot be regarded as catalogues of positive and negative evaluative acts, since they also include neutral description of aims, organisation and content. As regards the textual plane of discourse, Tadros (1985) and Cooper (1983) explore phenomena such as prediction and orientation in discourse, dealing with how a rhetorical device at one point of the text may involve the writer's commitment to a future discourse act. From this point of view, the interactive plane of discourse is linked to the relevance parameter of evaluation, since it contributes to textual organisation.

Taking into account the considerations outlined above, a model of evaluation emerges where parameters on the autonomous plane of discourse (status and value) are combined with an added text-oriented relevance, thus resulting in a three-dimensional

model (Hunston and Thompson, 2000). Following this line of argument, the notion of evaluation is understood from an integrated perspective by other researchers, who examine evaluation in an integrated way and deal with its propositional and textual levels (Hyland, 2005; Hyland and Tse, 2004; Silver, 2003). In this respect, evaluation is regarded as incorporating elements from other approaches outlined above, this concept being understood as the expression of the speaker's or the writer's attitude towards the propositions included in the discourse. In addition, the mentioned researchers address evaluation in academic discourse as a resource that provides a way to compare generic practices and explore the rhetorical preferences of different discourse communities.

In our research, which draws on the considerations mentioned above, we examine evaluation from an integrated point of view, bearing in mind that it includes several dimensions that interact in actual occurring discourse. Thus, the notion of evaluation is understood as a complex and multi-layered concept that reflects the different types of attitude the writer may hold. Concerning the autonomous and the textual plane of discourse, evaluation is regarded from a dual perspective. On the one hand, evaluation of status and value are considered to be complementary and often appear together, thus expressing both the writer's degree of commitment and his/her point of view and opinions about the propositions presented in a text. On the other hand, on a textual level, evaluation of relevance is considered to be a key element that contributes to provide information about how stretches of text become part of a larger argument. For our purposes, the writer's stance and evaluation rhetorical strategies are thus addressed from an integrated perspective in order to examine the system of values that underlies academic discourse in 'response' articles.



### 3.1.1 Evaluation as a metadiscourse dimension

Bearing in mind the issues outlined in the previous section, research findings suggest a link between evaluation and metadiscourse, since both phenomena are essentially context-dependent and linked to the norms and expectations of particular cultural and professional communities (Hyland and Tse, 2004; Hyland, 2005; Luzón, 2000c). Metadiscourse devices cut across and overlap with the notion of evaluation and research has therefore had to address issues of delimitation.

Within this context, most researchers favours an 'integrative approach', within which the notion of evaluation is understood as included in the concept of metadiscourse (Crismore *et al.*, 1993; Dafouz, 2003; Farnsworth, 1990; Hyland, 1998a, 2000; Vande Kopple, 1985; Hyland and Tse, 2004; Vázquez *et al.*, 2006). From this perspective, textual and attitudinal aspects are considered to be the basic dimensions of metadiscourse. On the other hand, a non-integrative approach draws a distinction between metadiscourse and evaluation (Ädel, 2005; Mauranen, 1993; Valero-Garcés, 1996). Whereas in the 'integrative approach', evaluative metadiscourse is seen as serving an interpersonal function, in the 'non-integrative' view, the term metadiscourse is restricted to aspects of textual organisation. Thus, the researchers who favour this option prefer to use the term 'metatext' (Mauranen, 1993; Valero-Garcés, 1996; Moreno, 1997). According to this non-integrative approach, evaluation is excluded from the domain of metadiscourse on the grounds that this concept shows a relation to the 'real world' and involves aspects that fall outside internal text organisation.

However, from an integrative point of view, evaluation is not only linked to a conceptual plane of reference, but is also regarded as playing a crucial role in the construction of discourse, as we have outlined above (Hunston and Thompson, 2000;

Hyland, 2005). In this way, drawing a clear-cut distinction between the conceptual and textual level of evaluation may raise some difficulties. Along these lines, as Martin (1983) points out, internal and external relations to a text often show overlapping areas since they encode the writer's or the speaker's interpretation and perception of the real world. Following this line of thinking, Luzón (2000c) argues that the presentation of the writer's mental processes with regard to particular positions or personal attitudes, should not be seen as belonging to a separate plane of discourse. Similarly, Rahman (2004) conceives metadiscourse not only in relation to the structure and organisation of texts but also as an indication of the development of concepts by representing relationships between and among them as they unfold. Thus, following an integrative line of research, besides the development of textual elements (referred to as 'text about text management'), the author proposes that the development of concepts as propositions (referred to as 'text about discourse management') should also be included within the notion of metadiscourse. In this regard, Hyland's (2005) model of metadiscourse includes evaluation as part of his model of interaction in academic discourse. Hence, Hyland (2005) links the notion of evaluation to the creation of the writer's stance in academic discourse, since evaluation is essential in adopting a point of view towards the issues being discussed<sup>42</sup>.

In our study, an integrative framework is considered to be the most appropriate conceptualisation to address the genre of the 'response' article, since it involves the unfolding of evaluation conveyed throughout the expression of attitude as well as the textual management of propositions. From this perspective, both aspects are regarded as complementary, since they contribute to build an interactional relationship with the reader and are essential in achieving persuasion. Based on the above considerations, we

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<sup>42</sup> See Chapter 2 (Section 2.2).

favour an integrative view in which evaluation is considered to be a metadiscourse dimension as an appropriate framework to address evaluative choices in academic writing.

### **3.2 Formal and functional properties of evaluation**

Having outlined a way of approaching the notion of evaluation, our understanding of this concept would not be complete without taking into account several aspects concerning the realisation of evaluation in discourse. In connection with this, research addresses formal and functional properties of evaluation and points to predominant meanings in specific academic contexts and socio-pragmatic circumstances (Hunston, 1994; Hyland, 2000, 2004a, 2005; Luzón, 1999, 2000a; Shaw, 2004; Thompson and Hunston, 2000).

First of all, one of the main difficulties regarding how evaluation works in discourse concerns the issue of distinguishing evaluative from non-evaluative items and how to interpret them appropriately. Linked to this difficulty is the fact that formal linguistic realisations of evaluation can belong to a wide range of particular word classes (considered more or less prototypical). With reference to the different parameters of evaluation outlined in the previous section, Thompson and Hunston (2000: 20) relate ‘status’ to choices traditionally realised by features belonging to grammar (for instance, modal verbs, adjectives, adverbs, verbs and nouns conveying certainty, likelihood, etc.). In contrast, ‘value’ is less grammaticalised in form and is centred on a wider heterogeneous class of lexical items.

A further point of concern involves the relation between forms and functions in discourse. As research acknowledges, establishing this kind of correlations is a complex

matter since evaluation may be expressed by a wide range of formal features (Gea, 2000; Hyland, 2000). In turn, the same form may accomplish various functions as a result of the polypragmatic nature of language (Hyland, 2000; Hyland and Tse, 2004; Varttala, 2001). In connection with this issue, some difficulties arise when dealing with interpretation. Despite these limitations, an approach addressing function and form is needed to account for rhetorical strategies and realisation procedures in specific discourse communities, as pointed out by Hyland (2005: 176-177):

Discrete categories inevitably conceal the fact that forms often perform more than one function at once because, in developing their arguments, writers are simultaneously trying to set out a claim, comment on its truth, establish solidarity and represent their credibility. But it is generally possible to identify predominant meanings to compare the rhetorical patterns in different discourse communities.

From this perspective, the role that certain choices accomplish in texts and the purposes achieved by selecting them needs to be considered taking into account the disciplinary contexts in which they appear. Developing on this issue, research emphasises that in order to be able to determine the evaluative force of items or expressions, they have to be analysed in context (Chanell, 2000; Coulthard, 1994a; Shaw, 2004). Thus, Coulthard (1994a: 9) stresses the power of texts to alter the meaning of words and refers to textual definitions of words as items that derive their meanings from the context in which they appear. Sharing this view, Chanell (2000) and Shaw (2004) refer to the concept of ‘polarity of words’ as the positive or negative associations a word may acquire by occurring most frequently in combination with other words or phrases, which are predominantly positive or negative<sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> In this way, polarity may be altered by the surrounding context. For instance, a word may be explicitly evaluative but its polarity cannot be predetermined (e.g. ‘beautifully simple’).

Drawing on these assumptions, the role of the surrounding text is also related to the more or less explicit way in which evaluation is conveyed. In this respect, evaluation may be conveyed explicitly or it may rely to a greater extent on the surrounding linguistic context and the reader's inference. As Hunston (1994: 193) notes, in the following example, a negative view is conveyed as a result of the way in which the argument is constructed and sentences are juxtaposed:

The present results can be used to address Piaget's (1995) claims. Piaget argued that children under the age of seven years, especially between the ages of three and five years, find it difficult to accommodate the perspectives of their listeners. The results of the present study, however, indicate that children between the ages of 3 and 4 years do adapt to differences in listener status and say 'thank you' more frequently to adults than peers.

As shown in the example above, in addition to the meaning of opposition conveyed by the conjunct 'however', the way in which the propositions develop may be interpretable on the basis of content that is shared with earlier segments (Luzón, 1999; Shaw, 2004). This issue is especially relevant within critical discourse, since what could often be considered as conveying the writer's opinion may acquire an additional evaluative meaning depending on discourse context. From this perspective, the role of context, and more strictly co-text, is related to the extent to which evaluation is regarded as explicit or implicit.

A further issue of concern, has to do with the discursive nature of evaluation. As Thompson and Ye (1991: 367) point out, an evaluative discourse thread emerges as the writer relies on a variety of signals:

Evaluation is an extremely complex textural thread (...) working at the discourse level of text rather than at the grammatical level of the clause: it may hold over relatively long stretches of text (including over a complete text); it is often cumulative rather than clearly signalled at any one point in the text; and it may depend crucially on context (including position within the text).

Research points out that evaluation works at the discourse level of texts and is a cumulative phenomenon rather than a discrete one (Hunston and Thompson, 2000; Hyland, 2000; Silver, 2003; Swales, 2004b). From this perspective, long stretches of text, or even whole texts, may need to be taken into account for interpretation reasons.

Additionally, the role of extra-textual features with regard to the interpretation of evaluative resources also needs to be considered. As Hunston (1994: 191) states, expressing evaluation in a text involves not only a statement of personal judgement but also an appeal to shared norms and values. As a result, rhetorical discourse choices cannot be explained without reference to issues such as knowledge of shared values and procedures in particular disciplines, specific disciplinary concepts, subject matter or the way in which interactions take place. In this regard, implicit evaluation is seen to rely on knowledge that, although shared by the community of practice, is not explicitly stated. Hyland (2000) points out that sometimes criticism is not directly stated but can be inferred from the contrast set up with the reader's expectations<sup>44</sup>. In addition to this, implicit knowledge is also useful beyond a lexico-grammatical point of view and can influence rhetorical discourse patterning. For instance, the use of blunt or direct strategies in academic discourse, implies knowledge about where and when it is appropriate to use them (Motta-Roth, 1998; Salager-Meyer *et al.*, 2003). In sum, evaluation choices need to be addressed taking into account socio-cultural aspects as

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<sup>44</sup> This fact is illustrated by the following example provided by Shaw (2004): 'The method of the book tends to be that of *pre-Marshall* Economics'. In this case, this comment should be interpreted negatively as Marshall's work represents a turning point on principles of economy.

well as implicit shared values and attitudes underlying interaction in specific discourse communities (Hunston, 1994; Hyland, 1997, 2000; Luzón, 2000a; Shaw, 2004).

Following on from the above considerations, research links specific genres and registers to how evaluation is conveyed through different linguistic choices and rhetorical preferences. Regarding the use and distribution of evaluation, Salager-Meyer and Alcaraz (2003) point out that, in contrast to review genres, where evaluation is seen as a basic and prevailing feature throughout discourse, research articles only focus on evaluation in some specific parts or sections of discourse. In addition, academic evaluation may also appear in abstracts and introductory sections of articles as a reflection of the writers' need to offer alternative claims to those in the literature (Swales, 1990; Martín and Burgess, 2004). The results and discussion sections of research articles may also include evaluative comments as a way to contrast results or findings with those of previous research (Brett, 1994; Holmes, 1997). However, as research has shown, despite these critical references, the main aim of research articles is not that of criticising currently established knowledge as in, for instance, review genres. Thus, the frequency and type of evaluation encountered in the different is seen as related to the communicative purposes of the genre and the context of the interaction.

Research on academic evaluation draws on these assumptions and is carried out across different genres such as research articles (Burgess and Fagan, 2002; Hunston, 2005; Salager-Meyer *et al.*, 2003; Saz, 2001), abstracts (Martín and Burgess, 2004; Stotesbury, 2003), theses (Hyland and Tse, 2004; Charles, 2003, 2006), letters to the editor (Bloch, 2003; Magnet and Carnet, 2006; Vázquez, 2006), book reviews (Gea, 2000, 2004; Hyland, 2000; Motta-Roth, 1998; Römer, 2005; Suárez, 2005; Suárez and Moreno, 2006) and review articles (Belcher, 1995; Salager-Meyer and Alcaraz, 2003). The study of evaluation has also been carried out in connection with registers. For

instance, Conrad and Biber (2000) relate the use of certain evaluative choices (stance adverbials) to three different registers (conversation, news and academic register). Our research interest lies in analysing how genre constraints operate as far as evaluation choices are concerned in a specific disciplinary community within the field of applied linguistics. Specific rhetorical choices and strategies resulting from the interaction between the writer and the reader are also addressed.

### **3.3 Evaluation and critical stance: rhetorical strategies in academic discourse**

As we have outlined in the previous section, research on the evaluative choices used by writers is linked to specific academic communities and reveals common evaluative criteria and rhetorical strategies required by the genre under consideration (Bloch, 2003; Gea, 2000; Hyland, 2000; Luzón, 1996; Martín, 2003a; Martín and Burgess, 2004). From this perspective, the role of rhetorical strategies in constructing an interpersonal relationship with the reader is addressed within a socio-culturally bound context.

Regarding academic writing, interaction is inherently related to the writer's positioning, especially when dealing with critical discourse or genres involving a reviewing activity. As Hyland (2005: 175-176) notes, the concept of evaluation is conceived of as essential in relation to academic interaction and successful argumentation:



Interaction in academic writing essentially involves ‘positioning’ or adopting a point of view in relation to both the issues discussed in the text and to others who hold points of view on these issues (...) Evaluation is therefore critical to academic writing as effective argument represents careful consideration of one’s colleagues as writers situate themselves and their work to reflect and shape a valued disciplinary ethos.

As shown in this quotation, evaluation and effective argument are connected to each other. In relation to the expression of critical stance, Motta-Roth (1998) emphasises that reviews are shaped by the norms of the communities they belong to and reflect current norms of practice. The members of a discourse community, therefore, share an understanding of what is considered appropriate social interaction, which includes what needs to be evaluated and how. Within this context, with reference to the ‘foci’ of evaluation in critical academic discourse, Hyland (2000) points out that the writer may comment on the validity and the quality of other colleagues’ research, the relevance of the information included or the appropriateness of the methodological design used in the investigation. In addition, the writer may also refer to the text itself by making critical observations about the style, the clarity of the exposition and its organisation. Furthermore, when dealing with critical reviews, the reviewed author may be the focus of evaluation as far as his or her status as an expert in the field is concerned. In connection with the way in which writers elaborate their views, Hyland (2000) also points out that, in addition to positive and negative judgements as statements that either offer or deny authors credit for their work, writers may also include discourses that merely describe, organise or discuss the point of view they present.

Within this context, it is essential for writers within an academic community to obtain positive credit from their peer reviewers. Peer validation of claims helps writers to build a reputation as competent members in the academic community. According to Bloch (2003), the fact that research contributions are cited in other articles or accepted

in accredited journals leads to a dynamic process of interaction among the reviewed or commented author, the writer, the reader and the editors.

In order to achieve this purpose, knowledge of conventional uses of rhetorical strategies is regarded as crucial for the writer's successful argumentation and positioning (Hyland, 2000, 2004b; Hyland and Tse, 2004; Kanoksilapatham, 2005; Vold, 2006). Hence, the issue of critically commenting on other colleagues' work reveals itself as especially sensitive from an interactional and interpersonal point of view. As Johnson (1992) points out, evaluation is considered as a characteristic way of arguing in specific communities:

When a reviewer is not anonymous (...) such as when a colleague reads and comments on another's paper in an effort to provide helpful criticism, interpersonal goals in writing become just as important as issues of substantive content (...). In this case, to create a text that addresses both critical substantive goals and interpersonal social goals, reviewers use a number of politeness strategies to delicately balance their criticisms.

As this quotation shows, mitigation strategies are regarded as necessary in order to downtone the damaging force that evaluation may entail. With reference to the use of redressive strategies, Martín and Burgess (2004) propose a useful conceptualisation of the writer's criticism choices<sup>45</sup>. According to these authors, criticism is considered from a three-dimensional perspective in relation to writer mediation, the target of the criticism and the use or absence of mitigation features such as hedging. The conceptualisation of these choices is represented in Figure 10:

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<sup>45</sup> The term 'criticism' is understood by Martín and Burgess (2004) as having a negative connotation, thus involving conflict or disagreement.

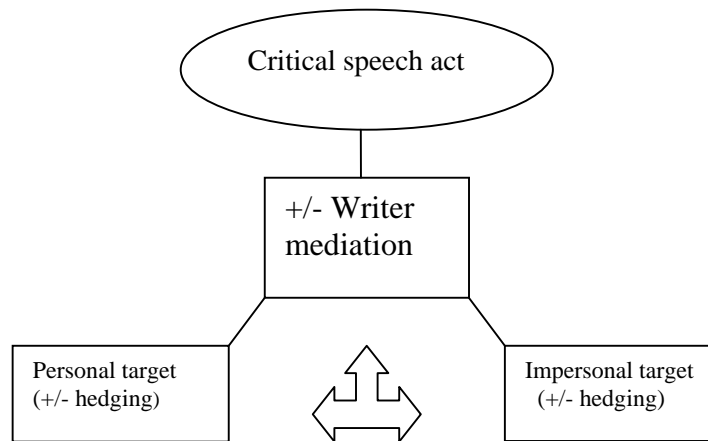


Figure 10. A Taxonomy of rhetorical strategies (based on Martín and Burgess, 2004)

Firstly, the writer-mediation dimension refers to whether the criticism is mediated by the writer in a more or less overt way. According to Martín and Burgess (2004), this dimension can be understood as a matter of degree rather than as an exclusive either/or option. Therefore, and taking into account that the writer is ultimately responsible for the criticism made, degrees of writer mediation need to be understood in terms of distancing strategies. From this perspective, cases such as the following comment, ‘This assumption is simplistic’, should not be interpreted as lacking writer-mediation but rather as a neutral or implicit intervention on the part of the writer. In other cases, the writer’s overt presence may appear more than once in a sentence (e.g. ‘I must confess, I don’t know what Swan means by...’) as the result of the inclusion of an introductory metadiscoursal frame. Secondly, the target of criticism involves whether evaluation is aimed at an individual researcher (personal) or at the community as a whole (impersonal), thus resulting in distinct rhetorical choices that may be influenced by the disciplinary field and genre under consideration. Regarding the case where individual researchers are addressed, it is common that personal pronouns may refer to

them explicitly (e.g. ‘I believe that *their* contribution is to be welcomed...’). Finally, resources such as hedging may modify critical comments, leading to a continuum of choices that range from outright to mitigated criticism.

Referring back to the conceptualisation proposed above by Martín and Burgess (2004), it is interesting to note that these researchers apply it to negative comment. However, we believe that this analytical framework may also be applied to positive comment. In this regard, research points out that, in addition to criticism (Gea, 2000; Hyland, 2000; F. and Hyland, K., 2001; Martín and Burgess, 2004; Luzón, 1996), strategies of praise (Gea, 2000; Gea and Saz, 2001; Luzón, 1996, 1998; Bloch, 2003; Hyland, 2000, 2001) and compliments (Holmes, 1988; Johnson, 1992) are also employed by writers to situate their work and opinions in specific academic communities. Regarding our study, and with reference to the directness dimension of evaluation, it should be noted that although strategies of praise provide positive comment, they may often appear with hedging devices in the ‘response’ article with the aim of limiting approval<sup>46</sup>. Thus, in our study, we address how the dimensions referred to above are realised by the writer’s rhetorical choices in our corpus of ‘response’ articles, thus leading to the construction of the writer’s stance.

### 3.3.1 Patterns of praise and criticism

As we have outlined in the previous section, writers use different rhetorical evaluation strategies in order to maintain successful interpersonal relationships with other researchers in the same disciplinary community (Bloch, 2003; Gea, 2000; Hyland, 2000; Motta-Roth, 1998; Martín and Burgess, 2004; Moreno and Suárez, 2006;

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<sup>46</sup> See Section 3.3.1 on this issue.

Salager-Meyer, 2000, 1998a; Salager-Meyer and Ariza, 2001, 2003). Within this context, patterns of praise and criticism<sup>47</sup> are singled out as reflecting positive and negative evaluative orientations (Bloch, 2003; Hyland, 2000; Gea, 2000; Luzón, 1996; Suarez and Moreno, 2006). As Hyland (2000: 44) points out these strategic choices are especially relevant in evaluative genres such as reviews:

Reviews are interactionally complex and represent a carefully crafted social accomplishment. In most fields then, a good review needs not only to offer a critical and insightful perspective, drawing on considerable knowledge of the field but at the same time respond to the complex demands of this delicate interactional situation, displaying an awareness of the appropriate expression of praise and criticism.

Patterns of praise and criticism are regarded within critical academic discourse as carefully managed choices that create a specific interpersonal frame as a consequence of their communicative function and purpose. In connection with these evaluative orientations, different terms are used to refer to positive and negative comments: praise and criticism (Hyland, 2000, Hyland, F. and Hyland, K. 2001; Gea, 2000; Luzón, 1996), positive and negative evaluation or comment (Bloch, 2003; Hyland, 2000; Motta-Roth, 1998) or consensus and conflict (Hunston, 2005; Martín and Burgess, 2004). According to Hyland F. and Hyland, K. (2001: 186), praise is viewed as an act that attributes credit to another researcher's work for some characteristic, attribute or skill, which is positively valued, whereas criticism is conceived of as an expression of dissatisfaction or negative comment on a text. In addition, it should be noted that agreement and disagreement are also referred to by research (Hyland, 2000, Hyland, F. and Hyland, K. 2000) as rhetorical strategies of evaluation, which are used to assess

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<sup>47</sup> The term 'criticism' is used here as a synonym of negative evaluation (Hyland, 2000; Martín and Burgess, 2004; Salager-Meyer and Alcaraz, 2003).

other authors' work from the point of view of the ideas shared by them<sup>48</sup>. Regarding both evaluative orientations, positive and negative comments are understood not only as building opposition in discourse but also two interrelated dimensions that function together in discourse (Hunston, 2005; Salager-Meyer, 2000). As Hunston (2005) observes, conflict is realised alongside consensus, thereby suggesting that the relation between them is one of interdependence. Finally, the terms positive and negative evaluation are employed as cover terms to examine the wide range of choices used by writers to support and criticise previously published research.

Concerning theoretical approaches, writers' rhetorical strategies have been interpreted from a pragmatic point of view in terms of politeness phenomena, as shown by several researchers (Beebe and Takahashi, 1989; Holmes, 1988, 1995; Myers, 1989, 1992; Olshtain and Weinbach, 1986; Wolfson, 1989). However, as Hyland (1997, 2000) points out, the application of politeness principles to academic discourse cannot provide entirely satisfactory explanations regarding academic interaction, as this approach underestimates the role played by disciplinary-based norms<sup>49</sup>. Because of these limitations, an appropriate understanding of rhetorical strategies in academic discourse implies taking into account disciplinary- and genre-based conventions. Despite sharing this view, some researchers draw on terminology used in pragmatics and refer to 'speech acts' as rhetorical strategies used to convey academic criticism (Burgess and Fagan, 2002; Martín and Burgess, 2004). However, as Martin and Burgess (2004) emphasise, the term 'critical speech act' is understood in relation to socio-cultural, socio-pragmatic and disciplinary-based impositions without which the significance of the writer's rhetorical choices cannot be accounted for. Drawing on

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<sup>48</sup> Agreement and disagreement had been dealt by research from an interactive point of view in spoken communication (Pomerantz, 1984; Scott, 2002).

<sup>49</sup> See Chapter 1 (Section 1.3) on the contributions of politeness theory to academic discourse.

these assumptions, academic conflict is addressed in a detailed way by dealing with how discrepancy among researchers is constructed in specific discourse communities (Bloch, 2003; Burgess and Fagan, 2002; Fagan and Martín, 2004; Gea, 2000; Salager-Meyer and Alcaraz, 2003; Martín and Burgess, 2004). From a complementary perspective, other studies have also been conducted on how praise is expressed in particular genres and contexts (Johnson, 1992; Hyland, 2000)<sup>50</sup>.

A further issue of concern relates to how praise and criticism are realised in academic discourse. In study of book reviews in connection with critical discourse, Hyland (2000) suggests that whereas positive comments largely address global issues, criticism tends to be more specific and raises particular problematic points. As research suggests, positive comments are bound to raise less resistance and can thus be more synthetic (Hyland, 2000: 42). On the other hand, negative evaluation demands longer and more elaborate argumentation, since it raises more conflict (Hyland, 2000; Motta-Roth, 1998; Römer, 2005; Suárez and Moreno, 2008). This fact is reflected in the wide variety and complexity of rhetorical choices used to convey negative evaluation. Apart from the use of lexico-grammatical hedging devices, the use of contrastive structures is acknowledged to be a common way of pointing out the weaknesses of research in a balanced way. For instance, the juxtaposition of praise and criticism contributes to show disapproval at the same time that certain areas of compatibility are emphasised (Bloch, 2003; Gea, 2000; Hyland, 2000; Luzón, 1996). In this context, the use of praise carries the writer's recognition of the critical evaluative force, since it is used to tone down the effects of negative comments. In addition to this, more indirect ways of conveying criticism also stem from the difficulty that negative judgements entail. According to Hyland (2000, 2002a), the use of suggestions and questions as a way of

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<sup>50</sup> Previous research studies had dealt with complementing behaviour in speech (Herbert, 1990; Holmes, 1988; Wolfson, 1989).

mitigating the force of criticism is aimed at building a framework of solidarity with the reader. In the same way, the use of limited or hedged praise draws attention to the way in which writers rephrase criticism or signal a fault in a less threatening way.

Regarding writers' evaluative choices, research also emphasises that successful academic writing is linked to specific disciplinary and socio-cultural features. As pointed out by Hyland (2005: 176), critical stance implies conveying personal judgements and connecting at the same time with a shared professional context:

In pursuing their personal and disciplinary goals, writers seek to create a recognisable social world through rhetorical choices, which allow them to conduct interpersonal negotiations and balance claims for the significance, originality and plausibility of their work against the convictions and expectations of readers.

Concerning the role of disciplines and conventions, variation has been reported in the way evaluation is realised. As research (Hyland, 1998c; Stotesbury, 2003) notes, a higher frequency of attitude markers is found in the soft disciplinary fields in comparison to the hard sciences, thus suggesting that hedging realisations vary across disciplines (Varttala, 2001; Fortanet, Palmer and Posteguillo, 2001). In addition to this, the choice of rhetorical strategies and the ways in which they are realised are related to particular genres. For instance, Hyland (2000: 45) states that conveying praise is not a discourse choice open to any writer, since being entitled to convey praise implies the authority and appropriacy to make the writer's judgements public in a specific community and genre setting. From this perspective, it is suggested that the occurrence of negative judgements is quantitatively higher in certain genres such as reviews (Gea, 2000; Römer, 2005) or 'response' articles (Hunston, 2005). Developing on this issue, research has been carried out on evaluation across genres within specific fields or



disciplines (Bloch, 2003; Gea, 2000; Saz, 2001; Hyland, 2000; Martín and Burgess, 2004; Motta-Roth, 1998; Salager-Meyer and Alcaraz, 2003; Salager-Meyer *et al.*, 2003).

Cultural context is also singled out as an additional influence on writers' evaluative resources. As Suárez and Moreno (2006: 113) point out in their cross-cultural study on English and Spanish literary book reviews, English reviewers show a higher tendency to use adversative and concessive devices to construct mitigating rhetorical strategies. In contrast to this, Spanish ones show a greater tendency to use first person plural pronouns, which are associated with a hedging function. These distinct choices also contribute to create different patterns of cohesion and coherence. Along these same lines, Ruiz de Mendoza and Otal (1997) observe that rhetorical strategies may be realised differently in specific socio-cultural contexts as regards either pragma-linguistic or socio-pragmatic aspects<sup>51</sup>. Sharing this view, Martín (2003a) notes that, whereas British writers often criticise the work of other researcher/s in abstracts, this is considered unconventional by Spanish writers, who choose not to include this specific discourse move. Similarly, other cross-cultural studies also show rhetorical variations that may be explained by the different expectations shared by specific communities (Bloch and Chi, 1995; Connor, 1996; Mauranen, 1993; Taylor and Chen, 1991; Vassileva, 2001). As these studies show, academic discourse is not universal, but there are socio-cultural factors that influence the preference for certain rhetorical strategies (and realisation procedures) over others.

In our study, we address how rhetorical evaluation strategies reflect and maintain the values of a specific academic community within a particular genre. From this perspective, drawing on the above considerations, the evaluative rhetorical strategies

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<sup>51</sup> See Thomas (1983) on this distinction.

that occur in our corpus are regarded to carry out those communicative acts that are conventionally employed by writers in the 'response' article.

### **3.4 Macro-structure, generic moves and organisation of critical academic discourse**

Apart from interpersonal strategies, research has also addressed textual strategies, which help to build discourse patterns and rhetorical structures and hence contribute to guide readers' interpretation of texts. As emphasis is placed on how the macro-structure of texts emerges, patterns of discourse involving rhetorical and schematic structures are identified (Crookes, 1986; Hoey, 1983, 1988; Martin, 1989; Van Dijk, 1988; Widdowson, 1973) and regularities are interpreted in terms of 'moves' (Swales, 1981, 1990; Bhatia, 1993). The macro-structural organisation of discourse contributes to provide a relevant contextual framework for the construction of the writer's stance and the interpretation of evaluation (Luzón, 2002c; Hyland, 2005; Moreno and Suárez, 2006).

From this point of view, textualisation or patterning of texts emerges as being related to the communicative purpose of discourse. In this way, research shows that patterns of praise and criticism may appear throughout the text or function in relation to text structure to help provide an opening and closing (Gea, 2000; Johnson, 1992; Hyland, 2000; Luzón, 1996; Motta-Roth, 1998). In connection with genre 'schemata', patterns of cohesion and coherence are created and play a significant role in constructing the information structure that defines a specific genre (Bhatia, 1993; Motta-Roth, 1998; Peacock, 2002). Within this context, evaluative rhetorical strategies are regarded as contributing to discourse patterning, since they are conceived as sub-functions within higher level constituents understood in terms of 'moves' (Bhatia,

1993; Swales, 1990) and rhetorical structures (Hoey, 1983; Widdowson, 1973). Following on from here, schematic patterns and discourse moves used by members of a discourse community are addressed as ways of constructing and interpreting discourse. Writers, as members of a discourse community, must therefore be aware of the schemata of a genre with respect to knowledge about content and form as well as how to organise and structure discourse (Motta-Roth, 1998; Hyland, 2000).

As far as evaluative review genres are concerned, research reports on the occurrence of common patterns of rhetorical organisation and refers to patterns that are not compulsory, but instead flexible and open (Belcher, 1995; Gea, 2000; Motta-Roth, 1998). In this respect, Belcher's (1995) initial study on book reviews shows that texts may consist of a summary and a final evaluative overview, with the reviewer's position clearly stated, or they may also present a summary, followed by a lengthy critique and a summative-evaluative statement as a conclusion. Subsequent research such as Motta-Roth's (1998) study on book reviews argues for a schematic description of the texts in terms of moves, such as introducing, outlining and highlighting parts of the book, before providing a closing evaluation. In the same vein, Gea's (2000) study on applied linguistics book reviews examines rhetorical patterns presenting slight structural variations. The author notes that a general and prototypical structural organisation such as 'Introduction, Description, Evaluation and Conclusion' allows for a certain amount of variation in the way some sections are structured. For instance, the sequence mentioned above allows for variations such as 'Introduction, Description/ Evaluation, Conclusion' or 'Introduction, Description, Discussion/Evaluation, Conclusion'. In the first variation, the descriptive and evaluative parts appear together whereas in the second one, evaluation occurs side by side with discussion. Although some structural

variation within the genre is allowed, Gea's (2000) findings also acknowledge the emergence of some common rhetorical patterns.

Sharing this view, subsequent studies (Moreno and Suárez, 2006; Suárez, 2005), support the finding that there are common structural elements related to specific genres. Along these lines, Vázquez (2005: 157) examines the genres of 'editorials' and 'letters to the editor' in English and Spanish and argues that each genre may favour distinct patterns of organisation:

(...) Many differences in the textual organisation of Editorials and Editoriales have been found, moreover, their structure is less rigid than those of Cartas and Letters, and that probably means that each genre may have unique linguistic patterns, which are not shared with the rest.

As Vázquez (2005) notes, some differences found between the genres of 'letters to the editor' and 'editorials' may be related to their different communicative purposes and the type of specific topics dealt with. Despite the existence of differential aspects as regards both evaluative genres, the author also finds some common structural features such as a sequence of 'Introduction, Development and Conclusion', with an opening and closing surrounding the main textual body of the genres studied.

Concerning the identification of textual boundaries and variability in structural patterns, research points out that whereas in some genres (such as the research article) structural divisions are more clearly defined, in others (such as book reviews, letters to the editor, etc.) their structure is more difficult to establish, since it is more heterogeneous and flexible (Gea, 2000; Paltridge, 1994; Vázquez, 2005)<sup>52</sup>. In addition to this, Paltridge's (1994) study in relation to the identification of textual boundaries in

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<sup>52</sup> In this regard, the structure of research articles also presents some variation concerning optional discourse elements or the use of section headings, depending on their purpose, research focus (Posteguillo, 1999; Ruiying and Allison, 2004) and the influence of socio-cultural and disciplinary features (Dahl, 2004; Ozturk, 2007).

academic discourse, links the lack of headings in certain texts to a variety of features involved in the generic patterning in relation to convention, appropriacy and content. Developing on this issue, structural divisions are regarded as a search for not only linguistically defined boundaries but also for cognitive ones (Paltridge, 1994; Posteguillo, 1999). Thus, a cognitive perception of textual division is proposed as complementing other more explicit linguistic devices such as headings, sub-headings or metatextual references to the different sections included in texts.

Evaluative discourse unfolds across textual boundaries, thereby developing an evaluative thread that structures discourse. From this perspective, with respect to evaluation and structural variation, research has shown that evaluative rhetorical strategies may be found throughout the whole text in specific genres. In this regard, in her study of book reviews, Motta-Roth (1998: 38-39) points out that evaluation is conceived as a defining feature of texts and thus being able to predict its location in discourse may present some difficulties:

In book reviewing, evaluation is built in terms of the characteristic ways of arguing in the discipline (...). Due to the evaluative character of the genre, terms of praise and blame can be found at any point along the text (...) Evaluation is usually interspersed throughout texts and may escape strict classification as a situated discourse act.

On the subject of discourse organisation, Paltridge (1977: 66) also raises questions about issues such as what elements must or can occur, or where and how often they occur. Other researchers deal with variation in move construction and move order in written academic discourse (Holmes, 2001; Lewin and Fine, 1996; Paltridge, 1994). Based on these considerations, the complex nature of evaluation emerges, since apart from conveying the writer's judgements and points of view, it also helps to structure

discourse by contributing to build textual patterns within specific disciplinary and generic contexts.

### 3.4.1 Patterns of cohesion and coherence in academic discourse

Developing on the issues outlined above, patterns of information in specific genres result in distinct patterns of cohesion and coherence that are connected to the communicative function of discourse (Charles, 2003; Recski, 2006; Suárez and Moreno, 2006). As 'texture' is related to the role of explicit signals of cohesion within the surface structure of texts, 'structure' is related to moves and sub-moves that build up a sequence of coherent micro-texts (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996; Halliday, 1976).

In relation to cohesion, research reports on how the appropriate use of a variety of lexico-grammatical items contributes to the way arguments are understood by readers, which aids in the creation of an authorial voice (Charles, 2003; Pisanski, 2005; Thompson and Zhou, 2000). Evaluative language is conceived of as a rhetorical means of positioning and persuading readers to accept writers' claims. Charles (2003) follows this line of research and suggests that an evaluative thread is created by means of the appropriate selection of items such as adjectives, nouns, verbs and personal pronouns, thus leading to the expression of arguments that are clearly structured and more likely to be convincing. Similarly, Pisanski (2005) regards nouns as signposts within a text aimed at predicting or anticipating information as well as summarising ideas throughout stretches of discourse. In this regard, Thompson and Zhou (2000) emphasise the contribution of evaluative adverbials to convey stance and structure discourse. In addition to a cohesive discourse thread, a clear and comprehensive presentation of ideas and arguments helps to create coherence in academic discourse (Hyland, 2005; Luzón,

2000c; Motta-Roth, 1998). Hence, as Grabe and Kaplan (1996: 70) state, the analysis of texts extends beyond a linguistic perspective to include aspects in relation to cohesion and coherence patterns:

While it is fair to say that cohesion represents the formal signalling features of texts beyond the limits of the sentence, and coherence is probably more than this, it is also likely that writers, in using this surface signalling, are guiding readers to achieve the preferred coherent interpretation intended by the writer.

Developing further on this issue, Lee (2002) claims that coherence is shaped along two lines or interrelated dimensions: coherence as internal to the text and as internal to the reader. Following this line of argument, socio-cultural and socio-cognitive aspects of the communicative encounter are connected with how interpretation is achieved. As regards the achievement of successful interaction, the way in which members of specific disciplinary communities carry out evaluation reflects shared attitudes towards evaluation criteria, practices and community understandings. As Hyland (2005: 175) notes, writers need to understand what counts as effective persuasion in academic writing:

With reference to writers' evaluative choices, they are not made from all the alternatives the language makes available but from a restricted sub-set of options, which reveal how writers understand their communities through the assumptions these encode.

In sum, choices that help build the cohesion and coherence of a text involve writers and readers in rhetorical acts of comprehension and persuasion. It should be stressed that socio-cultural aspects are considered essential in explaining how interpersonal encounters are carried out, and more specifically regarding persuasion in academic discourse. In line with a conception of discourse as genre, we regard appropriate

selections of lexical, grammatical and rhetorical choices as reflecting particular sociolinguistic settings, thus reproducing different communication purposes in specific disciplinary communities.

### **3.5 Critical discourse, writers' stance and academic genres.**

In agreement with the assumptions outlined in the previous section, evaluation is regarded as inherent to critical academic discourse as a consequence of the difficulties that drawing an absolute distinction between fact and evaluation presents (Hyland, 1998). As several researchers emphasise, far from being informative and content oriented, academic discourse aims at convincing the reader (Dafouz, 2003; Luzón, 2000c, Hyland and Tse, 2004; Hyland, 2000, 2005)<sup>53</sup>. Therefore, the use of appropriate argumentative strategies is considered to be crucial in order to achieve successful persuasion. Hence, research shows that writers need to present their claims and evaluation comments cautiously and modestly in accordance with genre conventions and the discourse community's expectations (Bazerman, 1984; Crompton, 1997; Hyland, 1994; Martín, 2003a; Myers, 1985, 1989; Salager-Meyer, 1994).

Within this perspective, research suggests a link between the construction of critical discourse and generic patterns (Bloch, 2003; Gea, 2000; Hunston, 2005; Hyland, 2000; Motta-Roth, 1998; Salager-Meyer and Alcaraz, 2003; Vázquez *et al.*, 2006). And more specifically, some genres are seen to be more evaluative-focused than others, depending on the aims of the discourse and the role of the interlocutors (Hunston, 1993; Hyland, 2000; Motta-Roth, 1998; Salager-Meyer and Alcaraz, 2003). First of all, academic

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<sup>53</sup> The study of writing from a sociological perspective started in the field of science (Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984; Latour and Woolgar, 1979) and extended to other fields of study.



evaluation varies in relation to the communicative purposes of texts and the generic patterns involved (Hunston, 1993; Hyland, 2000; Motta-Roth, 1998; Martín and Burgess, 2004). As early research on written academic genres suggests, the need for expert writers to position themselves leads to the appearance of critical interpretations, which not only become more common in the discussion sections of research articles, but also make these sections longer and more complex (Brett, 1994; Holmes, 1997; Hopkins and Dudley-Evans, 1988).

Following from here, evaluative genres evolve into interactionally complex discourse, which involves producing critical comments aimed at colleagues' research in a particular disciplinary field. As Hyland (2000: 44) points out, evaluative language needs to respond to the demands of the interactional situation in connection with the communicative purposes of discourse. According to this author, some genres such as critical reviews involve a direct challenge to a specific author, in contrast to research articles, where criticism of earlier research is much more subtle and implicit. Hence, reviews are seen as involving a direct, public and often critical encounter with a particular text and therefore its author, rather than responding to a general body of more or less impersonal literature. Within this context, a further source of variation concerns whether evaluation is aimed at a specific author (as in the case of critical reviews) or the academic community as a whole (as in the case of research articles). These differences lead to distinctions as to how evaluation is conveyed as well as the way in which the writer assumes the role of critical expert (Burgess and Fagan, 2002; Hunston, 2005; Martín and Burgess, 2004; Salager-Meyer and Alcaraz, 2003).

The creation of an authorial voice results from the interaction between writers and readers, thus giving rise to distinct evaluative choices. According to Salager-Meyer and Alcaraz (2003), there may be an evaluative gradation with respect to the role

accomplished by writers. In their cross-genre study in the field of medicine, the authors point out that review articles and editorials are distinguished from research articles on the grounds that the role of the research paper writer is different from that reflected in review articles. Salager-Meyer and Alcaraz (2003: 108) claim that, whereas in research articles writers present and justify their own research in the eyes of the academic community, in critical review articles writers express their own views and conclusions regarding a selected study. Within reviews, according to Salager-Meyer and Alcaraz (2003), there is also a gradation depending on whether evaluation is aimed at the academic community in general or at a specific target author. In this respect, in genres such as 'state-of-the art' articles, writers offer an overview of research that has been previously undertaken as well as critically assessing it. Developing further on the evaluation scale, the genre of editorials requires the writer to be an expert who comments on fellow researchers. Thus, the writer's role in editorials is far more debate-focused as an expert evaluator and critic, the primary aim being to try to convince the reader to adopt the writer's views. From all the above it can be seen that critical discourse and writer's stance are interrelated.

Apart from the issues outlined above, it needs to be highlighted that in addition to genre constraints (Hyland, 2005; Salager-Meyer and Alcaraz, 2003), disciplinary field (Hyland, 2000; Motta-Roth, 1998; Ozturk 2006) and socio-cultural background (Martín, 2003a; Vold, 2006) are seen to influence writers' evaluation choices. Despite the differential aspects that characterise evaluation across different genres and disciplines, research also notes that there are some features that are common to review genres as a whole (Hyland, 2000; Motta-Roth, 1998; Vázquez, 1995). The fact that evaluative genres offer a way of validating other researchers' views and findings in a specific community constitutes a dynamic way in which new knowledge is created.

Regarding our research, as far as the communicative purpose of the ‘response’ article is concerned, its main aim regards the activity of critically reviewing another researcher’s work. In this sense, the ‘response’ article, together with other review genres, may also be considered as a vehicle for knowledge creation and verification.

### 3.5.1 The ‘response’ article as a genre within the field of applied linguistics

Dealing specifically with the genre of the ‘response’ or ‘conflict’ article, recent research addresses its effectiveness at contributing to the dissemination of knowledge and claims. It represents an open forum of interaction among researchers in a specific academic community and disciplinary field. Apart from this, research also deals with how interaction is realised in this kind of discourse and the extent to which evaluation strategies are regarded as distinct (Hunston, 2005). In this respect, it needs to be emphasised that the success of academics depends on the use of appropriate rhetorical and interactive devices that are made available to them in particular genres and disciplinary communities.

Concerning the study of evaluation in written academic discourse, Hunston’s (2005) study represents a relevant piece of research regarding the genre of the ‘response’ article. Following Hunston (2005: 2), these articles are regarded as exemplars of a genre within academic discourse that obeys a distinct set of conventions:

These articles declare their purpose to be specifically to counter the opinions expressed in previously published articles. They do not present new research but engage in an argument that is more overt and personal than that found in typical research articles. For convenience, I shall call these articles ‘conflict’ articles.

'Conflict' articles are seen to consist of a conflict exchange, since arguments are often evaluated negatively within a specific value system. However, it should be highlighted that although controversy is raised, 'consensus' is also acknowledged to be present, thereby suggesting how arguments can be balanced in subtle ways. Because of this interdependence between conflict and consensus, in our study, we prefer the term academic 'response' article, taken as meaning by definition a response to a previous article, which initiated a discussion on a particular topic. In this regard, 'response' articles contribute to promote discussion in a discipline, thus showing that an academic issue can be approached from a variety of points of view. In line with Salager-Meyer's (2000) conception of 'debate-creating' genres, 'response' articles are regarded as offering the opportunity to exchange views and opinions related to certain topics considered of interest and relevance within the academic community. Within this context, evaluating the work or theory of another researcher is linked to the construction of writers' stance, since it involves displaying a personal view on a topic and setting up a framework of interaction in which discussion can take place (Hunston, 2005; Hyland, 2005).

Concerning the value system underlying 'response' articles, Hunston (2005) points out that this kind of discourse involves distinct evaluative features. In the first place, concerning the target of criticism, a direct and critical reference to a particular text and its author are singled out as conventional. According to Martín and Burgess (2004), the fact that rhetorical strategies are aimed at the discourse community in general or at a specific author in particular leads to specific interactional features. Similarly, Saz (2001) foregrounds the use of distinctive referential procedures in different kinds of written academic discourse. For instance, with reference to research articles, researchers' names are mentioned within parenthesis and using impersonal

constructions as a way of avoiding personal references (e.g. ‘most published works’, ‘in a study’, ‘it was hypothesised’). However, where a direct and critical encounter with a text and its author are focused on, pronoun references are considered common ways of making reference to target authors (Burgess and Fagan, 2002; Martin and Burgess, 2004; Hyland, 2000).

Concerning participant relationships and the realisation of interpersonal patterns in academic discourse, the ‘response’ article is characterised by the use of certain personal markers that refer to the writer of the article or the reviewed author (Kuo, 1999; Hunston, 2005; Martínez, 2005; Stotesbury, 2003). As far as first person references are concerned, genre conventions link the ‘response’ article to an explicitly involved and personal stance (Hunston, 2005). In this respect, Hyland (1998c, 2005) also relates disciplinary fields in the humanities and social sciences to the construction of a personal type of discourse, where the relevance of arguments is developed according to the writer’s point of view. In addition to this, references to the reviewed author (Hyland, 2000; Thompson and Ye, 1999) result in different referential patterns in academic discourse:

- (a) Factive: the writer portrays the author as presenting true information or a correct opinion (e.g. he throws light on..., he succeeds...).
- (b) Counter-factive: the writer portrays the author as presenting false information or an incorrect opinion (e.g. he confuses..., he disregards...).
- (c) Non-factive: the writer gives no clear signal concerning the author’s information/opinion (e.g. he suggests..., he advocates...).

As shown above, factive and counter-factive references represent ways in which the writer overtly evaluates another author explicitly. Concerning the ‘non-factive’ option,

the writer attributes a position to the original author by reporting, rather than by adopting an explicitly personal stance. According to Hyland (2000), the author may be reported as positive (e.g. 'he advocates...'), neutral (e.g. 'he comments on...'), tentative (e.g. 'he suggests...') or critical (e.g. 'he refutes...'). In connection with these referential choices, Thompson and Ye (1991) introduce a distinction between writer acts and author acts, as a result of employing either factive and counter-factive choices or non-factive ones. However, Thompson and Ye (1991) acknowledge that different layers of report can be linked to reporting verbs, since not only a reporting function but also an evaluative one may be conveyed in specific contexts. In agreement with this, Hunston (2005) also points out that these categories cannot be regarded as clear-cut choices, and emphasises that interpretation often forms part of the attribution process.

From a functional point of view, research reports on differences in the way these referential choices are used. For instance, Thompson and Ye (1991) note that the counter-factive category is rarely used in the genre of the research article, as part of the general reluctance to disagree with a fellow researcher in an overt way. However, Hunston (2005) claims that its use is not uncommon in the 'response' article. In connection with the use of overtly evaluative choices on the part of the writer, which include an explicit reference to the target of criticism, Martín and Burgess (2004) suggest that negative comment may be softened by the use of writer-mediation or hedging devices (as in 'I think that he might have misinterpreted my argument').

Drawing on these assumptions and with reference to participant relationships in academic discourse, research suggests the introduction of the term 'polyphony', which refers to the combination of several perspectives present in academic interaction (Breivega *et al.*, Fløttum, 2005). From this point of view, the self (or the 'I'/'we') dimension and the other (or 'you'/'he'/'they') dimension point to a combination of

different voices in discourse. As the relation between the writer of an article and the reviewed author gives way to a variety of referential choices, distinctive genre structures are produced in academic discourse. This point of view, according to Flottum (2005: 38), provides an appropriate framework to address a complex exchange of voices:

Linguistic polyphony is a subtle way of bringing both self and others into a text (...). It is clear that multi-voiced and polyphonic visibility is manifested in different ways and to different degrees in different languages, disciplines and genres.

Developing further on this issue, Hunston (2005) and Webber (2004) claim that critical discourse displays distinct patterns of intertextual engagement that become explicit in discourse, as a dialogue is set up between the writer engaging in an argument in the first place and the response produced by another researcher. In addition, concerning the construction of discourse patterns, Ifantidou (2005) suggests that intertextual as well as intra-textual relations need to be taken into account, depending on whether other texts or their writers themselves are referred to. In relation to the interaction with the reader, Thompson (2001) suggests that there is a link between genre patterns and the use of different interactive and interactional resources. For instance, by means of strategies such as the use of questions, the writer involves the reader in a virtual debate, thus treating him as a knowledgeable colleague and active participant in the interaction. Similarly, by means of a contrastive or concessive relation, the reader is guided into sharing the writer's concerns. It is suggested then that

effective writing strikes a balance between a monologic ‘logical’ argumentation and a dialogic and collaborative kind<sup>54</sup>.

From a formal point of view, researchers have also noted the presence of specific lexico-grammatical realisations that may be related with evaluation in certain evaluative contexts. In this respect, it has been claimed (Thompson and Ye, 1991; Webber, 2004) that the high frequency of negative words reflects the potential of negation in relation to the expression of divergence from other researchers’ views. According to Webber (1994: 181), writers may use negative items with different purposes, such as expressing dissatisfaction with notions put forward by other colleagues (e.g. ‘Beaugrande does not demonstrate...’) or delimiting their positions (e.g. ‘I do not know...’). To be able to distinguish a variety of uses, the role of context is regarded as essential for interpretation. Thompson and Ye (1991: 374) compare two different roles of negation by providing these examples:

- (a) However, the authors did not specifically compare the bilingual child’s ability in one language with his/her ability in the other (Alderson, 1984: 9).
- (b) Ulijn (1978) presents evidence which contradicts Cowan’s theory (...) He did not find that points of linguistic contrast caused comprehension difficulties or slower reading rates (Alderson, 1984: 11-12).

Whereas in example (a), the writer chooses to comment on the absence of an act introducing an evaluative comment, negation does not have this effect in example (b), where the researcher’s negative results are reported as contradicting another researcher’s findings.

For our purposes, the assumptions outlined above offer a suitable framework within which to address evaluative and interaction patterns in the ‘response’ article. A subtle

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<sup>54</sup> See also Thompson and Thetela (1995), which refers to the ‘reader-in-the-text’ as the inclusion of the reader’s voice in discourse.



mode of interaction between the writer and the reviewed author emerges as the target author is regarded as the primary audience of the article. With respect to inter-textual relations, a dialogue displaced in space and time occurs between the writer and the reader. By making a specific value system visible and with the aim of evaluating previous researchers' work, a specific interactional framework is built in which engagement with the reader is established. Furthermore, as outlined in this section, the 'response' article is considered to contain certain distinctive features that differentiate it from other academic genres, although it may share certain overlapping features with other review genres. Concerning the framework of analysis employed, a genre perspective is regarded as a suitable way of addressing the interdependence of the linguistic and contextual elements that are involved in the 'response' article.

### **3.6 Motivations for the present study**

The main motivation underlying the present study concerns the analysis of critical academic discourse, with special attention paid to how members within an academic community interact and exchange points of view. More specifically, our research deals with the study of evaluation strategies in the 'response' article, with the aim of examining the extent to which they are dependent on the specific conventions followed within different genres and academic communities.

Within this framework, research emphasises that in order to achieve successful communication, it is essential to be aware of appropriate strategies aimed at serving particular purposes in discourse (Hyland, 2000, 2005; Kanoksilapatham, 2005; Vold, 2006). In connection with this, research has also dealt with how critical rhetorical strategies are realised within different genres such as research papers (Fagan and

Burgess, 2002; Hunston, 2005; Luzón, 1996; Salager-Meyer, 2003; Saz, 2001), research article abstracts (Martín and Burgess, 2004; Stotesbury, 2003), book reviews (Gea, 2000; Hyland, 2000; North, 1992; Motta-Roth, 1998; Moreno and Suárez, 2006, 2008; Römer, 2005), letters to the editor (Bloch, 2003; Magnet and Carnet, 2006; Vázquez, 2005) and editorials (Flowerdew and Dudley-Evans, 2002; Le, 2004; Vázquez, 2005). However, concerning our study, although the evaluative strategies employed by academic writers have attracted some attention from the point of view of teaching and learning (Bloch, 2003; Cheng, 2006a; Mišak *et al.*, 2005), hardly any research dealing with ‘response’ articles has been published, with the exception of Belcher’s (1995) initial study on comment articles and Hunston’s (2005) recent study. Taking into account the studies of evaluation in academic discourse referred to above, our aim is to examine how evaluation is carried out in the ‘response’ article by addressing:

- (1) whether the ‘response’ article is characterised by a specific range of rhetorical strategies used to convey academic evaluation
- (2) whether those strategies are implemented by hedging and/or boosting devices
- (3) how the interactional encounter between the writer of the article and the reviewed author is constructed

The activity of evaluating other researchers’ work demands an awareness of the most appropriate rhetorical expression and preferred practices within a given discipline. Thus, the study of rhetorical strategies (and realisation procedures) used to convey evaluation is the first objective of our study. Writers’ evaluative choices are regarded as reflecting an understanding of complex social interactions, involving a critical and

deferential perspective on another author's work while the writer's stance is constructed. A further issue of interest concerning our study regards the target of criticism, as 'response' articles are overtly aimed at an individual author. Drawing on Martín and Burgess (2004), rhetorical strategies of evaluation are seen to be influenced by three interrelated dimensions: writer mediation, target of the criticism and directness, which contribute to build a specific interpersonal interactive framework. Thus, we address evaluation as a scale resulting from the consideration of the above-mentioned three-dimensional model.

Turning to our second issue of concern, we deal with how evaluation is modified by means of interpersonal metadiscourse, more specifically, the use of hedging and boosting devices. As previous research findings have shown, hedging and boosting may modify the pragmatic force of evaluation (Hyland, 2000; Mendiluce and Hernández, 2005; Vassileva, 2001). As far as hedging devices are concerned, we focus on the variety of choices involved, which may include lexico-grammatical hedging (Hyland, 2000; Martín, 2003b; Saz, 2001; Varttala, 2001), hedging bundles (Artiga, 2006; Biber *et al.*, 2004; Cortés, 2004) and strategic hedging or paired-patterns (Bloch, 2003; Johnson, 1992; Hyland, 2000, Hyland, F. and Hyland, K., 2001). As a result, we are concerned about how these resources may be used in combination to produce a pattern that contributes to the interpersonal tenor of the genre.

Our third issue of concern regards the construction of the writer's personal stance in relation to the writer's presence and mediation. With regard to the marking of stance, different stance bundles may be distinguished, each of which introduces different degrees of commitment on the part of the writer (Biber *et al.*, 2004; Cortés, 2004; Fortanet, 2004b). In addition to this, we are also concerned with the interactional patterns created by the references to the reviewed author in different evaluation

contexts and whether these references are mediated by the writer or appear modified by any hedging or boosting devices. As research by Martín and Burgess (2004) shows, whenever explicit references to the author are found within negative critical evaluation, writer-mediation and/or hedging help to introduce criticism as the writer's personal opinion. Our interest lies in analysing what may motivate these choices and to what extent they constitute distinctive patterns in the 'response' article.

### 3.6.1 Research questions

On the basis of the different aspects of the rationale guiding our study, we have formulated the following research questions:

1. Is there a variety of rhetorical strategies used to convey evaluation in the 'response' article? If so, do they reflect any distinct orientations in academic discourse? (Bloch, 2003; Gea, 2000; Luzón, 1998; Motta-Roth, 1998; Hyland, 2000; Suárez and Moreno, 2006, 2008)

2. Does evaluation appear together with any modifiers in the 'response' article? If so, how is it realised? (Fortanet *et al.*, 2001; Hyland, 2000; Martín, 2003b; Martín and Burgess, 2004; Mendiluce and Hernández, 2005; Saz, 2001)

3. As far as the writer-mediation dimension is concerned, are different types of stance bundles used to carry out evaluation? If so, how are they realised? (Biber *et al.*, 2004; Cortés, 2004; Fortanet, 2004b)

4. As far as the interaction between the writer of the article and the reviewed author is concerned, do explicit references to the author appear? If so, do they appear alongside writer-mediation or hedging devices? (Burgess and Fagan, 2002; Martín and Burgess, 2004)



## 4. METHOD





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In this chapter we explain the methodological approach we follow in order to answer the research questions proposed in the previous chapter. First, we focus on the corpus of ‘response’ articles selected within the field of applied linguistics (Section 4.1) and provide a description of the corpus selected (Section 4.1.1) together with the criteria followed for its compilation and selection (Section 4.1.2). Second, we outline the theoretic-methodological approach, which is intended to provide a quantitative and qualitative analysis of praise and criticism as evaluative rhetorical strategies in the ‘response’ article (Section 4.2). Next, taking into account the unit of analysis on which our study is based, we describe the steps followed in this study and the analytical tools used (Section 4.2.1). In addition, we focus on the way in which the different rhetorical strategies used by writers are identified (Section 4.2.2) and deal with the role of context in order to interpret evaluation (Section 4.2.2.1). Following from here, a taxonomy of evaluative rhetorical strategies is proposed (Section 4.3) and some categorisation difficulties and limitations related to this classification are pointed out (Section 4.3.1). Apart from this, the role of other related variables such as the use of evaluative stance bundles as well as hedging and boosting devices is considered as they qualify evaluation to varying degrees (Section 4.4). Within this context, an analysis and categorisation of the most common stance bundles that occur in our corpus is provided (Section 4.4.1). Finally, the role of hedging and boosting devices used to carry out the writer’s evaluation choices is examined and a classification of the most frequent choices found in the ‘response’ article is provided (Section 4.4.2).

#### 4.1 The corpus: description and compilation criteria

In order to deal with the study of written academic discourse aimed at evaluating other colleagues' work, we focused on a corpus of 'response' articles within the field of applied linguistics and examined the specific range of rhetorical devices used to carry out an interactively complex encounter. Taking into account that the articles compiled are explicitly evaluative, linguistic and rhetorical similarities across the articles of our corpus constitute a basic issue of interest as they may point to certain conventional resources in a specific disciplinary community.

Based on the considerations outlined above, articles are selected from *Applied Linguistics* (AL), the *Journal of Second Language Writing* (JSLW), *English for Specific Purposes* (ESP), *Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages Quarterly* (TESOL Quarterly), the *Modern Language Journal* (MLJ), the *English Language Teaching Journal* (ELT) and the *Canadian Modern Language Review* (CMLR). All these journals have in common that they deal with different areas of interest and issues within the field of applied linguistics and the selected texts were published across a span ranging from 1997 and 2007, depending on the journal. The following table shows the main features of our corpus:

Table 1. Main features of the corpus of applied linguistics 'response' articles

Journals (1997-2007)	Number of articles	Number of words
TESOL Quarterly (TESOL Quarterly)	57	106.106
Applied Linguistics (AL)	23	66.681
English Language Teaching (ELT)	31	49.429
Journal of Second Language Writing (JSLW)	13	44.358
Modern Language Journal (MLJ)	14	35.558
Canadian Modern Language Review (CMLR)	6	24.421
English for Specific Purposes (ESP)	4	15.558

As can be seen from the table above, the number of articles selected from each publication differs according to each journal's policy or the need for this specific kind of interactional encounter to take place<sup>55</sup>. In this way, some journals such as *TESOL Quarterly* frequently offer this section throughout the different issues, whereas other publications such as the *MLJ*, *ESP* or the *CMLR* are not so regular in offering this type of discussion. Apart from this, journals such as *AL* have only recently started publishing this kind of articles as a consequence of acknowledging the importance of evaluating differences of opinion, which give rise to critical responses from other academics and readers<sup>56</sup>. Thus, regarding our study, we consider the selected texts, covering a ten-year span (1997-2007), to provide a valuable sample of academic language to be analysed, and allow us to extend our conclusions across a wide range of publications from a qualitative and a quantitative point of view.

<sup>55</sup> The bibliographical references for the articles in the corpus are given in the Appendix.

<sup>56</sup> *AL* started publishing 'response' articles in a new section entitled 'Forum' in issue 22/2 (1999).

#### 4.1.1 Description of the corpus

Concerning the characterisation of each publication, the selected journals deal with topics of relevance within the applied linguistics field of research and focus on a wide variety of issues from theoretical as well as empirical perspectives. However, based on the comments made by the journal editors themselves, they present a slightly different focus and character that defines each publication.

First of all, trying to link theory and practice, journals such as *AL* emphasise specific areas of concern in theoretical linguistic studies and educational research, thus approaching language-related concerns from a multidisciplinary perspective<sup>57</sup>. Additionally, other journals such as *TESOL Quarterly* or the *MLJ* publish studies of current interest, which focus on aspects of theory and practice in relation to the teaching and learning of second and foreign languages. In this line, the *ELT* journal and the *CMLR* also offer a medium for discussion in relation to principles and practices regarding how the English language is taught and learnt. However, these publications differ from *AL* in that they have a more practical character, dealing with aspects of language learning and teaching such as language skills, curriculum or methodology as well as everyday practical concerns in relation to education, psychology or sociology. Apart from these publications, the *JSLW* or the *ESP* journal are characterised by dealing with specific interests within the field of applied linguistics. In the first of them, the emphasis is on language writing and instruction, whereas the second one focuses on the description of specialised varieties of English together.

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<sup>57</sup> Within this framework, a wide scope of interests are comprised such as first and second language learning and teaching, bilingualism, discourse analysis, translation, language testing, language teaching methodology, the study of interlanguage, stylistics or lexicography.

Additional features also need to be taken into account, regarding the quality of these publications as well as the audience that is addressed. Thus, according to Egbert (2007), the journal of *AL* is rated as the highest in quality among a selection of journals in the field of applied linguistics and is intended mainly for an academic audience<sup>58</sup>. In connection with this aspect, Ruiying and Allison (2004) point out that journals such as *AL* present a higher degree of readability difficulties in contrast to other journals within the field of applied linguistics. Regarding quality issues, other publications, such as *TESOL Quarterly* and the *MLJ* are rated on a slightly lower level, although they are also acknowledged as having an academic standard<sup>59</sup>. In addition to this and with regard to the audience addressed, Egbert (2007) suggests that some publications such as the *ELT* journal or the *CMLR* present a more practical focus and thus are addressed to a wider audience, which ranges from academics to teachers in general. Following a complementary line of research, journals such as the *JSLW* or *ESP* are also intended for linguists or teachers (Egbert, 2007).

An essential feature common to the publications selected in our study regards the fact that they provide a section intended as a forum in order to exchange information among members of the profession world-wide. This section includes articles presented as responses to other pieces of published research within a journal and addresses different topics and issues of interest. This purpose of this section, which is the source of the ‘response’ articles selected in our study, is to start a discussion that may be continued in subsequent issues. Being largely critical, ‘response’ articles give journals an interactive dimension as the following quotation shows:

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<sup>58</sup> Ruiying and Allison (2004: 266) refer to *AL*, *TESOL Quarterly*, *ESP* and the *ELT* journal as established publications in applied linguistics and regard *AL* ranking the highest in quality among them.

<sup>59</sup> See Egbert’s study (2007) on quality analysis of journals in the field of applied linguistics.

- (1) Our comments -largely critical- should be interpreted as part of professional discourse whose goal is to clarify and elucidate misunderstandings and misconceptions. (CMLR, Sanz and Vanpatten, 1998)

The role of critical comment is acknowledged as triggering future developments and at the same time providing an interactive dimension. Hence, the following texts show that the exchange of ideas among the members of the academic community is encouraged:

- (2) Again, I would like to thank Professor Jones for making the foregoing dialogue possible. I have found responding to his critique stimulating and enlightening in that it made me question and rethink my views on what constitutes appropriate instruction for ESL writers. (*TESOL Quarterly*, Silva, 1999)
- (3) In concluding, I extend my thanks to Ewald. I hope that the conversation started here will encourage other teachers, especially teacher-researchers, to add their accounts of practice, whether electronic or print, to the published record (...). (*TESOL Quarterly*, Crookes, 1999)

The title headings of the sections where these articles appear frequently reflect a dialogic character across the different publications. In this respect, *AL* and *TESOL Quarterly* title this section 'The Forum' and describe it as an interactive space, which welcomes responses to previously published articles in the form of short contributions<sup>60</sup>. Other journals such as the *MLJ* also include a similar section, although it presents some changes over time. In this journal, the section initially entitled 'response article section' in issue 78/3 (1994) changes to 'Readers' Forum' in issue 84

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<sup>60</sup> Some guidelines regarding the length of contributions (ranging between 2000 to 3500 words) are given in the editorial note of the journals.

(2000). Similarly, in order to encourage scholarly exchange, particularly of opposing views, journals such as the *ELT* use headings such as ‘Point and Counterpoint’ or ‘Readers’ Respond’ to refer to the creation of debate. Along these lines, the *JSLW* or the *ESP* journal refer to ‘Dialogue’ or ‘Research and Discussion Note’ respectively. It is also the case that in the *ESP* journal or the *JSLW*, these articles may be referred to as ‘A response/reply to...’ without being included necessarily in a specific section within the journal. Additionally, ‘response’ articles frequently include phrases such as ‘a response or reply to...’ as part of the title of the article.

Regarding the interactional framework created by ‘response’ articles, texts may have a number of replies from different readers. As Hunston (2005) points out, it is common that an exchange may include two moves: a responding move in which the writer of the article responds to the author initiating the exchange and a second move in which the initiating author provides in turn a response<sup>61</sup>. For instance, in the following example, the writer reviews a previous journal contribution:

- (4) John Truscott’s 1996 Language Learning article, “The case against grammar correction in L2 classes”, has led to a great deal of discussion and even some controversy about the best way to approach issues of accuracy and error correction in ESL composition. This article evaluates Truscott’s arguments by discussing points of agreement and disagreement with his claims and by examining the research evidence he uses to support his conclusions. (*JSLW*, Ferris, 1999)

As a second responding move, the author originating the dialogue may show his position with respect to colleagues’ comments. The following text provides an example of this interaction of views:

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<sup>61</sup> Following Thompson and Ye (1991), we use the term ‘writer’ to refer to the person who produces the ‘response’ article and ‘author’ to refer to the researcher who is being reviewed.

- (5) Ferris (1999) rejects my case against grammar correction in L2 writing classes (Truscott, 1996) and attempts to build her own case for the practice. This paper responds to her criticisms. I argue that these criticisms are both unfounded and highly selective, leaving large portions of my case unchallenged and, in some cases, even strengthening them (...). (*JSLW*, Truscott, 1999)

As the example above shows, writers often reiterate their previous position and try to defend themselves from the critique by arguing for the evidence that leads them to adopt their position. In this context, more than one responding move may be produced, whenever different writers choose to produce separate responses for a single initiating article, thereby making it obvious that the topic dealt with is of interest. In connection with the interactional nature of this genre, intertextuality is reflected by means of references to the words of other colleagues', whose articles are being commented upon. As a consequence, a dialogue displaced in time may be established, as shown by the following quotation:

- (6) (...) I have decided to cast my response as a dialogue, both figuratively and literally. That is, I will quote Professor Jones' text verbatim and insert my comments directly thereafter (...) I have reservations about many of Professor Jones' assertions and want to address them in context (...). (*TESOL Quarterly*, Silva, 1998)

As far as discourse organisation is concerned, the articles in our corpus are commonly divided into three parts: an introduction, a body and a conclusion. As evaluation is performed throughout these different sections, it is often difficult to locate it as a situated discursive act. As regards the main macro-segments, the schematic description of 'response' articles is quite flexible. The following table illustrates the content and distribution of the basic sections:



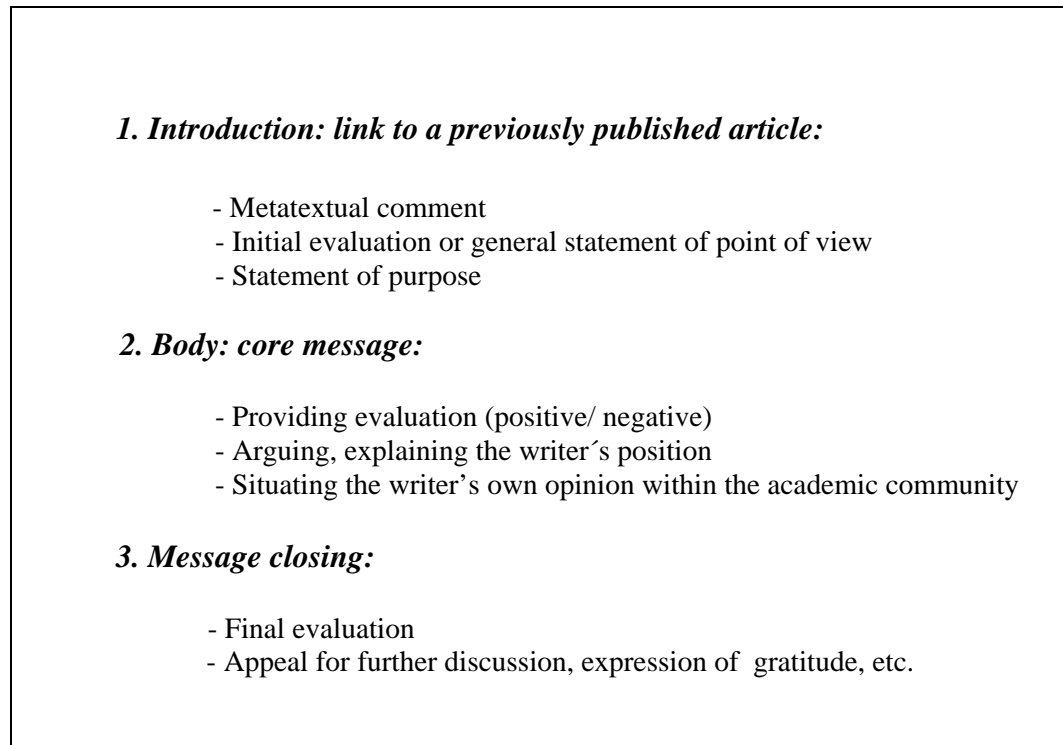


Figure 11. Macro- and micro-segments within the 'response' article

As illustrated by the table above, the introduction frequently contains a link to a previous text, which may take the form of a metatextual comment referring to the text which is going to be commented upon<sup>62</sup>. This initial comment may be accompanied by an evaluation and statement of purpose. Secondly, the body foregrounds the writer who takes a critical stance and explains his/her position, arguing for it and using a wide range of available evaluation strategies. Finally, the closing includes a final evaluation and, optionally, suggestions for further research, appeals to the reader, and so forth. As this description shows, 'response' articles have a marked evaluative focus, although they also include neutral description of aims, organisation and content while providing the writers with space to elaborate their own views. It should be noted that the description referred to above is intended to exemplify how the genre dealt with may be

<sup>62</sup> For example: 'John Truscott's controversial review essay has certainly led to a great deal of discussion and comment...' (JSLW, Ferris, 1999).

structured. The variety of micro-segments that may appear are regarded as variable choices depending on the writers' strategic preferences. Finally, with reference to the structuring of discourse within the 'response' article, the writer may divide the different parts of the article by means of titles and headings or use textual metadiscourse to guide the reader from one part of the article to another<sup>63</sup>. As a result, the structure of 'response' articles allows for a certain degree of flexibility.

Regarding our study of 'response' articles, the selected texts in our corpus are intended to carry out a specific kind of interaction, resulting in a homogeneous corpus of written academic discourse with an evaluative focus. In addition to this, as the texts analysed belong to different publications, our analysis aims to throw some light in relation to writing conventions and evaluation procedures in the specific field of applied linguistics.

#### 4.1.2 Criteria for corpus selection

Apart from homogeneity of function and field, we have taken into account several other aspects in order to compile our corpus of 'response' articles. On the one hand, representativity criteria as well as the impact factor of the publications selected constitute significant aspects to be considered. Besides, other practical considerations such as the availability of materials and accessibility of the subject matter to the linguist are taken into account<sup>64</sup>.

First, representativity implies that our corpus consists of a number of articles that represents an adequate database from which generalisations can be derived. As Luzón

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<sup>63</sup> In this case, some responses may allow an open organisation of points, whereas in others previous evaluation is taken into account and may lead the writer to comment on points that his/ her dialogic respondent has already dealt with. For instance: 'I will organise my comments according to the structure of Sheen's critique...' (*AL*, Lightbown, 2002).

<sup>64</sup> These criteria are suggested by several researchers (Luzón, 1996; Oliver, 2004 and Posteguillo, 1996).

(1996) points out, a corpus is representative when a bigger amount of data would only entail quantitative but not qualitative changes about the results obtained. It must be stressed that the amount of data analysed in order to obtain reasonable results is limited by the fact that the analysis is carried out by a single researcher with the help of a second rater. In this regard, for the purposes of our study, we analysed a total of 150 'response' articles, searching them for expressions of praise and criticism as evaluation strategies. The number of articles selected per journal varies depending on the regularity of appearance of this type of article in the different journals (as we pointed out in Section 4.1)<sup>65</sup>. Notwithstanding this fact, the wider the range of publications selected, the more generalisable our findings may become, regarding how evaluation is conveyed in this specific type of academic discourse. Based on the evidence that the linguistic elements which writers resort to are linked to a large extent to the communicative purposes and discipline involved (Hyland, 2000; Hunston, 2005), our aim here is to make reasonable statements about specific language features connected with these commentary pieces across a variety of journals.

A further aspect associated with representativity, concerns the prestige of the journal publications in our study, since they are considered to be highly influential in the field of applied linguistics. As Egbert (2007) points out, the impact factor and circulation rates (Egbert, 2007: 159) of the journals selected in our study are considered as rating highly. Ruiying and Allison (2004: 266) refer to *AL*, *TESOL Quaterly*, the *ESP* and the *ELT* journal as established publications in applied linguistics. However, a certain amount of variation regarding the academic standard of these publications is pointed out by research (Egbert, 2007; Ruiying and Allison, 2004), as some of these

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<sup>65</sup> For our purposes, we consider that the decision to select a uniform number of articles per journal would have greatly limited the number of articles included in our corpus.

publications are not only open to academics but also to teachers and professionals in the field.

A further consideration regarding corpus selection is related to the availability of the journals and the accessibility of the subject matter by the linguist. First of all, the 'response' articles included in this study are available at the library of the University Jaime I as either printed text, electronic format, or through the interlibrary loan system. Secondly, the familiarity of the researcher (as well as the second rater<sup>66</sup>) with the field of applied linguistics contributed to a deeper understanding of texts and their social function. As pointed out by several authors (Campoy, 2001; Flowerdew, 2005; Hyland, 2000; Swales, 2002), the researcher's field of specialisation has a strong influence on the degree to which the selected texts can be comprehended and analysed<sup>67</sup>.

After having considered the variety of aspects that were taken into account to compile our corpus, we now turn to outline the methodological framework we employed to examine writers' evaluative choices in a specific type of written academic discourse.

#### **4.2 Theoretic-methodological approach**

Our methodology is in line with the notion of genre understood as a communicative event within a specific community. From this perspective, the conventions of writing in our corpus of applied linguistics 'response' articles are analysed. First of all, we are concerned with the examination of the communicative purpose of rhetorical strategies as the basic units of evaluation. Additionally, other lower-level related elements are

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<sup>66</sup> On the issue of inter-rater reliability see Section 4.2.1.

<sup>67</sup> By holding a M.A. degree in applied linguistics, the analyst is familiarised with the topics and issues dealt with, this fact being relevant in order to understand and interpret discourse successfully.

also examined, as they also contribute to the purposes of evaluation. In this respect, stance bundles (Biber *et al.*, 2004) and hedging and boosting devices (Hyland, 2000) are integrated within a genre approach to text. Within this analytical approach, not only rhetorical function but also realisation procedures are examined in connection with praise and criticism as the main rhetorical strategies in the ‘response’ article.

With regard to a functional coding of elements, certain limitations emerge as interpretation involves a certain degree of subjectivity, which cannot be eliminated completely. As research points out (Ruiying and Allison, 2004; Hyland, 2000), the communicative purpose of a stretch of text may often be interpreted in different ways. In our study, this limitation is minimised by analysing linguistic elements in context. The surrounding co-text is regarded as essential to discern the most salient function of a stretch of text (as pointed out by Holmes, 1997; Hyland, 2000; Shaw, 2004). Thus, we analyse every unit of language in its specific context of use in order to help us solve any categorisation difficulties that may arise<sup>68</sup>. The application of functional coding criteria in relation to discourse structures is carried out in a systematic way, leading to the creation of a taxonomy of recurrent evaluative patterns in our corpus. In addition, regarding interpretation difficulties, the reliability of the researcher’s judgments is compared to those of a second rater<sup>69</sup>, who helped us with the coding of the strategies and allowed us to apply an inter-coder reliability measure.

Within this framework, our aim is to provide a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the evaluative patterns observed in our corpus. Whereas quantitative data allow us to see the extent of variation and similarity in texts in connection with specific linguistic and discourse features, qualitative interpretations help us to understand the communicative function of texts. Thus, in our study, frequencies are used as the starting

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<sup>68</sup> See also Section 4.3.1 for a more extensive account of this difficulty.

<sup>69</sup> See Section 4.2.1 for a full account of this procedure.

point of a more qualitative analysis that, in our view, is the major contribution of this investigation, which focuses on characterising writing conventions within a specific disciplinary community.

On the whole, in line with a generic view of discourse, our approach to text is primarily a functional-semantic one, dealing specifically with different types of evaluation strategies. This methodological approach is especially useful since a functional coding of items is the most appropriate way to develop an understanding of how functions are conventionally carried out in this type of critical discourse.

#### 4.2.1 Steps of the analysis and analytical tools

We now turn to describe the steps involved in our analysis, as well as the tools used in order to achieve an understanding of academic interaction in the genre of the ‘response’ article. In order to examine our research questions adequately, we followed several steps:

- a) Selecting the unit of analysis to best address our research questions
- b) Using concordancing software as a starting point in locating stretches of language where references to the writer of the article and/or reviewed author appear
- c) Establishing a functional coding of strategies and other related variables
- d) Validating the reliability of the analyst’s judgements by comparing them with those of a second rater working independently

First of all, the unit of analysis aimed at as the target of research constitutes the first step in order to study preferences of expression within the 'response' article. On this basis, evaluation strategies are selected as the main units of analysis, taking into account that they present a wide range of variation depending on the writers' choices. In our study, we focus on exploring writer-mediated evaluation strategies where a specific author is the target of the evaluation, thus foregrounding the interactional encounter created in this type of controversial discourse. And more specifically, we concentrate on those strategies that also include the use of person markers such as first or third personal pronouns (such as '*I*', '*we*', '*he*', '*they*') or possessive adjectives (such as '*my*', '*our*', '*his*' and '*their*').

It should be noted that we understand evaluation as comprising a variety of choices along a continuum, which ranges from positive to negative evaluation. As these choices may be regarded as more or less deferential or personal, two main aspects are taken into account. On the one hand, a scale of directness according to which a more or less deferential style is related to the use of mitigating or hedging devices (Hyland, 2000). On the other hand, in connection with the interaction established between the writer and the author, the extent to which the presence of the writer or the author is made explicit in discourse is regarded as a significant discourse choice (Burgess and Fagan, 2002; Martín and Burgess, 2004).

As regards analytical tools, we have implemented our analysis by means of the use of concordancing software, thus combining a genre-based approach to text with concordancing techniques. It must be noted that the articles of our corpus were scanned and converted into text-format. All footnotes and bibliographical references were deleted, and the corpus was analysed using the *Monoconc Pro* concordancer. Concordancing is used as a preliminary selection tool as regards certain common or

recurrent lexico-grammatical patterns appearing in discourse. As noted above, it is common that certain stance bundles appear with reference to the writer or the reviewed author (e.g. '*I think..*'/ '*he disregards...*'), and its recurrent use is of interest to us. As the interactional encounter between the writer of the article and the reviewed author gives rise to the occurrence of certain person markers that refer to them in an explicit way, concordancing lines that contain first person pronouns or possessive adjectives are produced. The following examples taken from critical 'response' articles illustrate this point:

- (a) *I* make exactly the same point as Block does...  
*I* do find that Elbow's ideas usefully complicate my thinking...  
*I* m not at all sure that *he* is right ...  
*My* view is that *his* arguments are not exhaustive...  
*I* believe this argument is problematic...
- (b) *He* fails to extend the argument to its logical conclusion...  
*He* misses the point...  
*His* discussion should surely have distinguished...  
*His* review is valuable...

As it is shown in (a), the writer's presence is explicitly conveyed through first person pronouns, whereas in (b) it is implicitly understood<sup>70</sup>. Regarding discourse choices where writer-mediation is explicit, as we can see in (a), references to the reviewed author and his/her work may reflect several degrees of personalisation, depending on the variety of forms used to refer to the reviewed author. These references may include the use of the author's name, a genitive, personal pronouns and possessive adjectives or other impersonal references. In contrast, choices in (b) focus explicitly on the reviewed author, whereas the writer-mediation remains implicit. In this case personal pronouns and possessive adjectives are used. Based on these

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<sup>70</sup> See Martín and Burgess (2004) for their conception of writer-mediation as a continuum of choices from explicit to implicit ones.



considerations, in our study we are interested in those cases where personal forms of reference are used, specifically when personal pronouns or possessive adjectives appear<sup>71</sup>. Developing on this, a connection between discourse choices and certain evaluative realisation procedures may be established.

With regard to the appearance of person markers and the use of concordancing, several considerations need to be taken into account. First of all, although concordancing is helpful in selecting stretches of language where references to the writer and/or author appear, it is the analyst's task to select from the list of concordances produced the ones that are evaluative. For instance, if we compare the following examples, we can see that, whereas in (7) the writer is evaluating another author's work, in (8) he is only referring to the process of argumentation:

- (7) I believe Truscott's interpretation is mistaken (...). (*JSLW*, Ferris, 1999)
- (8) I believe I have already provided an adequate response of this familiar argument...(*JSLW*, Truscott, 2004)

In this respect, personal pronouns may appear in sentences where evaluation is not signalled by the writer but other functions are displayed, such as references to developing arguments, the purposes of the article or the expression of the writer's own opinions.

A further aspect that needs to be taken into account involves an additional difficulty in relation to concordancing software. By selecting personal pronouns or possessive adjectives, the concordancing software produces discourse lines, where more than one personal marker may appear in a single strategy. For instance, there are cases where

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<sup>71</sup> In this way, non-writer-mediated strategies such as 'This argument is problematic...' or 'Allison's argument misses the point...' are excluded from the analysis, since they do not include either first or third person markers in the surrounding context.

writer-mediation appears together with an explicit mention of the reviewed author (e.g. ‘I don’t think that *he* has addressed the central point...’) or the evaluation is preceded by a framing phrase (e.g. ‘I can say that I am largely in agreement with...’). In our study, these examples are interpreted in relation to a single strategy not to duplicate our data.

On the other hand, sequencing difficulties may also be involved in connection with a consistent sequencing of units. Thus, as the concordance program brings into focus a selected phrase and a stretch of language surrounding it, the researcher’s responsibility also includes signalling where a strategy starts and finishes. For our purposes, we consider a strategy to be a unit carrying out a complete and meaningful discourse act, regardless of the sentences it may contain. As we can see in the following examples, whereas instance (9) contains a single sentence, which represent a complete and meaningful unit, example (10), on the other hand, contains two separate units of meaning, which are dependent upon each other in order to display their full pragmatic meaning. Thus, a single strategy may extend over one or more sentences:

- (9) I believe that the label favoured by Sanz and VanPatten is misleading because ‘processing instruction’ may refer to either input or output-based processing. (*CMLR*, Salaberry, 1998)
- (10) I can say that I am largely in agreement with what I would call their root claim (...). But I have some substantial reservations about the various ways in which they pursue this general point. (*JSLW*, Elbow, 2000)

Despite these limitations, a useful feature of concordancing software is that it allows the analyst to perform computerised searches for specific data, while also providing the surrounding context of the target item in order to aid interpretation. In

this respect, the use of a concordancer is only intended as a first stage in the selection process, since it is the analyst's intervention that establishes form-function correlations.

Additionally, in order to implement our analysis, the researcher makes use of a database, where the specific evaluative function of each strategy is indicated. Concerning the functional coding of evaluation strategies, rhetorical choices are identified within their actual discourse context and classified according to a continuum ranging from praise to criticism. With reference to positive and negative evaluation, instances where a strategy is characterised as a 'paired-pattern' (containing praise and criticism as sub-strategies) are noted in the database. Apart from the main functional value of each strategy, the database also includes information that refers to the journal it was taken from and the writer that produced it.

Furthermore, other related variables, such as the use hedging and/or boosting devices in relation to strategic choices are included<sup>72</sup>. Regardless of the number of items conveying either mitigation or emphasis, we are interested in examining the extent to which evaluation strategies are complemented by these resources. Thus, where more than one linguistic item of the same kind appears, their effect is regarded as cumulative, forming 'harmonic' combinations. On the other hand, mitigation and emphasis can also appear within the same context, thus giving rise to 'non-harmonic' combinations (Hyland, 2000). In this case, the fact that both devices appear in combination is an issue of interest. Additionally, our database also includes information about evaluative writer and author bundles. With regard to writer-mediation or self-mention, the occurrence of features such as negation, modality<sup>73</sup> or affective markers is also noted, since they qualify the critical force of stance bundles. With reference to the

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<sup>72</sup> For an extensive characterisation of the types of bundles dealt with and hedging and boosting devices see Sections 4.4.1 and 4.4.2 respectively.

<sup>73</sup> With reference to modality, we also indicate whether 'epistemic' or 'deontic' modality appears within the stance bundle.

author regarded as the target of evaluation, different types of author stance bundles are distinguished, and they are categorised into factive and counter-factive choices. In sum, the following table presents the main evaluative choices and related variables examined in our study:

### MAIN EVALUATIVE CHOICES

E (evaluation)	PE (positive evaluation) ----> praise
	NE (negative evaluation) ----> criticism
	PP (paired-pattern) ----> praise/ criticism



### RELATED VARIABLES

WM (Writer mediation)
AR (Author reference)
H/ B (Hedging/Boosting)

Figure 12. Main evaluative choices and related variables.

Developing further on the steps of the analysis, the writer's own judgements are compared to those of a second rater in order to establish inter-rater reliability. With this aim, to make the categorisation process as reliable as possible, a second rater<sup>74</sup> coded an amount of the data in order to minimise the effects of subjectivity. It should also be noted that, as a previous step in the analysis the researcher conducts a preliminary pilot study of 50 randomly selected texts from our corpus, with the aim of creating a

<sup>74</sup> The second rater is a specialised linguist holding a PhD degree as well as a Masters degree in the field of applied linguistics.

taxonomy or classification of evaluation strategies<sup>75</sup>. The second rater received 20 training sessions (of an hour each) to learn to identify the strategies outlined in our taxonomy, and coded a random sample covering 30% of our corpus. As a result of this independent analysis, differences in coding led to discussion, negotiation and solving of any discrepancies. On the whole, an inter-rater reliability of 95% is reached as far as the categorisation of rhetorical strategies is concerned. In addition, the level of inter-rater reliability as regards the characterisation of stance bundles and hedging and/or boosting resources reaches 98% and 96% respectively.

In sum, our methodological approach, based on functional criteria, integrates corpus analysis with a genre approach to text. Each strategy is classified according to its evaluative purpose and coded in relation to other related variables, which help to characterise evaluation patterns. As a result, significant quantitative as well as qualitative results are obtained concerning how meanings are expressed in the ‘response’ article.

#### 4.2.2 Analysis of evaluative rhetorical strategies

As outlined in the above section, a previous step to classifying rhetorical strategies involves selecting those occurrences that are evaluative and excluding the rest. In order to identify the evaluative function of a stretch of language, the context of appearance is considered crucial in our study. Hence, writer-mediated rhetorical strategies that are non-evaluative have been excluded from our study, as in the following cases:

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<sup>75</sup> See section 4.3 for an extended account regarding a characterisation of evaluation strategies in the ‘response’ article.

a) the writer indicates the purpose of the article, refers to the development of argumentation or textual organisation:

- (11) More generally, EAP can reintroduce a notion of culture into its courses, so that it is not just student culture that is conceived of as a source of difference, but rather many sites of culture...*I shall discuss the implications of this view later (...)*. (*ESP*, Pennycook, 1997)
- (12) My own comments are intended only to develop the debate further and promote thought and discussion within the TESOL profession (...). (*TESOL Quarterly*, Gieve, 1998)

b) the writer presents his/ her own opinions or arguments, as examples (13) and (14) show respectively:

- (13) My own point of view in this regard has further been that individualism-as-ideology is somewhat undesirable in the U.S. and has contributed to many of our current social problems. (*JSLW*, Atkinson, 2000)
- (14) It is our position that language and culture constitute a site of struggle implicated in shifting relations of power, rather than objective, finite, or fixed social realities governed by predetermined rules. (*AL*, Kubota and Lehner, 2005)

c) the writer provides justifications or clarifications in relation to his/her point of view when his/her position has not been clearly understood:

- (15) We did not take any such position, nor do I believe that such a position is tenable given current realities in the writing classroom, or, equally, current academic practices beyond it. Rather, we were trying to encourage others to see what we had seen in our empirical study—that widely used practices and concepts in university writing classrooms were not culturally neutral (...). (*JSLW*, Atkinson, 2000)

- (16) We made clear in our commentary that we believe the knowledge base for language teachers has at its core an understanding of "how languages are organized, how languages are learned, and what options are available for language teaching (...).(*TESOL Quarterly*, Muchisky and Yates, 2004)
- d) the writer signals limitations with regard to knowledge gaps and the delimitation of his/her own position:
- (17) But there are many important questions that we have not asked, and we do not claim to have complete answers to those we have asked. (*AL*, Lightbown, 2002)
- e) the writer attributes or ascribes a view to the reviewed author (reporting him as neutral or critical)<sup>76</sup>:
- (18) He begins by identifying what he calls my 'two background argument': the first about the distinction between applied linguistics and linguistics applied, and the second about the shift of focus in linguistic description. (*AL*, Widdowson, 2001)
- (19) He thus rejects my argument that an imaginative engagement with language can actually motivate the inference of generalities. (*AL*, Cook, 2002)

There are cases where the writer's view of what the author has (or has not) done may not be in line with the author's own view, this ambiguity being inherent to reporting:

- (20) Freeman and Johnson focus on fundamental differences and major misconceptions in our two positions regarding the need for a knowledge of language. *They suggest that we are confused as to the difference between the knowledge base for teachers and for teacher educator.* (*TESOL Quarterly*, Muchisky, and Yates, 2004)

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<sup>76</sup> In this case, non-factive bundles with reference to the author occur (Hyland, 2000; Thompson and Ye, 1991).

The combination of evaluation and reporting is quite frequent, and it is often the case that a reporting sequence opens up an evaluative space. For instance, in example (21), reporting ('she begins...') is followed by an evaluative sequence ('I disagree'):

- (21) In the section of her response entitled "Disagreements with Truscott's Arguments," Ferris (1999) presents two types of criticisms, identifying the first type as problems of definition. She begins by pointing out that I did not define error describing this as a "critical lack" (p. 3). *I disagree*. (JSLW, Truscott, 1999)

However, the distinction between reporting verbs and verbs introducing evaluation is not always clear-cut. Therefore, we consider the actual context of use in order to decide whether a stretch of text is evaluative or not<sup>77</sup>. The following example shows how reporting verbs may show an evaluative potential depending on the context:

- (22) *He goes on to say* that "correction comes in many different forms, but for the present purposes such distinctions have little significance" (p.329). This is where I, and most teachers I know, would disagree vehemently. (JSLW, Ferris, 1999)

Based on the restrictions established, we need to examine the concordance lines produced by means of the selected person markers in order to discard from our corpus non-evaluative occurrences in a systematic and consistent way. Hence, we focus specifically on writers' evaluative comments, which are oriented towards the more positive or negative end of the evaluation scale, as examples (23) and (24) show:

- (23) This is the topic that Ramanathan and Atkinson treat at greatest length and the one I too find most rich and interesting. (JSLW, Elbow, 2000)

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<sup>77</sup> As Thompson and Ye (1991) point out reporting verb status is not something inherent in the verb itself but is dependent on the context of use.



- (24) I also strongly disagree with the idea that teachers play such a passive and submissive role. However, and rather paradoxically, Thornbury is assigning teachers this passive role when he wants them to detach themselves from theory. (*ELT*, Clemente, 2001)

Similarly, with regard to possessive adjectives, we are interested in examining those instances that appear within an evaluative context and are used by writers to convey attitudinal meanings. Examples (25) and (26) below show evaluative and non-evaluative uses respectively:

- (25) (...) *their* suggestion that FL reading problems might be due to anxiety is *premature* because they did not determine their participants' level of reading skill. (*MLJ*, Sparks *et al.*, 2000)
- (26) Central to assessing Morita's contribution, then, is an understanding of *her* quest for such a holistic account of classroom participation. (*TESOL Quarterly*, Trent, 2006)

Apart from claims, writers' questions and suggestions may also be used with an evaluative function depending on the context<sup>78</sup>. In this respect, questions may be used with the aim of pointing out certain doubts or delimiting issues concerning the aspects dealt with, or to introduce critical evaluation. Whereas example (27) exemplifies the first case mentioned above by providing an instance of a non-evaluative use, in (28) the use of questions implies the writer's disapproval:

- (27) My problem with what Carter says is that he seems a little hesitant-or perhaps unwilling-to say where he stands. Does he reject the fundamentalist views of those linguists and language teaching theorists for whom corpus findings are the only source of truth?. (*ELT*, Carter, 1998)
- (28) But why an alternative? Why do teachers have to choose? I certainly see things in a different way, for I believe that we could regard these trends as complementary. (*ELT*, Clemente, 2001)

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<sup>78</sup> See Section 4.3 for a full account of evaluation strategies found in the 'response' article.

Similarly, suggestions may also be used to convey the writer's point of view upon a topic. However, it needs to be distinguished when a real suggestion or recommendation is provided, as example (29) illustrates, or when its use is intended to convey disapproval in an indirect way, as in (30):

- (29) What I suggest is that the teacher gets to know the available theoretical and methodological possibilities in the EFL field in order to know how to cope with them. (*ELT*, Clemente, 2001)
- (30) While the article 'Towards less humanist English teaching' raises some interesting points, I would like to suggest that many of the arguments presented are either not well-founded or misleading. (*ELT*, Arnold, 1998)

As shown above, reference to context is considered essential in order to classify a rhetorical strategy as evaluative. In this respect, there is a wide range of lexicogrammatical elements contained in the surrounding context that may help to interpret the evaluative potential of a stretch of text. It is also common that the analyst may need to refer to a wider discourse context in order to discern the evaluative purpose of a rhetorical strategy<sup>79</sup>.

#### 4.2.2.1 Role of the co-text with regarding the interpretation of evaluation

As the evaluative role of a stretch of text cannot be clarified without the help of the co-text, the presence of explicit evaluative lexico-grammatical elements provides a valuable help in order to code elements from a functional point of view. Lexico-

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<sup>79</sup> For our purposes, the concordancing software incorporates a KWIC (Key Word in Context) device, which allows the analyst to open a window where a key word appears surrounded by a context of up to a hundred and fifty words, thereby enabling us to decide on the evaluative purpose of a stretch of text.

grammatical explicit signals of evaluation may belong to different classes such as adjectives, adverbs, verbs, nouns, certain lexico-grammatical phrases and clauses.

Among the wide variety of signals that convey evaluation, adjectives may be used by the writer to comment on another author's work, thereby reflecting the writer's degree of conviction in relation to the arguments proposed by the reviewed author:

- (31) I am *sceptical* for three reasons. First, the article assumes that other systems of classification have been less adequate than their own (...) Second, it suggests that an improved, linguistically oriented classification system will result in better teaching and learning but provides no empirical evidence from classroom studies to support this assumption. (*TESOL Quarterly*, Sheen, 2000)

The extent to which the writer shows conviction may be reflected by a wide variety of adjectives occurring in our corpus, such as 'true, valid, certain, right, correct,..., invalid, unfounded, doubtful, questionable, wrong or inaccurate' among many others. In addition, adjectives that refer to possibility and probability also contribute to convey this meaning:

- (32) (...) we argue initially that it is of *questionable* value to carry out research on a teaching approach in a situation in which that approach is not implemented and we contend that the authors' analyses of the three 'focus on form episodes' are deeply flawed thus provoking serious doubt as to the reliability of the findings. (*AL*, Sheen and O'Neill, 2005)
- (33) While Stapleton's factitious foils are not categorically impossible, they are, I would argue given the available evidence, considerably less *probable*. (*AL*, Ross, 2006)

Developing further on the expression of attitude, we can find a wide variety of adjectives in our corpus that express the writer's approval or disapproval, as in examples (34) and (35):

- (34) (...) To take full advantage of the criticism of Raimés and Zamel, we would like to note where their critique is *valuable*, and we welcome this opportunity to state more explicitly how we selected the textbooks we examined. (*JSLW*, Raimés and Zamel, 1997)
- (35) His argument does not hold up at some key points and his conclusion that grammar correction has no place in writing courses and should be abandoned (1996, p.328) is *premature*. (*JSLW*, Ferris, 1999)

Positive attitudinal values may be shown by adjectives such as ‘clear, effective, detailed, relevant, challenging, valuable, influential, useful’, among others<sup>80</sup>. On the other hand, adjectives such as ‘confusing, unclear, misleading, unsuccessful, limited’, among others, suggest disapproval<sup>81</sup>. In addition, we also find adjectives that refer specifically to the writer’s affective feelings, thus conveying personal impressions, as we can see in (36) and (37):

- (36) I was *delighted* to see Spada and Lightbown’s conclusion but also *disappointed* at their failure to justify it. (*MLJ*, Sheen, 2000)
- (37) Of course, Ramanathan and Atkinson get to define large fuzzy concepts like interdependence and individualism however they please, but I am *sad* that if they are examining my work, they won't acknowledge that I too am talking about a genuine kind of interdependence and individualism...(JSLW, Elbow, 2000)

Additionally, adverbs and adverbial complements are also used to qualify evaluation in different ways. In this regard, the writer may convey meanings of commitment and assertiveness:

- (38) F&W also discuss the implication of homogeneity within groups (...). They point out, *correctly*, that the concept of NS can be a problematic one, because, as mentioned above, issues of bilingualism or multi-lingualism are important considerations (...). (*MLJ*, Gass, 1998)

<sup>80</sup> Negatively premodified adjectives such as ‘not appropriate, not clear’... result in their opposite value.

<sup>81</sup> These adjectives may appear in predicative or attributive position and complement a wide variety of nouns (e.g. ‘argument, claim, assumption, proposition, suggestion, interpretation, proposal, viewpoint...’).

Writers' commitment may also be suggested by means of adverbs that indicate probability (such as 'possibly, probably, apparently, seemingly, presumably, perhaps...') or frequency (such as 'often, sometimes, at times'...)<sup>82</sup>:

- (39) Truscott concludes that because some students do not improve their accuracy or make fewer errors because of teacher feedback, we should do away with such correction altogether. *Perhaps* a fairer assertion is that many students can improve their writing as a result of judicious and well executed teacher feedback (...). (*JSLW*, Ferris, 1999)
- (40) Their choice of facts and reference is highly selective, and their representation of research is *often* faulty (...). (*TESOL Quarterly*, Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson, 2001 )

We can also find another group of adverbs called 'approximators' (Quirk *et al.*, 1972), which contribute to convey different degrees of commitment on the writer's part as well as qualifying his or her judgements (e.g. 'nearly, almost, essentially, approximately, just, only' ):

- (41) (...) if we were to take Whitlow's suggestions in their entirety and follow them faithfully, we would find ourselves in a *nearly* impossible position. (*TESOL Quarterly*, Izumi and Bilgelow, 2001)

Apart from this, the writer may emphasise the force of a proposition by means of 'emphatics' or 'amplifiers' which mark the presence of assertiveness or indicate the degree of it<sup>83</sup>:

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<sup>82</sup> See also Section 4.4.2 in relation to the hedging function of these adverbs.

<sup>83</sup> See Biber and Finegan (1989) with reference to this distinction.

- (42) *Indeed*, I think it would be foolish to argue against Allison's insistence on the importance of pragmatic approaches to EAP as "sensitive to contexts of discourse and of action" (p. 87). Despite such agreement, however, I nevertheless feel that we understand the issues here in fundamentally different ways. (*ESP*, Pennycook, 1997)
- (43) Although I agree with all of the issues and findings Atkinson presents, the conclusion I draw from this exploration is *significantly* different from his. (*TESOL Quarterly*, Hawkins, 1998)

With regard to the distinction between 'emphatics' and 'emphasisers', the first group includes adverbs such as 'clearly, certainly, indeed, surely, in fact, of course, obviously, undoubtedly, evidently, decidedly...', whereas the second group is represented by adverbs that contribute to amplify the extent of evaluation, such as 'significantly, especially, greatly, extremely, highly, thoroughly, fully, strongly...', among others. One thing these adverbs have in common is that they signal solidarity with the listener, and so they contribute to boost the force of a proposition<sup>84</sup>.

Attitudinal complementation is also shown by a wide variety of adverbs that are used by writers to show their subjective attitude or point of view, as examples (44) and (45) show:

- (44) Izumi and Martha Bigelow's article...*effectively* and *convincingly* raises important issues (...). (*TESOL Quarterly*, Whitlow, 2001)
- (45) I believe that Petrovitz's picture of normal teaching practice is seriously mistaken; that his account of the relevant linguistic facts is *badly* flawed; and that his recommended approach to grammar syllabus design, to the extent that it is feasible, would be counterproductive. (*ELT*, Swan, 2001)

Some frequently used adverbs conveying positive or negative attitude include 'clearly, rightly, effectively, convincingly, successfully, thoroughly, usefully

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<sup>84</sup> See Section 4.4.2 in relation to boosters.

persuasively..., wrongly, inadequately, inappropriately, narrowly, contradictorily...', among many others<sup>85</sup>. In addition, adverbs may also reveal the writer's feelings, conveying affect and marking the evaluation as personal<sup>86</sup>:

- (46) I, of course, I agree with much of what he writes. I *respectfully* disagree, however with most of what he argues for under the rubric of his third point (...). (CMLR, Lyster *et al.*, 1999).

Similarly, subjective attitude and opinion may also be expressed by verbal evaluation. Different types of verbs are used to express attitude (e.g. 'accept', 'agree', 'disagree', 'object'), commitment (e.g. 'think', 'believe') and affective feelings (e.g. 'confess', 'fear', 'hope'), which in combination with person markers form verbal stance bundles<sup>87</sup>:

- (47) *I agree* with John Field's article more than he realises and I fervently hope I am guilty of fewer simplistic assumptions and misconceptions than he imagines. However, *I don't think* he has addressed the central point in my article (...). (ELT, Ridgeway, 2000)

In addition to the different types of verbs used to express commitment, modal verbs also introduce evaluation in a tentative way by mitigating the interpersonal damage that critical comments may cause:

<sup>85</sup> Negatively pre-modified adverbs result in the opposite effect: 'not clearly', 'not sufficiently', etc.

<sup>86</sup> Other adverbs conveying affect also include '(un)fortunately, hopefully, wholeheartedly, curiously, regrettably, sadly' among others.

<sup>87</sup> See section 4.4.1 for an extensive account on stance bundles.

- (48) In sum, in this short reply, I have attempted to respond to some of Sheen's major criticisms of my paper. While I *may* agree with his discussion regarding a focus on form approach in general, I disagree with most of his points regarding my article. (*CMLR*, Nassaji, 2000)

Developing further on this issue, we also find in our corpus modal verbs that convey deontic modality, when writers use them to make recommendations or suggest alternative lines of research:

- (49) Generally, I agree. However I think classes *should* focus on linguistic and rhetorical issues as well as composing strategies/processes. (*TESOL Quarterly*, Silva, 1999)

Finally, apart from the wide variety of lexicon-grammatical signals outlined above, nominal evaluation is also commonly used in 'response' articles to convey the writer's opinions and subjective comments:

- (50) In addition to the *misrepresentations* and obvious *misunderstandings* discussed above, the article contains several other *errors*. (*TESOL Quarterly*, Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson, 2001)

Although negative nominal evaluation is frequent (e.g. 'misinterpretation, gap, problem, error, omission, failure, inadequacy, inconsistency, failure'...), nouns that express positive evaluation are also found (e.g. 'achievement, validity, relevance, insight'...)<sup>88</sup>.

Finally, the writer may also convey evaluation by means of phrases or clauses that may indicate certain limitations in the investigation or suggest some hypothetical conditions:

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<sup>88</sup> In many cases, nouns are pre-modified by a negative particle with the resulting negative meaning (such as 'no attempt, no discussion, no mention, no evidence...').



- (51) *Despite* the apparent inadequacies of Izumi and Bigelow's research design, their results lead to another interesting point (...). (*TESOL Quarterly*, Whitlow, 2001).
- (52) ...Had they modified their study in this way, they might have gone some way to redressing the imbalance (...) (*MLJ*, Sheen, 2000).

As shown above, the context often contains a variety of words that help the analyst to regard a stretch of text as evaluative. Moreover, it is essential to consider each stretch of language in actual occurring discourse as the context may determine the 'polarity' of words (Shaw, 2004). As example (53) shows, although the italicised bundle 'he is right' may be associated with positive connotations, an overall negative meaning is conveyed because of the influence of the surrounding context (in this case, the mentioned bundle is preceded by the sequence 'I'm not at all sure...'):

- (53) Petrovitz dismisses this approach by implication ('I've got a little list') as having little or no teaching value. Unfashionable though list-learning may be, *I am not at all sure that he is right* (*ELT*, Swan, 2003).

Moreover, a stretch of text may need to be interpreted on the basis of a shared context with earlier segments. In this way, as shown in example (54), the italicised sequence ('I would argue that methodology is fundamental to the learning of language...') could be considered to convey the writer's opinion or judgment with reference to the topic dealt with. However, the preceding discourse segment leads us to interpret it not just as an opinion but as a critical comment:

- (54) (...) I have a problem with the idea that the learning context is necessarily the first place to start in any educational exchange. Instead, *I would argue that methodology is fundamental to the learning of language in classrooms where teachers are working* (*ELT*, Harmer, 2003).

In sum, with regard to evaluative discourse, the preceding and following sequences are considered essential in order to interpret propositions as conveying the writer's own point of view on a topic or as a reflection on another colleague's views. From a methodological point of view, this is accomplished by taking into account the context or co-text of the linguistic occurrences examined. As a result, trying to study and classify evaluation rhetorical strategies is a complex issue, which depends crucially on contextual variables.

### **4.3 A taxonomy of evaluative rhetorical strategies in the 'response' article**

In this section, we propose a classification or taxonomy of rhetorical evaluation strategies that appear in our corpus and are the object of analysis in this study. Based on previous research on evaluation with reference to review genres (Bloch, 2003; Gea, 2000; Hyland, F. and Hyland, K. 2001; Hyland, 2000; Martín and Burgess, 2004), different evaluation strategies are encountered, which are dependent on the norms and values of a specific academic culture as well as the writer's own style.

Adhering to a semantic-functional analysis (as outlined in Section 4.2), some basic criteria are followed in order to identify a set of rhetorical strategies of evaluation. First of all, a continuum of choices that ranges from showing support to criticism is regarded as a main functional criterion. Regarding our analysis, praise is considered as an act that attributes credit to another researcher's work, or another person, for some characteristic that is positively valued, whereas criticism, on the other hand, is understood as an expression of dissatisfaction or disapproval of another colleague's work. In this respect, it should be emphasised that far from a clear-cut distinction between positive and negative comment, there is a great variety of evaluative options

that spread along the continuum of evaluation. Secondly, in order to provide a comprehensive picture of rhetorical strategies in the ‘response’ article, it is essential to include both the occurrence of variables such as hedging and/or boosting devices and the presence of writer or author bundles, which have a great influence on how evaluation is conveyed. Based on these considerations, we propose the following categorisation of writers’ evaluative choices:

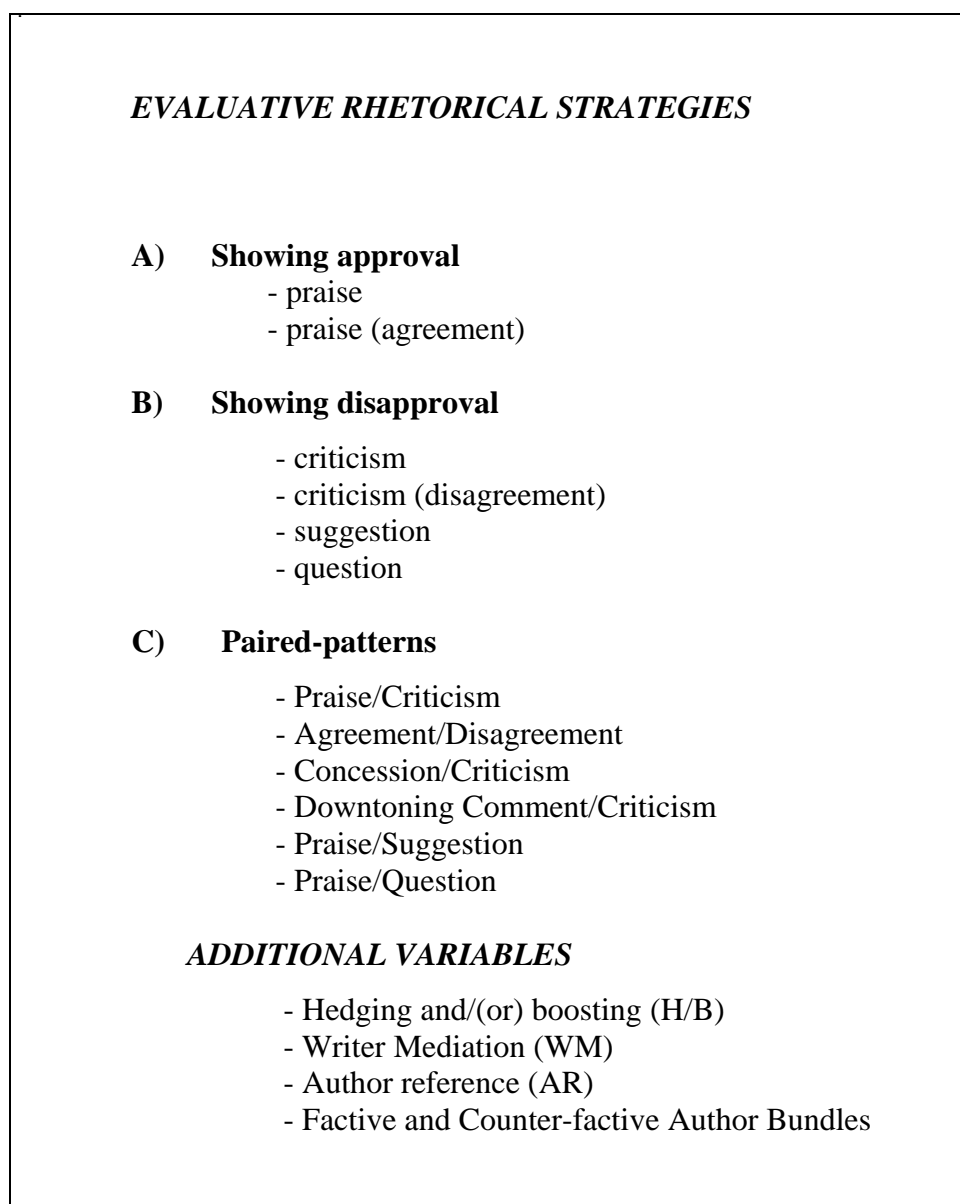


Figure 13. A classification of strategic evaluation choices (based on Bloch, 2003; Hyland, 2000 and Hyland, F. and Hyland, K. 2001; Suárez and Moreno, 2006)

As regards the proposed classification, we primarily focus on rhetorical strategies in relation to the evaluation values they convey. It is important to note that, the main functional orientations distinguished in our taxonomy imply a wide range of realisation procedures, which display different ways of conveying evaluation depending on the degree of explicitness or directness the writer wishes to employ. In this regard, strategies can convey evaluation in an explicit way by means of praise and criticism (and also agreement and disagreement) when they appear as independent strategies. However, negative evaluation is often conveyed in an implicit way by means of questions, suggestions and the use of paired-patterns. In addition, as regards the degree of directness and assertion conveyed by the writers' critical comments, the occurrence of other evaluative variables needs to be considered, as we shall see below.

Concerning praise and its actual occurrence in our corpus, the writer may show approval with reference to another author's work in relation to several aspects such as the points of view presented, the subject matter or the procedures followed, as shown in the following examples:

- (55) (...) we accept the principle that helping student writers become more aware of reader expectations is a useful pedagogic goal. (*JSLW*, Allison, 1999)
- (56) This is the topic that Ramanathan and Atkinson treat at greatest length and the one I too find most rich and interesting. (*JSLW*, Elbow, 2000)
- (57) We appreciate their bringing to our attention a number of articles that we had not previously seen, a couple of which do indeed suggest that younger learners might be faster on certain aspects of acquisition. (*TESOL Quarterly*, Stefka *et al.*, 2001)

Moreover, complimenting or showing admiration towards the author of the original article also occurs in our corpus. As Hyland (2000) points out, focusing on the

reviewed author results from the specific interpersonal consequences inherent to negative comments in the ‘response’ article:

- (58) As this response to Spada and Lightbown (1999; henceforth S&L) is largely critical, I would like to make it crystal clear here that I have the highest regard for the work of these two applied linguists whose dedication to research on real-life in Quebec has provided an excellent example to the field. (*MLJ*, Sheen, 2000)

Together with approval, we encounter praise as conveying agreement, which refers more specifically to whether the writer and the author share the same beliefs or points of view, as we can see in examples (59) and (60):

- (59) I absolutely agree with Ewald that learners, too, are quite unlikely to be familiar with some (though not all) of the procedures implied by any of the possible critical or alternative pedagogies that might be used by teachers committed to social change (...) (*TESOL Quarterly*, Crookes and Lehner, 1999).
- (60) I think Sowden is right on target in pointing out that memorization or rote learning has always been a highly valued learning strategy in the Far East and that such a learning strategy can lead to high levels of understanding if applied appropriately (*ELT*, Liu, 2005).

For our purposes, whereas praise is categorised as the general expression of approval and admiration, thus providing positive comments on the value of another author’s work, agreement is understood as specifically accepting or sharing the same points of view or beliefs proposed by another author<sup>89</sup>.

In contrast, criticism is understood as conveying a general meaning of disapproval, presenting negative comments on another author’s work, thus creating conflict (Motta-Roth, 1998; Martín and Burgess, 2004). As regards the focus of criticism, comments

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<sup>89</sup> This distinction is also pointed out by Hyland (2000: 44) and Hyland, F., and Hyland, K. (2001: 186).

may refer to the content, the validity and/or reliability of a study, the methodology employed or the writer himself, as shown in the following examples:

- (61) However, I believe the central thrust of Bax's article-that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is some monolithic approach, which is inappropriately applied around the world to the detriment of learning, and that therefore it should be downplayed-is essentially flawed in a number of respects. (*ELT*, Harmer, 2003)
- (62) Although Atkinson is thoroughly familiar with postmodern theories and attempts to incorporate them into his work, his conclusion does not really fit with his literature review. (*TESOL Quarterly*, Siegal, 2000)
- (63) These are precisely the kind of questions that are problematic for applied linguistics, as anybody who has been involved in the field will know full well. So why does Beaugrande not know? With regard to work in applied linguistics, it is he, it would seem, who is 'several generations behind in his knowledge'. (*AL*, Widdowson, 2001)

Developing further on this issue, critical comment may not only be realised by pointing out a weak point or inadequacy but also by signalling disagreement with the reviewed author. In our study, disagreement concerns specifically the act of showing objection to a view or standpoint:

- (64) In the first place *I do not believe* that CLT is a describable phenomenon any more (except in the very vaguest ways (e.g. we want students to communicate), nor do I think a 'communicative-task-based' approach is widely practised in world terms. (*ELT*, Harmer, 2003)

However, as research notes (Martín and Burgess, 2004), distinguishing between the lack of agreement in relation to an issue dealt with and pointing out faults or shortcomings regarding other colleagues' work may present some difficulties as both meanings are often seen to overlap in actual occurring discourse. In this respect, those instances where explicit expressions such as 'I disagree...', 'I have a different

opinion...' etc. appear are classified as disagreement rhetorical strategies. However, when this distinction is not clear, the more general term of 'criticism' is preferred<sup>90</sup>.

Developing on the variety on strategies used to convey evaluation, it is important to note that there are rhetorical strategies such as suggestions that can be used to show objection in an implicit way. On this issue, we regard these strategies as a way to provide 'constructive criticism' (as pointed out by Hyland, F. and Hyland, K., 2001), and consider them to convey values that belong to a more positive end of the evaluation continuum. Thus, disapproval may be signalled by means of presenting alternative proposals or recommendations, as shown below:

- (65) (...) fundamentally I have a problem with the idea that the learning context is necessarily the first place to start in any educational exchange. *Instead, I would argue that methodology is fundamental to the learning of language in classrooms where teachers are working* (ELT, Harmer, 2003).
- (66) A better approach, we suggest, may be to critically educate students as to which materials are the most accurate, representative, and appropriate for their own interests and to encourage and empower them in achieving their own educational goals. (*TESOL Quaterly*, Wadden and Hilke, 1999)

In this context, with reference to realisation procedures, the use of modals such as 'could', 'would' or 'might' is frequent in connection with meanings that point to other available choices or possibilities. Additionally, 'should' or 'need to' are also used in as regards the proposal of alternative views:

- (67) Summarizing, my view is that Lindstromberg's argument *could* be developed by including a more ample prepositional analysis grounded in cognitive and lexical semantics. (*AL*, Brala, 2002)

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<sup>90</sup> With reference to realisation procedures, it is worth noting that where self-mention occurs (e.g. 'I do not believe...'), writers choose to make it explicit to their audience that they are offering a personal opinion by specifying themselves as the source of the comment.

- (68) They *might* have had two of the groups receive explicit instruction, one with and one without the added contrastive information. They then *would* have had substantive findings to support or reject their conclusion on the value of contrastive information. (*MLJ*, Sheen, 2000)

It is also frequent that when a different line of research or an alternative way of proceeding are suggested, the use of person markers such as ‘we’ appears even if the writer of the article is a single researcher. In these cases (referred to by research as inclusive ‘we’, Fortanet, 2004a), the writer often includes the reader in the commentary:

- (69) *We* should make a clear distinction between the terms ‘skill’ and ‘strategy’, which Ridgway uses interchangeably (*ELT*, Field, 2000).

In addition, questions may also be used as a way to provide criticism in an implicit way, at the same time stressing the interactional character of the ‘response’ article. The form that questions may take varies from direct to indirect choices, as shown in examples (70) and (71):

- (70) Why did the authors not include a single one of the 39 grammatical examples (p. 258) collected? Did they not consider them to be incidental and, therefore, excluded them? Whatever the reasons, this serious omission needs to be explained. (*AL*, Sheen and O’Neill, 2005)
- (71) I kept asking myself what the author meant when he used testing-related terms, and wondered why he had not been more careful with terminology. (*ELT*, Figueras, 2005)

Apart from the strategic resources considered above, patterns that combine positive and negative evaluation also appear in our corpus. As pointed out by research (Bloch, 2003; Hyland, 2000; Hyland and Hyland, 2001; Suárez and Moreno, 2006), the



balance of positive and negative comment is regarded as a characteristic way of showing attitude in critical discourse. From a functional point of view, positive and negative comments may be juxtaposed because of several reasons. In this respect, the writer may wish to point out some common concern or show support to a certain extent, despite signalling faults or shortcomings:

- (72) Although we welcome explorations of ways to teach academic writing, we find we have to question the methodology, the assumptions, and the conclusions of this study. (*JSLW*, Raimés and Zamel, 1997)

On the other hand, an additional reason to combine negative critical comments with positive ones derives from the writer's wish to soften or mitigate the impact of negative evaluation<sup>91</sup>. For instance, the writer may show agreement or praise certain aspects of an article but he/she may disagree with the rest:

- (73) I am thus in broad agreement with the claims made by Antón and DiCamilla for the important role that problem-solving dialogue in L1 can play in learning an L2. However, I am less convinced by the distinction the authors make between 'social' and 'private' speech and by their assignment of these two putative modes to the 'interpsychological' and 'intrapyschological' planes, respectively. (*CMLR*, Wells, 1998)

From a functional point of view, paired-patterns are characterised by the fact that two different functional units are contained within them. As regards the different combinations of paired-patterns encountered in our corpus, there is a wide range of choices. As we outlined above, the occurrence of praise next to criticism constitutes a frequently occurring pattern, which includes variations such as agreement/

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<sup>91</sup> See also Section 4.4.2 on strategic hedging.

disagreement, praise/ disagreement or agreement/criticism, as shown in examples (74), (75) and (76):

- (74) While we would agree with Truscott that there are many challenges and complexities involved in providing effective feedback for L2 learners, we clearly disagree with his conclusion that feedback on error should be abandoned. (*CMLR*, Lyster *et al.* 1999)
- (75) I find the notion of a critical pragmatism appealing, but I cannot unreservedly agree to the terms in which Pennycook poses the choice. (*ESP*, Allison, 1998)
- (76) It is somewhat ironic that I agree with this conclusion but find that the study provided no justification for it other than what has been evident in all the research carried out on Quebec francophone school learners of English. (*MLJ*, Sheen, 2000)

Variations in connection with these patterns may also involve the order in which positive and negative critical comments occur. It is interesting to note that positive evaluation frequently precedes negative comment in our corpus, although it is also possible that negative evaluation occurs first, for instance:

- (77) I do not agree with this opposition between methodology and context, yet there is much that we do agree about. (*ELT*, Harmer, 2003)

In addition, paired patterns may also consist of a concession in combination with criticism. From a functional point of view, concessions can also act as mitigators by providing partial agreement, as shown in (78) and (79):

- (78) Thus, although I recognize the advantages of adopting the community-of-practice perspective for language minority research, I have strong reservations about using the notion of LPP to describe the experiences of language minority students (...). (*TESOL Quarterly*, Kanno, 1999)

- (79) I am sympathetic to Ewald's point that our account offered few suggestions concerning what to do in "classrooms in which students need to learn nouns, verbs, and adjectives," though one of the few points on which I would disagree with her is in her statement that language instruction in its very essence is content free. (*TESOL Quarterly*, Crookes, 1999)

Similarly, apart from concessions, the statement of certain limitations in combination with negative evaluation also contributes to mitigate the force of negative comments. Thus, the writer may refer to his/her own understanding or limited knowledge with reference to a specific issue:

- (80) Perhaps I am simply misguided in my reading-and writing-of my own work. But I will argue otherwise here. (*JSLW*, Elbow, 2000)
- (81) I do not know what the rating of textual typicality is in this case, but as far as context is concerned, I would have thought that the argument in the rest of my paper makes it abundantly clear how this particular phrase is meant to be interpreted. (*AL*, Widdowson, 2001a)

Other paired-patterns include the occurrence of praise (or agreement) next to suggestions or questions, since these latter strategic choices may also convey criticism in a less explicit way, as shown in example (82). Additionally, combinations formed by criticism (or disagreement) with suggestions or questions are also possible, as in (83):

- (82) Generally, I agree. However, I think classes should focus on linguistic and rhetorical issues as well as composing strategies/processes. (*TESOL Quarterly*, Silva, 1998)
- (83) Can this possibly be enough time to document whether learners have made long-term gains? *I doubt it* and would advocate for longitudinal assessment in all experimental design so that readers can see the effects of input and output over time (...). (*TESOL Quarterly*, Whitlow, 2001)

With regard to discourse structure, paired-patterns commonly appear in the opening and closing paragraphs of 'response' articles as a way of redressing the global negative comments found in the body of the article. With reference to openings, the writer may employ a subtle critical tone, in an attempt to expand the views previously shown or improve them, as shown in (84). In others, a more evident and explicit disapproval may be conveyed, in line with a greater degree of challenge, as can be seen in (85):

- (84) In responding to Jennifer Ewald, I primarily wish to second her concerns, though perhaps I can ameliorate them slightly simply by foreshadowing work shortly to be published in *TESOL Quarterly* as well as pointing to other accounts not mentioned in the work commented on. (*TESOL Quarterly*, Crookes, 1999)
- (85) As an admirer of Peter Elbow's work, I am even happier than usual to enter into a discussion of the article in question. I must also say, however, that I believe many of Elbow's comments to emanate from a lack of understanding of the larger context in which the article was written, and to which it was meant to contribute. (*JSLW*, Atkinson, 2000a)

As far as closings are concerned, negative comments are also redressed by means of positive evaluation often accompanied by acts such as thanking or expressing the need for further research:

- (86) I do not wish to end on a negative note, however, for I feel that Atkinson's contribution is to be welcomed. His article has set the agenda for a much closer examination within *TESOL* of the sociocultural locatedness of what are often taken to be neutral technologies (*TESOL Quarterly*, Gieve, 1998)

In sum, the classification of rhetorical choices outlined in this section is intended to help us examine and identify the most prototypical realisations that appear in our corpus of 'response' articles. For the purposes of our study, we are interested in

examining the extent to which reviews are shaped by the expectations and practices of a specific community of use.

#### 4.3.1 Some additional categorisation difficulties and delimitation issues

On the issue of categorisation and delimitation of rhetorical strategies, some difficulties may emerge when actual occurring discourse is considered. Taking into account the basic considerations and criteria outlined in Section 4.2 with respect to functional units, the establishment of form-function correlations may entail some difficulties.

On the one hand, there are specific cases in our corpus where different functional meanings seem to overlap, which causes difficulties when it comes to categorising strategies as functional units of meaning. For instance, the meanings of agreement and concession seem to be conveyed in the first part of the following paired-pattern:

- (87) I agree that ‘neutrality’ arguments over language (and education) are suspect, and often spurious, but I do not see EAP as necessarily or even typically making value-free assumptions. (ESP, Allison, 1998)

In cases such as the one shown above, the opinion of a second rater is taken into account with the aim of solving any discrepancies by selecting the most salient function in the actual context of appearance. On the other hand, some difficulties also emerge with reference to the delimitation of rhetorical strategies as sequences of linguistic elements. As we are dealing with actually occurring discourse, the issue of where a strategy starts and finishes often needs to be carefully considered by the analyst. Peacock (2002) points out that a unit of text can be defined as long as different individuals may be able to demarcate the boundary of units at a sufficient level of

agreement. In our study, it is common that a strategy may contain more than one sentence<sup>92</sup>. For instance, ‘paired-patterns’ include two clearly distinguishable pragmatic units from a functional point of view, although they are considered as a single functional unit that conveys an overall meaning of disapproval:

- (88) Kubota bases much of her thesis on poststructuralism and postcolonialism. She makes some valid points, but I believe that much of her position is overstated, contradictory, and factually inaccurate. (*TESOL Quarterly*, Sower, 1999)

With reference to delimitation criteria, we encounter specific rhetorical combinations that make it difficult for the analyst to distinguish the stretches of text that seem to be involved in a strategy. For instance, in example (89), the first and second sentences seem to form a unit. The first part of the evaluation involves praise (‘I support the sort of research program Ferris outline in her conclusion’) and is reinforced by an additional stretch of discourse (‘I may even participate in it’):

- (89) I support the sort of research program Ferris outline in her conclusion. I may even participate in it. But the logic of such a program needs to be clarified (*JSLW*, Truscott, 2004)

A similar pattern occurs in the following example, where the first two sentences appear to function as a unit (a concession including additional agreement) in opposition to a final comment conveying disapproval:

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<sup>92</sup> The sentence taken as a unit delimited between two full stops results in many cases in a successful unit of coding, although very often a strategy may contain more than one sentence.

- (90) I acknowledge again that of course Ramanathan and Atkinson are justified in associating voice with loud speech and contrasting it with silence, since voice has come to be associated with authority in our culture. I make the same point. And yet they fail to acknowledge that I was also at pains (even in 1981) to note that a voice with authority is often quiet. (*JSLW*, Elbow, 2000).

It seems that the examples mentioned above may be categorised as instances of paired-patterns, although they show additional complexities in relation to more prototypically occurring pairs (like the ones we have referred to above in Section 4.3). However, there are also other instances where a triad or three strategic functional units seem to emerge. For instance, in example (91), praise is followed by an expression of disapproval, which is further complemented by a final suggestion:

- (91) In spite of these publications, there has been no apparent influence on the world of MT in terms of the availability of teaching texts that exploit CA input. It is for this reason that I was *delighted* to see S&L's conclusion thereon but also disappointed at their failure to justify it. I would have thought that because their own study did not address the issue, they would, at least, have reviewed the literature that does address it (*MLJ*, Sheen, 2000).

These types of sequences where a triad seems to emerge have been excluded from our analysis, which is intended to examine the most commonly occurring paired-patterns formed by two strategic elements as we focus on the most commonly occurring paired-patterns formed by two strategic elements. Therefore, the examination of these sequences exceeds the scope of the present study, although the consideration of these sequences may be undertaken for further research. Finally, taking into account the considerations outlined above, it is worth noting that as regards the categorisation and delimitation of rhetorical units, careful examination of the stretches of discourse involved is needed.

#### **4.4 Additional variables within rhetorical strategies: stance bundles and hedging/ boosting devices**

In addition to the basic rhetorical functions outlined in section 4.3, other related variables are also taken into account in our analysis, since they influence the way evaluation is conveyed. On the one hand, the occurrence of bundles referring to the writer as well as to the author of the text contribute to create a specific type of interaction, where a personal tone of communication is established. On the other hand, the use of hedging and boosting devices contributes to signal different degrees of tentativeness and assertiveness. As recurrent patterns of these related variables are seen to occur across a variety of ‘response’ articles, our aim is to analyse their distribution and variability regarding the construction of praise and criticism as rhetorical strategies in the ‘response’ article.

##### 4.4.1 Categorisation of lexical stance bundles

In this section, we focus on stance bundles as lexical phrases by means of which critical comments may carry subjective and personal views. In the ‘response’ article, it is common for stance bundles to include references to the writer of the article or the reviewed author.

With regard to writer-mediated stance bundles, writers often choose first person markers to refer to themselves, thereby giving their writing a personal tone. Whenever a single writer is the source of the article, singular personal pronouns or possessive adjectives (such as ‘I’ or ‘my’) may appear<sup>93</sup>. Similarly, when a text is written by

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<sup>93</sup> There are also cases where the plural form ‘we’ is used when a single writer originates the article (inclusive ‘we’).



various researchers the plural forms ‘we’ and ‘our’ appear frequently. As research points out (Fortanet, 2004; Kuo, 1999; Martín and Burgess, 2004), the use of first person markers is a conscious choice made by the writer and, in our view, a significant one in that meanings of authority and assertiveness are conveyed.

In connection with the different meanings that stance bundles can display, it is essential to evaluate them in their actual discourse context, since the same form may be associated with different meanings. For instance, a verb such as ‘see’ may convey a variety of meanings including opinion, evaluation or concession, as can be seen in examples (92), (93) and (94) respectively:

- (92) I would argue, and indeed have argued in my paper, is that we also need to be clear about such equally fundamental matters as the nature of the data and methods of language education. And, crucially, to enquire into the relationship between them. This, as I *see* it, is what applied linguistic mediation means. (*AL*, Widdowson, 2001a).
- (93) We do not *see* our approach to explaining L2 student-writing problems as mutually exclusive from the more individualist-oriented stance adopted by our respondents. (*JSLW*, Ramanathan and Kaplan, 1997)
- (94) Still, I *see* Thornbury’s point when he talks about the urgent need to open the pedagogical dialogue, but I would turn his statement, ‘(teachers) need to be taught how to talk rather than to teach’ into: Teachers need to be aware that they need to talk in order to teach (...) (*ELT*, Clemente, 2001)

Drawing on previous research about stance bundles in academic writing (Biber *et al.*, 2004; Fortanet, 2004b, Hyland, 2000; Thompson and Ye, 1991), we examine the variety of stance bundles used to convey evaluation in the ‘response’ article. Following from here, we propose a classification of writer bundles according to semantic-functional criteria. A feature common to the bundles outlined in the table below concerns their role in conveying subjective and personal attitude. Four main types of bundles, which can be realised by a wide range of lexico-grammatical forms, can be

distinguished: ‘attitudinal’ stance bundles (A), ‘opinion’ stance bundles (B), ‘epistemic’ stance bundles (C) and ‘discoursal’ stance bundles (D):

Table 2. A classification of writers’ stance bundles (based on Fortanet, 2004b, Hyland, 2000 and Thompson and Ye, 1991)

<i>Writer’s mediation</i>	<i>Linguistic realisations</i>
<b><i>Attitudinal stance bundles (personalisation A)</i></b>	
A1- Subject + attitudinal verb/ idiomatic phrase	I object, I favour...; I agree, I disagree,... I have reservations about....
A2- Subject + affective verb	We fear that...
A3- Subject + negative verbal phrase	I do not advocate/ agree....
A4- Subject + modal verbal phrase	I must reject....
A5- Subject + negation + modal verb	I cannot accept....
A6- Subject + copula + compliment	I am glad..., I am troubled...
A7- Metadiscoursal framing + verbal phrase	I must say I suspect
A8-Attitudinal noun phrase	My problem with Carter’s view is that....
<b><i>Opinion stance bundles (personalisation B)</i></b>	
B1- Subject + opinion verbal phrase	I think, I believe , I find....
B2- Subject + opinion affective verb	I feel.....
B3- Subject + negative opinion verbal phrase	I do not think.../I do not believe...
B4- Subject + modal verbal phrase	As far as I can see...
B5- Subject + negation + modal verb	I cannot see, understand...
B6- Metadiscoursal framing + verbal phrase	I must say that I believe....
B7- Opinion noun phrase	In my view...
<b><i>Epistemic stance bundles (personalisation C)</i></b>	
C1- Subject + epistemic verbal phrase	I doubt...
C2- Subject + negative epistemic verbal phrase	I don’t know....
C3- Subject + verb + complement	I’m not clear..., I’m not sure...
<b><i>Discoursal stance bundles (personalisation D)</i></b>	
D1- Subject + discourse verbal phrase	I suggest/argue...
D2- Subject + modal verbal phrase	I would argue to the contrary....
D3- Subject + affective discourse verb	I would like to make it crystal clear that....

The first type of bundles we distinguish are intended to project the writer’s interpersonal meanings of judgement and attitude. Within this main type, we

differentiate various subtypes corresponding to a wide range of formal realisations. Firstly, we find ‘attitudinal bundles’, which are formed by a subject followed by an attitudinal verb, conveying evaluation meanings that range from the positive to the negative end of the scale:

- (95) Although our critique of Reid's study will express other reservations, *we accept* the principle that helping student writers become more aware of reader expectations is a useful pedagogic goal. (*JSLW*, Allison *et al.*, 1999)
- (96) (...) One of the few points on which *I would disagree* with her is in her statement that language instruction in its very essence is content free. (*TESOL Quarterly*, Crookes, 1999)

We also find verbal phrases that convey an ‘affective’ kind of evaluation in a explicit way, showing the writer’s personal feelings. In this context, the occurrence of verbs that reveal the writer’s emotional state is common, showing that academic discourse may also resort to personal forms of interaction:

- (97) In a context that aims at bridging the gap between theory and practice and that largely addresses a readership in the area of teaching *we fear that* their approach actually perpetuates a simplified view of the relationship between research and practice (...). (*TESOL Quarterly*, Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson, 2001).

From a formal point of view, lexical idiomatic phrases are also used to convey attitudinal stance. It is common that these phrases introduce a more informal use of the language, as example (98) shows:

- (98) Fundamentally *I have a problem with the idea that* the learning context is necessarily the first place to start in any educational exchange. Instead, I would argue that methodology is fundamental to the learning of language in classrooms where teachers are working (*ELT*, Harmer, 2003).

Attitudinal stance bundles may also include negation and/or modality as ways to qualify verbal phrases. Based on research by Shaw (2004) and Thompson and Ye (1991), both negation and modality are considered as engagement markers, having the potential to modify the writer's stance. In this sense, the use of negation is related to divergence of views between the writer and the author:

- (99) As made clear in our article (p. 67, note 1 and p. 68, note 5; see also Atkinson, 1999), *I do not support* the idea that students are reducible to their cultural backgrounds (*JSLW*, Atkinson, 2000).

As pointed out above, modality is also regarded as a writer engagement marker, which plays an important role in evaluation, and it may convey either 'epistemic' or 'deontic' values<sup>94</sup>, as can be seen in examples (100) and (101) respectively:

- (100) Even if Freeman and Johnson are correct in proposing a greater cultural component to language than we *might* agree with, language teachers still need to know about linguistic forms to understand how those forms vary across social context and culture. (*TESOL Quarterly*, Muchisky and Yates, 2004)
- (101) I agree (and have always agreed) that this may be the case for some learners, but for a number of reasons, I *must* reject this theory as an explanation for all anxiety reactions. (*MLJ*, Arries, 1999)

In addition, modality and negation may be combined, playing an important role in conveying the writer's position, for instance:

- (102) I find the notion of a critical pragmatism appealing, but I *cannot* unreservedly agree to the terms in which Pennycook poses the choice. (*ESP*, Allison, 1998)

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<sup>94</sup> Whereas epistemic modality is related to meanings of possibility, deontic modality relates to meanings of necessity or obligation (Lyons, 1977; Palmer, 1986).

From a formal point of view, lexico-grammatical variations may also include phrases that contain a verb followed by a complement that conveys attitudinal (or affective) meaning:

- (103) *We are puzzled* by Bartels's claim that applied linguists are colonizing classroom teachers, particularly in view of the fact that we are simultaneously applied linguists and classroom ESL teachers. (*TESOL Quarterly*, Muchisky and Yates, 2004)

Evaluation may also be preceded by an introductory frame or 'metadiscoursal bracketing' (Hyland, 2000), which contributes to foreground the writer's presence, as in example (104):

- (104) Within this context *I would like to point out* that *I strongly agree* with Lindstromberg when he argues for the use of pictorial information of basic prepositional senses in dictionaries. (*AL*, Brala, 2002)

Apart from the variety of verbal phrases outlined above, writers may also employ noun phrases that include a possessive adjective to introduce attitudinal meaning, as shown in (105):

- (105) *My problem* with what Carter says is that he seems a little hesitant-or perhaps unwilling-to say where he stands. Does he reject the fundamentalist views of those linguists and language teaching theorists for whom corpus findings are the only source of truth? (*ELT*, Cook, 1998)

Next, we turn to consider the second group of stance bundles, which convey attitude by introducing the writer as an opinion holder. In this case, 'opinion' bundles (Hyland, 2000; Oliver, 2004; Martín, 2003) exercise a hedging function, since the writer specifies himself (or herself) as the source of a viewpoint. These bundles commonly include verbs of cognition (such as 'think', 'believe', 'find'), which contribute to signal

personal opinion. An aspect that is shared by the bundles included in this group concerns the fact that their evaluative orientation needs to be interpreted in context. As the examples below show, a positive and negative orientation result respectively:

- (106) *I believe* that the label favoured by Sanz and VanPatten is misleading because ‘processing instruction’ may refer to either input- or output-based processing. (*CMLR*, Salaberry, 1998)
- (107) The purpose of this critique is not to denigrate Ross’ research. In fact, *I consider* his paper a valiant effort to provide some empirical support for the usefulness of formative assessment. (*AL*, Stapleton, 2006)

Apart from this, stance bundles that blend connotations of opinion and feelings also appear in our corpus. In this case, the choice of affective verbs is a frequent choice, as in (110):

- (108) Ultimately, *I feel* that Sparks *et al.*’s arguments are based on a dated understanding of the nature of second language learning and teaching. (*MLJ*, Horwitz, 2000)

Negative elements as well as modality may also be used by writers within the verbal phrase to modify the degree of the writer’s assertion, thus helping to delimit the writer’s point of view, as shown by examples (109) and (110) respectively. In addition, modality and negation may also combine in the same context, as in (111):

- (109) In the first place *I do not believe* that CLT is a describable phenomenon any more (except in the very vaguest ways-e.g. we want students to communicate), nor do I think a ‘communicative-task-based’ approach is widely practised in world terms. (*ELT*, Harmer, 2000)
- (110) What Beaugrande’s paper amounts to, *as far I can see*, is a defence of his adopted faith against what he sees as an unwarranted attack by an infidel. (*AL*, Widdowson, 2001b)

- (111) I *cannot* understand an argument that asserts the opposite (...). Another problem with that argument is that it includes three studies that I said were not evidence. (*JSLW*, Truscott, 1999)

From a formal point of view, stance opinion bundles may also be preceded by ‘metadiscoursal framing’, which contributes to introduce evaluation in a subjective way, as shown below:

- (112) *I must also say, however, that I believe* many of Elbow’s comments to emanate from a lack of understanding of the larger context in which the article was written, and to which it was meant to contribute (...) (*JSLW*, Atkinson, 2000)

Apart from this, evaluation may be introduced by prepositional phrases that include possessive adjectives instead of personal pronouns, suggesting the writer’s direct involvement in evaluation:

- (113) In sum, *in my view*, F&W are perfectly justified, and probably right, in arguing that a broader, con-text-sensitive, participant-sensitive, generally so-ciolinguistic orientation might prove beneficial for SLA research (...). (*MLJ*, Long, 1997)

In sum, the bundles outlined above signal the writer’s subjective and personal point of view, conveying a balance between assertiveness and caution and implying the possibility that other views are also possible<sup>95</sup>.

The third group of bundles, ‘epistemic’ stance bundles, express the writer’s doubt or certainty towards another author’s points of view by introducing different degrees of precision or signalling limitations as far as the writer’s knowledge is concerned. As the

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<sup>95</sup> See Hernández and Mendiluce (2003), Oliver (2004) and Thompson and Ye (1991) with reference to the expression of cautious stance.

example below shows, these bundles often include verbs of knowing (such as ‘know’ or ‘doubt’):

- (114) *Insofar as I know* those studies, I would call this implication unhelpfully misleading. (*TESOL Quarterly*, Sower, 1999)
- (115) While *I still doubt* the possibility that people can be as individualistically oriented as Elbow thinks they can while also being more interdependent, I do find that Elbow's ideas usefully complicate my thinking. (*JSLW*, Atkinson, 2000)

As regards variation from a formal point of view, the use of negation often occurs within this type of bundles and helps to introduce the writer’s comments of precision or limitation with regard to the information provided by other colleagues:

- (116) I must confess that I simply don’t *know* what Swan means in stating that certain areas of grammar are ‘messy’ (a new grammatical feature perhaps: [+/- messy]?). There are, of course, irregularities, which can be defined as such, and general phenomena we do not yet understand, but adopting a defeatist attitude is a mistake. (*ELT*, Petrovitz, 2001)

Apart from this, lexical phrases consisting of the verb ‘be’ followed by epistemic adjectives are also found in our corpus. As shown in examples (117) and (118), the introduction of these bundles contributes to introduce critical comments in a mitigated way:

- (117) I am not quite sure how he reaches the conclusion that Lightbown (2000) is an uncritical endorsement of Long and Crookes’ (1992) task-based approach. (*AL*, Lightbown, 2002)
- (118) I am not myself clear as to what is so deep about this notion, but in any case, it was precisely such frequent and typical occurrences that I was talking about, not about unique instances. (*AL*, Widdowson, 2003)



In sum, ‘epistemic’ bundles convey the writer’s personal doubt and display different degrees of commitment, often contributing to soften the force of negative evaluation.

Finally, ‘discoursal’ bundles introduce critical comments by means of lexical verbs that are related to textual or discourse expression (e.g. ‘maintain’, ‘suggest’). Stance bundles of this kind need to be interpreted in their actual discourse context:

- (119) I *argue* that these criticisms are both unfounded and highly selective, leaving large portions of my case unchallenged and, in some cases, even strengthening them. (*JSLW*, Truscott, 1999)
- (120) In contrast to the arguments presented by Kubota, I *maintain* that Japanese culture is not constructed by discourse (...). (*TESOL Quaterly*, Sower, 1999)

Additionally, examples (121) and (122) show that discoursal bundles may also be modified by modals or the use of ‘metadiscourse frames’ that refer to the communication process itself:

- (121) I would argue that nowhere in Ross’s paper are these important variables considered. (*AL*, Stapleton, 2001)
- (122) I must hasten to add that I do not completely subscribe to the answers he puts forward (...). (*ELT*, Mathew, 2007)

As shown above, the introduction of first person markers conveys a personal discourse tone and suggests a blend of meanings between assertiveness and mitigation, which characterises ‘self-mentions’ in the ‘response’ article. Based on the above categorisation of bundles we aim to analyse writer stance bundles found in the ‘response’ article from a qualitative and quantitative point of view.

Developing further on the analysis of stance bundles, we also focus on author bundles, which are intended to convey evaluative meanings with regard to the work of another author. The occurrence of this type of bundles plays a crucial role in evaluation and is highly relevant in relation to the interpersonal framework of communication created in the ‘response’ article.

As regards the characterisation of these bundles, they include explicit references to the target author, which can occur in contexts where the presence of the writer is explicit (e.g. ‘I’m not at all sure that *he* is right...’) or it is implicitly understood (e.g. ‘*He* fails to extend the argument to its logical conclusion...’). For the purposes of our study, we divide these bundles into two main types, ‘factive’ (F) and ‘counter-factive’ bundles (CF), depending on whether they convey meanings of approval or disapproval. Based on semantic and grammatical criteria, we propose a characterisation of the main types of author bundles found in our corpus of ‘response’ articles. We focus first on the factive bundles and we distinguish the following types:

*Table 3. Factive stance bundles associated with author’s reference (based on Hyland, 2000 and Thompson and Ye, 1991)*

<b><i>Factive Bundles</i></b>	<b><i>Examples</i></b>
F1 (subject + evaluative verb/ idiomatic expression)	He achieves...
F2 (subject + discourse verb)	He convincingly argues...../ He ably shows.....
F3 (subject + research verb)	...the ideas she promotes have worth...
F4 (subject + be + complement)	He is right...
F5 (noun phrase)	His review is valuable...

Having in common that they show approval from a semantic point of view, factive bundles may be realised in different ways. First of all, the occurrences of bundles that

include ‘attitudinal’ verbs or expressions constitute a frequent choice<sup>96</sup>. As the following example shows, the writer comments on the achievement of a successful result in relation to another author’s work:

- (123) He does understand the reality of power. But I find his definition somewhat abstract and eventually disabling for teachers (*ELT*, Canagarajah, 1999).

In addition, bundles that contain ‘discourse’ or ‘research’ verbs are found in our corpus. In the first case, they are used as ways of introducing comments on the communication process itself, whereas in the second the research activity and procedures constitutes the focus of evaluation, as examples (124) and (125) show respectively.

- (124) He proceeds cautiously, providing some interesting ‘real’ data, and pointing out significant differences between actual and textbook English. He does not say one should replace the other. (*ELT*, Carter, 1998)
- (125) Kubota misrepresents my work and that of others (e.g., the ethnographers mentioned in Footnote 5, whose work by no means simply supports Kubota’s views (...)) This is a shame, in my opinion, as some of the ideas *she promotes* clearly have worth (...). (*TESOL Quaterly*, Atkinson, 2002)

From a formal point of view, factive author bundles may also contain the verb ‘be’ followed by a complement. In these cases, epistemic stance is often conveyed, as in the following example:

- (126) And *he is right* to recognize that I and my close colleague, Michael McCarthy have been in the teaching profession too long to believe that new approaches to language description can or even should revolutionize language teaching. (*ELT*, Carter, 1998)

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<sup>96</sup> Whereas Thompson and Ye (1991) uses the term ‘textual’, Hyland (2000) refers to ‘discourse’ verbs.

In addition to the range of verbal lexical bundles outlined above, other factive evaluative bundles may be formed by noun phrases that include possessive adjectives, as in:

- (127) Steven Ross is to be commended for his attempt to empirically study the impact of formative assessment (Ross 2005). *His* research covering a time span of eight years is particularly ambitious. (*AL*, Stapleton, 2006)

A further issue of concern regards the examination of counter-factive author bundles as they introduce rather personal and direct forms of evaluation in the 'response' article. A common feature to counter-factive author bundles is that they include an explicit reference to the reviewed author by means of a person marker (which may be a personal pronoun or a possessive adjective). As research points out (Thompson and Ye, 1991), the occurrence of this kind of author references, which are intended to show disapproval, makes criticism intense and personal. Based on lexicogrammatical criteria, the following table shows the variety of bundles we distinguish in our study:

*Table 4. Counter-factive active stance bundles associated with author's reference (based on Hyland, 2000 and Thompson and Ye, 1991)*

<b><i>Counter-factive Bundles</i></b>	<b><i>Examples</i></b>
CF1 (subject + evaluative verb/ idiomatic expr.)	He misinterprets...
CF2 (subject + discourse verb)	He introduces confusion...
CF3 (subject + research verb)	She has set up a false dichotomy...
CF4 (subject + negative verbal phrase)	He does not explain.../ He does not offer a valid view
CF5 (subject + modal verb)	He may misinterpret..
CF6 (subject + be + complement)	He is wrong.....
CF7 (noun phrases)	His arguments are premature...

First of all, counter-factive author bundles may be realised by ‘attitudinal’ verbs or idiomatic expressions, which convey the writer’s disapproval with regard to the work of another researcher, as shown in examples (128) and (129)<sup>97</sup>.

- (128) It is difficult to see how this study says anything about the effectiveness of error correction when it takes place within the cycle of feedback and revision. On the other hand, for different reasons, *he disregards* the findings of Fathman and Whalley (1990) and Lalande (1982), both of which found positive effects for error correction. (*JSLW*, Ferris, 1999)
- (129) *She further turns a blind eye to* the thousands of North American colleges and universities that indiscriminately and imprudently use the TOEFL as their principal initial criterion for determining admission. Indeed, it is here that the true washback takes place. (*TESOL Quaterly*, Wadden and Hilke, 1999)

Apart from attitudinal verbs and expressions (as shown in the examples above), counter-factive verbal phrases may also contain a ‘textual’ or ‘discourse’ verb, which refers to the communication process itself:

- (130) (...) *he introduces* confusion by appearing to include under the rubric of LD not only students who have been classified as LD through diagnostic evaluations (...) (*MLJ*, Sparks and Jarvorsky, 1999)

Additionally, example (131) shows that here are also cases where stance bundles convey attitude by including verbs that refer specifically to activities related to statements of findings and procedures followed:

- (131) Another difficulty with Spack’s argument is that *she has set up* a false dichotomy-that our choice, as ESL/EFL teachers and researchers, is to view students either as members of cultural groups or as individuals (...). (*TESOL Quaterly*, Nelson, 1998)

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<sup>97</sup> In the latter case (129), more personal and informal connotations are introduced.

In addition, the inclusion of negation within the verbal phrase plays a significant role in relation to the evaluative potential of the critical comment, as shown in the examples below:

- (132) The only justification offered for carrying out the research is the appeal made by another applied linguist (p. 243)-hardly a convincing justification. *They do not explain* exactly how their findings could prove to be of importance in the classroom. (AL, Sheen and O'Neill, 2005)
- (133) However, as Lightbown points out that this generalization was originally based on research on developmental sequences, it is unfortunate that *she does not pursue* this line of argument. (AL, Sheen, 2002)

From a formal point of view, negative expressions such as certain negative 'catenative' verbal phrases (e.g. 'fail to') are also found in our corpus to indicate certain faults or shortcomings:

- (134) Most importantly *he fails to* note that the model has been generally discarded, for reasons that I indicated. (AL, Gregg, 2005)

Apart from negation, writers can also employ modality within the verbal phrase as a way to qualify the evaluative potential of stance bundles. In this context, the possibility that the reviewed author had not communicated his ideas clearly is suggested, at the time that respect is shown for other colleagues' views:

- (135) (...) We do think that *they may have misinterpreted* what we were trying to do when we wrote the article in question. (JSLW, Ramanathan, Kaplan, 1997)

Counter-factive author bundles may also be formed by the verb ‘be’ followed by a complement, this choice being considered a marked and direct one as far as written academic discourse is concerned:

- (136) Sheen and O’Neill claim that there is no research supporting the hypothesis that ‘focus on form’ aids acquisition. *They are wrong*. There are a number of studies that provide evidence that negotiation of meaning promotes acquisition. (AL, Ellis *et al.*, 2006)

In addition to the variety of verbal choices outlined above, noun phrases where possessive adjectives occur also provide an additional way of presenting the author’s arguments:

- (137) (...) *their suggestion* that FL reading problems might due to anxiety is premature because they did not determine their participants’ level of reading skill. (MLJ, Sparks *et al.*, 2000)

As regards the discursive thread, personal pronouns and possessive adjectives commonly refer anaphorically or cataphorically to the target author, whose mention is introduced in the surrounding context:

- (138) Kubota bases much of her thesis on poststructuralism and postcolonialism. She makes some valid points, but I believe that much of *her position* is overstated, contradictory, and factually inaccurate. (TESOL Quarterly, Sower, 1999)

As regards other formal features of stance bundles such tense, it must be noted that present verbal tenses are mostly used to carry out evaluation in the ‘response’ article, as shown in example (139):

- (139) Carson and I *differ* primarily in the way we define and learn about students’ cultural identities and how we apply that knowledge. (TESOL Quaterly, Spack, 1998)

However, other tenses are also employed, contributing to build a cohesive evaluation thread. Among the tenses used to convey evaluation in our corpus, we encounter the present continuous, the past tense, the present perfect and past perfect tenses:

- (140) I am very aware at this stage that I may have said little to convince Waters. It may simply be the case that *we are working* from two irreconcilably different positions (...). (*ELT*, Holliday, 2007).
- (141) At any rate, what *I found* provocative about Elbow's notion of having one's individualism and one's interdependence, too, was exactly that in my own thinking, at least, I had tended to class them as opposites (...). (*JSLW*, Atkinson, 2000)
- (142) That Salaberry consistently refers to input processing as a comprehension approach suggests that *he has confused* theory with pedagogy and we refer him and other readers to VanPatten (1995). (*CMLR*, Sanz and VanPatten, 1998).
- (143) *I had hoped* that Norton would make an even more persuasive case for this claim based on a rigorous analysis of some relevant data; unfortunately, her findings are questionable (*ELT*, Lazaraton, 2006).

A further available choice to introduce the writer's critical comments regards the use of conditional tenses, which often convey meanings related to possibility, as the following example shows:

- (144) If Tomlinson had contemplated in his article the work done on classroom assessment (Kohonen, 1996), on portfolio assessment (Little and Perclová, 2001) or on formative evaluation and the use of feedback (Black and William, 1998), *he would have* come across the need to define the terms more clearly, and would surely have given a fairer picture of what is going on in the field of assessment to help students learn. (*ELT*, Figueras, 2005)

Finally, it is also interesting to note that references to the reviewed author can also be introduced by explicit writer-mediation. In this context, the meanings of disapproval conveyed by the critical comment are mitigated to a certain extent, as we see in example (145):



- (145) I'm afraid *I* find *his* specific criticisms misplaced, and in what follows I'll try to briefly show why. (*AL*, Gregg, 2005)

As the examples above show, the 'response' article is seen to employ rather personal and direct forms of evaluation. Based on the categorisation outlined above, our aim is to analyse the recurrent uses of stance bundles in 'response' articles across different journals in the field of applied linguistics. Their forms and functions are central to the creation of interaction in academic discourse and, more specifically, the personal projection they entail is crucial to convey evaluation in the 'response' article.

#### 4.4.2 Analysis of hedging and boosting

In this section, we turn now to the analysis of hedging and boosting devices as an additional variable in connection with evaluation. A characterisation of the elements that convey mitigation and emphasis is needed to be able to evaluate the role they play in modifying the evaluative potential of the rhetorical strategies encountered in the 'response' article. For the purposes of our research, we aim to examine how these devices help to shape interaction by introducing qualitative variations in relation to positive and negative evaluation contexts.

From a functional point of view, if we compare the example (146), where agreement is conveyed, and examples (147) and (148), where the writer chooses to modify evaluation by means of hedging and boosting respectively, we observe that these devices introduce significant differences within evaluation:

- (146) I agree with Bax that the unthinking application of a set of teaching practices in inappropriate circumstances is foolish and probably counter-productive (...) (*ELT*, Harmer, 2003).

- (147) (...) we *largely* agree with the proposals put forward by the authors as practical implications-not because of the status of a possible critical period or maturational constraints but because they follow from applied empirical research (*TESOL Quarterly*, Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson, 2001).
- (148) I *absolutely* agree with Ewald that learners, too, are quite unlikely to be familiar with some (though not all) of the procedures implied by any one of the possible critical or alternative pedagogies that might be used by teachers committed to social change (...). (*TESOL Quarterly*, Crookes, 1999).

Concerning hedging, we regard it as a rhetorical persuasive strategy, which plays a relevant role in minimising the interpersonal damage of critical comment. With regard to the classification of hedging devices, it should be noted that functional as well as formal criteria are taken into account. Despite the limitations that dealing with pragmatic categories imply, we propose the following classification:

Table 5. A characterisation of hedging devices in relation to writer-mediated evaluation

<b>HEDGING DEVICES</b>	
<p>1) <u>Lexico-grammatical hedging</u></p> <p>(Salager-Meyer, 1994; Hyland, 1996; Quirk <i>et al.</i>, 1972; Varttala, 1999)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Adjectives, adverbs, (adjectival/ adverbial phrases) referring to possibility, probability, quantity, degree, frequency and time.</li> <li>- Modal verbs (e.g. may, might, would, could) and semi-modals (seem to, appear to)</li> <li>- Hypothetical phrases and expressions</li> </ul>
<p>2) <u>Hedging Stance bundles</u><sup>98</sup></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expressions of writer's opinion (Hyland, 1994, 2000; Biber <i>et al.</i>, 2004)</li> <li>- Expressions of writer's personal doubt and involvement (Saz, 2001; Martin, 2003; Hyland, 2000; Oliver, 2004)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Opinion bundles (e.g. in my view, I think, I believe)</li> <li>- Epistemic bundles (e.g. I doubt, I fail to see, I don't know)</li> <li>- Subjectivisation bundles (e.g. I suggest)</li> </ul>
<p>3) <u>Strategic hedging</u></p> <p>(Bloch, 2003; Hyland, 2000; Gea, 2000; Hyland and Hyland, 2001; Luzón, 1996)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Paired-patterns (e.g. praise/ criticism)</li> </ul>

As the above classification shows, hedging may be conveyed by means of lexico-grammatical elements such as modal adjectives, adverbs, nouns, adjectival and adverbial expressions, as well as phrases contributing to downtone the force of evaluation. These lexico-grammatical expressions by referring to possibility,

<sup>98</sup> It is worth noting that we regard lexical epistemic verbs that have a hedging function within 'hedging stance bundles', because we consider that the combination of a person marker and a verb creates a characteristic unit that conveys the writer's evaluation.

probability, quantity, degree, frequency and time contribute to mitigate critical comment, as shown in the following examples:

- (149) *Perhaps* the primary problem in Saito *et al.*'s (1999) study is their failure to measure and control for their participants' level of native language reading or FL reading skill. (*MLJ*, Sparks *et al.*, 2000)
- (150) He has *somehow* neglected to notice that I am advocating exactly opposite. He has *somehow* missed the point that it is just the danger he notes that prompts the distinction between applied linguistics and linguistics applied, for which he has previously told us he sees no compelling motive. (*AL*, Widdowson, 2001)

With regard to contextual variation, it is important to note that hedging devices do not only appear in contexts that tend towards negative evaluation but also when positive evaluation is conveyed, thus implying limited approval:

- (151) Again, I share their viewpoint *to some extent*, as I have written in several places (e.g., Kasper, 1995) and elaborated in my 1993 AILA keynote. But because I have already aligned myself in that way, I will now take a critical stance towards F&W's positions, in celebration of the dialogic principle. (*MLJ*, Kasper, 1997)

Regarding the expression of possibility and probability, modal lexical verbs (e.g. 'may', 'might', 'could' or 'would') may contribute to mitigate critical comments in academic written discourse, as example (152) shows<sup>99</sup>. In addition, semi-auxiliary verbal phrases such as 'seem (to)' or 'appear (to)' are also used as mitigators, as in (153):

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<sup>99</sup> In this regard, modal verbs that are not evaluative are excluded from our analysis. For instance, modals can be used to qualify the writer's own claims (e.g. 'I *would* think most teachers would support this general strategy...', *TESOL Quarterly*, Sheen, 2000) or to report on another author's argument (e.g. 'He claimed that some of these verbs *may* be followed by gerunds...', *ELT*, Swan, 2001).

- (152) He *could* have avoided this contradiction by subjecting the Long and Robinson advocacy to critical review rather than treating the differing proposals for ‘focus on form’ strategies as an undifferentiated whole (*CMLR*, Sheen, 2000).
- (153) Yet even if one arbitrarily limits Hamp-Lyons critique to this section, she *appears to* overextrapolate from the TOEFL preparation texts she perused (...) (*TESOL Quarterly*, Wadden and Hilke, 1999)

As we have also mentioned above, some of these modal verbs may also be used within praise, conveying partial agreement of views. Therefore, it must be noted that it is essential to consider the actual discourse context in order to achieve successful interpretation.

- (154) In sum, in this short reply, I have attempted to respond to some of Sheen's major criticisms of my paper. While I *may* agree with his discussion regarding a focus on form approach in general, I disagree with most of his points regarding my article. (*CMLR*, Nassaji, 2000)

In addition to the already-mentioned categories, mitigation may also be realised by means of phrases or clauses, which may convey partial agreement, some kind of limitation or a hypothetical condition:

- (155) *Despite such agreement*, however, I nevertheless feel that we understand the issues here in fundamentally different ways. (*ESP*, Pennycook, 1997)
- (156) He mistakes the true nature of second-language listening *if he believes that it can take place without a considerable amount of what he terms ‘listening incomprehension.’* (*ELT*, Field, 2000)

Secondly, we also include in our categorisation, the writer's stance bundles consisting of personal markers and lexical epistemic verbs that appear in discourse with a hedging function. The use of hedging stance bundles allows the damage of critical comment to be mitigated, by conveying personal opinion, doubt or a sense of personal implication:

- (157) *In our view*, FL researchers should include the contribution of language skills when investigating students' affective differences in reading and comprehending a FL (*MLJ*, Sparks *et al.*, 2000).
- (158) (...) *I am hesitant* to endorse false assumptions based on inaccurate information (...). (*ELT*, Liu, 2005).

With reference to lexical verbs that convey hedging, some researchers conceive them as individual lexical resources, and classify them within lexico-grammatical resources in general (Varttala, 1999). However, based on Biber *et al.* (2004), Saz (2001) and Martín (2003b), we consider them to create a characteristic unit linked with person markers. Hence, this kind of lexical stance bundles convey writer-mediated evaluation and thus create a cohesive evaluative thread throughout critical discourse. It is also common that 'hedging stance bundles' appear in combination with other lexico-grammatical resources classified within the first category in the taxonomy shown above:

- (159) Although *I find* myself in *general* agreement with Karman's position, I think his paper left a lot of issues unexplored. (*AL*, Kabel, 2007)

Apart from the already-mentioned hedging categories, 'strategic' hedging is also included in our categorisation. Based on research in academic discourse (Bloch, 2003; Gea, 2000; Hyland, F, and Hyland, K., 2001), we consider 'strategic' hedging as central to the construction of interaction in the 'response' article. It involves the use of 'paired-patterns' and occurs whenever critical comment is mitigated by balancing negative evaluation with positive comment, thus resulting in less threatening choices:

- (160) I can say that I am largely in agreement with what I would call their root claim, namely, that certain common principles and practices of U.S. university writing pedagogy can carry individualistic implications that can be problematic for some ESL students. But I have some substantial reservations about the various ways in which they pursue this general point. (*JSLW*, Elbow, 2000)

Hedging may be realised by a wide range of devices, which may be used in combination, thereby creating a cumulative effect and conveying a cautious tone of discourse. In this respect, ‘strategic’ hedging may also combine with other lexico-grammatical hedging devices and hedging stance bundles:

- (161) *I find* the notion of a critical pragmatism appealing, but I cannot *unreservedly* agree to the terms in which Pennycook poses the choice. (*JSLW*, Desmond, 1998)
- (162) Although there is *occasionally something* to be said for this view, *I think* it is *generally* unproductive. (*ELT*, Swan, 2001)

After having dealt with hedging and its categorisation, we will now deal with boosting as a strategy closely linked to that of hedging. According to functional criteria, ‘boosters’ are mainly used to convey meanings of assertiveness and emphasis in the ‘response’ article. All the categories proposed in our characterisation may realised by a variety of lexico-grammatical elements such as adjectives, adverbs, verbs or lexical phrases, which share the characteristic of emphasising evaluation. Despite the difficulty of classifying pragmatic elements, the following categories are proposed:

<b>BOOSTERS</b>
Emphatics marking assertiveness and emphasis
Expressions of necessity and obligation
Expressions signalling importance
Expressions indicating a high or maximum degree on a scale

Figure 14. A classification of boosting devices (based on Mendiluce and Hernández, 2005)

First of all, a wide variety of boosters contribute to introduce meanings of assertiveness and emphasis in relation to evaluation. We are interested in examining how boosters contribute to provide emphasis in different discourse contexts. In this regard, boosting may signal solidarity with the reader in positive evaluation contexts:

- (163) Within this context, I would like to point out that I *strongly* agree with Lindstromberg when he argues for the use of pictorial information of basic prepositional senses in dictionaries. (AL, Brala, 2002)

However, with regard to negative comment, the presence of boosting introduces a highly marked choice in academic discourse, since it contributes to stress disapproval, as in example (164):

- (164) Stubbs explicitly excludes this matter from his discussion... And here I *do* take objection. Anybody who takes a responsible interest in the teaching of English as a foreign language will know there is an issue here. (AL, Widdowson, 2003)

Similarly, the following example shows an initial negative comment ('he provides no citation...'), which is followed by an attitudinal stance bundle subsequently emphasised by boosting ('completely'):

- (165) ...his arguments are informed by SLA findings, he provides no citation of findings which support the proscription of TGT. More important, he *completely ignores* substantial research, which demonstrates that in comparative studies some exponent of TGT has consistently proven to be the most effective. (Sheen, TESOL Quarterly, 2006)

There are also lexical expressions that convey emphatic meanings or cases where emphasis is introduced through the appearance of specific syntactic patterns such as conjunctions:



- (166) (...) *he does not bother to* engage with my arguments either. He simply rules out of order any suggestion that the linguistic work I discuss might have its limitations, and that its relevance to pedagogic and other practical concerns needs to be critically. (*AL*, Widdowson, 2001)
- (167) In the first place I do not believe that CLT is a describable phenomenon any more (except in the very vaguest ways-e.g. we want students to communicate), *nor* do I think a ‘communicative-task-based’ approach is widely practised in world terms. Nor am I convinced that the attitude of a few British teachers and trainers (...). (*ELT*, Harmer, 2003)

From a functional point of view, we observe that hedging and boosting may be used to modify writer-mediated evaluation. Thus, boosting devices may also combine with hedges to create ‘non-harmonic’ combinations<sup>100</sup>, since both types of devices help the writer to carry out balanced evaluation:

- (168) First, we would like to thank Ann Raimés and Vivian Zamel for giving our article (Ramanathan & Kaplan, 1996) such serious consideration. It is good to know that anyone has cared enough to read the text with such attention. However, *we do think* that they *may* have misinterpreted what we were trying to do when we wrote the article in question. (*JSLW*, Ramanathan, Kaplan, 1997)
- (169) *Some of his points, I fully accept:* the major differences between the listening and reading processes the interactive nature of much listening, the doubtful value of teaching certain strategies individually, though I would draw very different conclusions to his. (*ELT*, Field, 2000)

Moreover, with regard to paired patterns, hedges and boosters also share contexts of appearance, which leads to variations regarding writers’ evaluative choices. For instance, in a praise/criticism pair, both hedging and boosting may modify either the first or the second part of the sequence. In this respect, in example (170) agreement is limited by

<sup>100</sup> Non-harmonic combinations (Hyland, 2000; Aguilar, 2002) are in contrast to harmonic ones where devices of the same kind combine (e.g. ‘*One of the few points on which I would disagree with her is...*’).

the modal verb ‘would’, whereas disagreement is emphasised by means of the adverb ‘clearly’:

- (170) While we *would* agree with Truscott that there are many challenges and complexities involved in providing effective feedback for L2 learners, we *clearly* disagree with his conclusion that feedback on error should be abandoned. (*CMLR*, Lyster *et al.*, 1999)

However, in example (171), the writer uses an emphatic auxiliary verb to signal positive evaluation (‘does’), while critical divergences of opinion are downtoned by means of hedging (‘somewhat’):

- (171) Rajagopalan has the good sense not to take the romantic position adopted by many LH proponents these days. He *does* understand the reality of power. But I find his definition *somewhat* abstract, and eventually, disabling for teachers (*ELT*, Canagarajah, 1999).

Second, we also include in our classification expressions of necessity and obligation that appear mainly when the writer wishes to indicate a recommended course of action or signal directions further research:

- (172) We share Reid's view that further work (both in research and pedagogy) *should* look more at first and second sentences from paragraphs in authentic texts, notably in students' own writings (*JSLW*, Allison *et al.*, 1999).
- (173) In our view, FL researchers *should* include the contribution of language skills when investigating students' affective differences in reading and comprehending a FL. (*MLJ*, Sparks *et al.*, 2000)

Apart from this, we also consider within boosters certain lexico-grammatical items that signal importance. It is also significant that their meaning depends on the discourse context where they appear:

- (174) First, we believe there are a number of *important* misunderstandings of critical theoretical issues in both input processing and processing instruction that appear in Salaberry's work. (*CMLR*, Sanz and VanPatten, 1998)
- (175) I would like to call attention to some *serious* flaws while highlighting a larger failing in applied linguistic studies of this nature which employ complex inferential statistical tools and models in an attempt to persuade audiences with detailed. (*AL*, Stapleton, 2006)

We also find that the superlative and comparative forms of adjectives convey meanings that indicate a degree on a scale. In relation to evaluation, approval and disapproval may be introduced, as examples (176) and (177) show respectively:

- (176) Here, her charge contains its *largest* grain of truth, and it is this section of the exam that is most in need of revision.... Yet even if one arbitrarily limits Hamp-Lyons critique to this section, she appears to overextrapolate from the TOEFL preparation texts she perused (...). (*TESOL Quaterly*, Wadden and Hilke, 1999).
- (177) However, after reviewing Sparks *et al.*'s and their colleagues' contributions to the foreign language profession's understanding of the role of individual differences in second language learning, I feel that a much *stronger* statement is necessary (*MLJ*, Arries, 1999).

In sum, with regard to hedging and boosting, our aim is to examine how hedging and boosting are related to writer-mediated evaluation and stance, noting the most frequently occurring patterns and functions in our corpus of academic discourse. As the use of these devices is central to the construction of interaction in the 'response' article, its examination offers valuable insights into the characteristic ways of arguing within the academy.



## 5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION



In this chapter, we present the results of our study regarding the four research questions stated earlier in Chapter 3 (Section 3.6.1) and a discussion of their implications within the study of critical academic discourse.

### **5.1 Results and discussion concerning the variety of rhetorical strategies used to convey evaluation in the ‘response’ article**

Our first research question regards the rhetorical means employed to convey the writer’s attitude particularly when the work of another author is addressed or reviewed, which gives way to a variety of evaluation strategies in academic discourse. Before examining our results concerning this research question, it is important to point out that here we focus on the evaluation strategies selected as target units in this study (as explained in Chapter 4, Section 4.2.2, these strategies reflect the personal point of view of the writer as regards the reviewed author and contain as part of their realisation either personal pronouns and/ or possessive adjectives. Taking into account the results obtained regarding the different evaluation strategies encountered in our corpus, our aim is to analyse these choices in relation to the communicative purpose of the ‘response’ article.

#### **5.1.1 Research question 1**

With the objective of contributing to the identification of the discursual preferences for conveying personal evaluation in the ‘response’ article, the following table presents the variety as well as the frequency of evaluation strategies encountered in our corpus (based on the categorisation framework outlined in Chapter 4, Section 4.3):

Table 6. Frequency of evaluative strategic choices encountered in the 'response' article.

<b>Evaluation strategies</b>				
POSITIVE EVALUATION				Total
PE praise		59		128 (12.57%)
PE praise (agreement)		69		
NEGATIVE EVALUATION				
NE criticism	Direct	502	547	635 (62.38%)
NE criticism (disagreement)		45		
NE criticism (question)	Indirect	35	88	
NE criticism (suggestion)		53		
PAIRED PATTERNS				
Praise (P)/ Criticism (C) <sup>101</sup>			126	255 (25.05%)
Concession (CS)/ Criticism (C)			66	
Downtoning Comment (DC)/ Criticism (C)			31	
Question or Suggestion (Q/S) / Criticism (C)			32	

It can be seen in the table above that, praise and criticism as rhetorical strategies may appear separately as individual strategies or they may appear in combination, when the writer chooses to place positive and negative remarks side by side. Concerning the total number of strategies reflecting a positive or negative orientation, it is significant to note that criticism strategies appear more frequently than praise ones. In this respect, the amount of positive evaluation represents 12.57% of the total, whereas negative evaluation amounts to 87.43%. It must be noted that the greater amount of strategies conveying negative evaluation responds to the fact that the purpose of 'response' articles is a critical one, thus signalling points of divergence in order to start an

<sup>101</sup> Here we include combinations of the two strategies forming part of the paired-pattern, regardless of the order of occurrence, that is, praise-criticism or criticism-praise patterns.



academic dialogue. Additionally, criticism comments can appear as an independent strategy (62.38%) or in combination with other strategies within paired-patterns (25.05%). From a qualitative point of view, the fact that positive and negative evaluation often appear next to each other reflects a characteristic way of providing critical comment within the 'response' article, as negative comment is balanced with positive evaluation.

With regard to the distribution of praise, it is interesting to note that the amount of praise as an individual strategy (128 occurrences) and, as part of a paired-pattern (juxtaposed to negative evaluation), is very similar (126 occurrences). However, its role within each context is radically different. On the one hand, praise as an individual strategy is intended to point out the writer's approval by signalling strong points and sharing the reviewed author's views. In contrast, when praise appears alongside negative evaluation, it conveys partial approval or may even be intended as a way to introduce negative comment. These strategic patterns seem to be related to the purpose of 'response' articles and constitute conventional ways in which writers participate in discourse. Hence, whereas one of the specific purposes of 'response' articles is to point out knowledge gaps or weak points of previously published articles, the way in which writers present their arguments also includes showing some points of convergence in order to sound less damaging.

Within this general framework, the variety of strategic choices observed in our corpus, reflects the set of options available to the writer in order to convey evaluation in the 'response' article. The figure below illustrates the percentages of appearance of each of them:

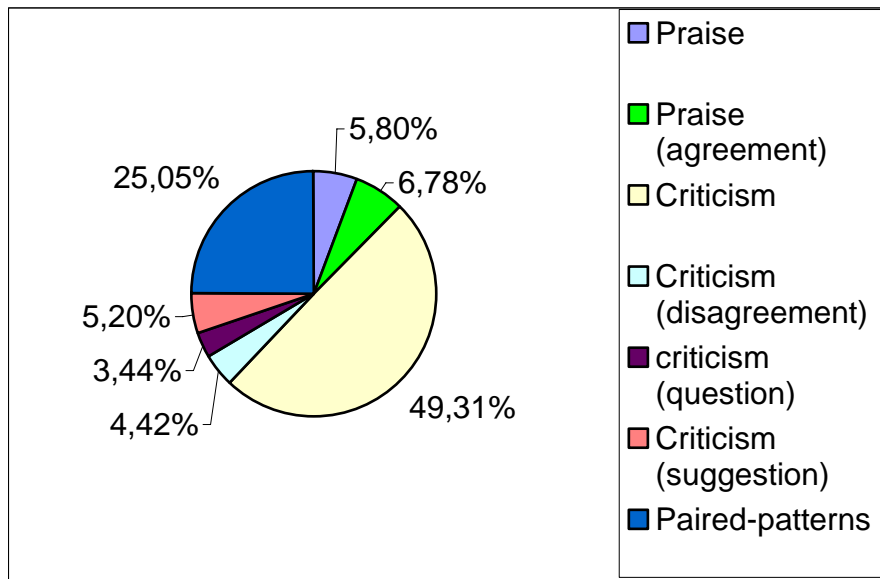


Figure 15. Distribution of occurrences of the rhetorical strategies encountered in the 'response' article

Concerning positive evaluation, the main choices encountered in our corpus regard praise that conveys approval or admiration (5.80%), thereby positively valuing another author's work and praise realised as agreement, thus showing that the same beliefs or points of view are shared by the writer of the response (6.78%). As we pointed out above, positive comments contribute to create an interactive framework of solidarity.

It should be emphasised that as far as negative evaluation is concerned, there is a wider variety of strategies, which reflects their greater complexity and the damaging value they entail. Negative comment may be realised by more or less explicit strategies that give rise to a continuum of choices. In this regard, criticism may be conveyed explicitly by signalling weak points with reference to another colleague's work (49.31%) or by implying misalignment of positions and disagreement (4.42%). On the other hand, the use of questions (3.44%) and suggestions (5.20%) is also employed by writers to present critical comments in a more implicit way. The use of questions is intended to draw the reader into the dialogue by setting a dialogic framework of communication. In addition, suggestions constitute critical comments that provide

'constructive' criticism and thus originate from a more positive side of the evaluation continuum (Hyland, 2000; Hyland, F. and Hyland, K., 2001). As a result, questions and suggestions reflect of difficulties writers' may encounter when it comes to providing negative evaluation and, thus, they contribute to introduce critical comments in a mitigated way.

Apart from this, negative evaluation may also be conveyed by means of paired-patterns, since writers may choose to combine a stretch of positive and negative evaluation, thereby giving rise to a varied and complex combination of strategies. It is interesting to note that, as Figure 15 shows, paired-patterns are the second most widely used evaluation strategy in the 'response' article (25.05%). The following table shows the wide range of choices that we encounter in our corpus:

*Table 7. Evaluative paired-patterns encountered in our corpus of 'response' articles*

<b>PAIRED PATTERNS</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of all</b>
A Praise-Criticism	116	126	49.41%
Criticism-Praise	10		
B Concession (CS)-Criticism (C)	55	66	25.88%
Criticism(C)-Concession	11		
C Downtoning Comment (DC)-Criticism (C)	22	31	12.16%
Criticism (C)-Downtoning Comment (DC)	9		
D Other (Question + Criticism)	14	32	12.55%
(Criticism + Question or Suggestion)	18		

Criticism may combine with a variety of strategies that can occur either before or after the main critical comment. First of all, criticism is found mainly with praise (49.41%), followed by the use of concessions (25.88%) in order to convey critical

comment. Whereas in the first case partial agreement is suggested, in the second a concession is made in order to convey critical comment in a milder way. In addition to these, other sub-strategies such as downtoning comments (12.16%) may also perform this role by signalling a limitation or doubt concerning the writer's claims. Finally, we also encounter a group of pairs where a question or suggestion may appear next to a negative critical comment (12.55%). Although within this context both strategies convey negative evaluation, their occurrence shows how implicit evaluation choices (that includes choices coming from a more positive extreme of the evaluation continuum) may appear combined with criticism.

Concerning the frequency and distribution of paired-patterns encountered in the 'response' article, praise-criticism pairs are the most frequent ones followed by concession-criticism and downtoning comment-criticism combinations. The figure below represents the percentages of occurrence of the different types of paired-patterns encountered in our corpus:

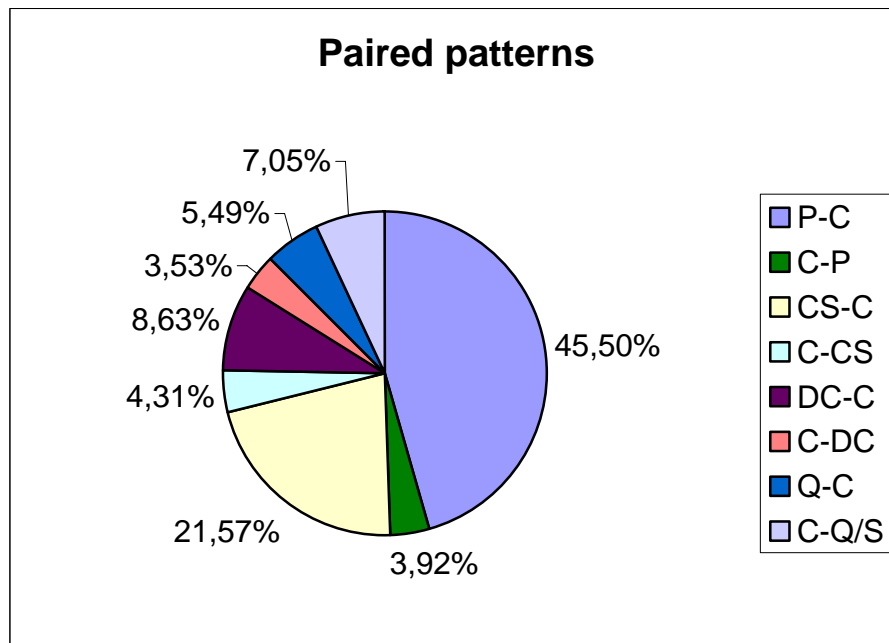


Figure 16. Distribution of occurrences of the different types of paired-patterns encountered in the 'response' article

Concerning the combination of positive and negative evaluation, it should be noted that in contexts where criticism is accompanied by praise, concession or a downtoning comment, it commonly appears in the second part of the pair in 75.7% of realisations. This may be due to the fact that before providing evaluation that may be damaging, the writer prefers to frame it with discourse intended to downtone evaluation. However, combinations where criticism appears in the first place are also possible (11.76%). With respect to other combinations, critical comment may also be preceded by a question (in 5.49% of cases) or be followed by a question or suggestion (in 7.05%). Based on these results, we may conclude that criticism is frequently combined with other strategic choices in order to soften the damage that evaluation may cause. Thus, the expression of negative comment often demands longer and more complex rhetorical choices. In sum, our findings suggest that writers employ a conventional set of choices to mitigate their comments and convey appropriate levels of respect for readers' opinions. Thus,

being aware of appropriate interactional norms in specific academic communities is essential to achieve successful argumentation.

Concerning previous studies on critical discourse, we share the view that the rhetorical choices employed by writers are influenced to a great extent by contextual features such as the discourse genre involved or the academic community rhetorical preferences (Bloch, 2003; Burgess and Fagan, 2002; Gea, 2000; Hunston, 2005). In addition, our study supports the fact that criticism of other researchers' work requires appropriate and collegial discourse choices within specific disciplinary backgrounds (Culpeper, 1996; Hyland, 2000; Hyland, F. and Hyland, K., 2001; Luzón, 1998; Martín and Burgess, 2004; Motta-Roth, 1998).

First of all, as regards the dimensions of evaluation examined, both positive and negative evaluation strategies are identified in our work and their frequency, distribution and complexity are dealt with in connection with the communicative purposes they accomplish. In this respect, our findings show that the occurrence of negative evaluation exceeds that of positive comment. In agreement with this view, Hunston (2005) also finds out that conflict is more frequent than praise in 'response' articles. However, Hyland's (2000) research reveals the opposite tendency in his study of book reviews. The reason for this difference derives from the fact that the book reviews analysed in Hyland's (2000) study were mainly intended to recommend a book. In contrast, 'response' articles create a controversial encounter by signalling faults and shortcomings regarding other authors' work, thus creating conflict and controversy. In connection with this, whereas previous research examined other critical genres, such as book reviews (Gea, 2000; Motta-Roth, 1998; Hyland, 2000), letters to the editor (Bloch, 2003; Magnet and Carnet, 2006; Vázquez, 2005) or editorials (Flowerdew and Dudley-Evans, 2005), our study deals with a genre that has hardly been dealt with. It

should be noted that, since Hunston's (2005) study deals specifically with a corpus of 'response' articles, it is of special interest to us. From a qualitative point of view, we agree with Hunston (2005) as regards the essential role that conflict strategies play. According to this author's view the 'response' article contains a great amount of rhetorical strategies that deliberately oppose other published articles. However, Hunston's (2005) findings remain mainly at a qualitative level and thus comparison with our own results is difficult.

In relation to the variety of rhetorical strategies, it is interesting to note that some studies focus on the role and characterisation of either negative (Burguess and Fagan, 2002; Martín and Burguess, 2004; Salager-Meyer and Ariza, 2003) or positive evaluation choices (Johnson, 1992), whereas others are concerned with both orientations (Bloch, 2003; Hyland, 2000; Hyland, F. and Hyland, K., 2001; Motta-Roth, 1998)<sup>102</sup>. As a development of this second line of study, our analysis attempts to expand on the variety on strategical options used by writers in critical discourse. Developing on this issue, our study contributes to identify a range of strategic choices along a continuum of evaluation and interpreting them according to a scale of explicitness and directness<sup>103</sup>. On the one hand, in agreement with Hyland (2000) and Hyland, F. and Hyland, K. (2001), we emphasise that implicit criticism strategic choices often occur in critical discourse as writers employ suggestions and questions as ways of signalling 'constructive criticism'.

In addition, our study supports previous findings with reference to the combination of praise and criticism strategies that takes place in critical discourse. With regard to the

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<sup>102</sup> These research studies deal with a range of genres such as research articles (Burguess and Fagan, 2002; Martín and Burguess, 2004), review articles (Salager-Meyer and Ariza, 2003), book reviews (Hyland, 2000; Motta-Roth, 1998), letters to the editor (Bloch, 2003) and classroom discourse (Hyland, F. and Hyland, K., 2001).

<sup>103</sup> According to this dimension the writer's choices may be more or less direct, depending on whether the use of hedging devices is involved (on this issue, see Section 5.2).

combination of different strategic choices, some of our results parallel those pointed out by previous research on critical discourse (Gea, 2000; Hyland, 2000; Motta-Roth, 1998; Moreno and Suárez, 2008a; Suárez and Moreno, 2006)<sup>104</sup>. As these authors point out neither form of evaluation needs to be absolute and the juxtaposition of praise and criticism is intended to convey negative evaluation in a milder way. In our study, we underline the role of ‘paired-patterns’ as distinct ways of conveying criticism in the ‘response’ article. And more specifically, we expand on the characterisation of these combinations, dealing with a range of patterns that may occur. In connection with this, our results suggest then that negative evaluation presents a more varied and elaborate argumentation in comparison with positive comment (as the research studies mentioned above had already suggested). Apart from this, previous research studies suggest that the structure of critical discourse presents an open and flexible organisation (Bloch, 2003; Motta-Roth, 1998). Both Bloch (2003) and Motta-Roth (1998), in their studies of letters to the editor and book reviews respectively, point out that due to the evaluative character of these texts, the terms praise and criticism can be found at any point throughout discourse and often in combination.

Finally, from a methodological point of view, whereas a great deal of research regarding written academic discourse has dealt with a variety of lexico-grammatical evaluation resources such as hedges (Fortanet *et al.*, 2001; Lewin, 1995; Posteguillo and Piqué, 2004; Varttala, 2001), boosters (Mendiluce and Hernández, 2005), attitude markers (Hyland, 2000; Hyland and Tse, 2004) or reporting verbs (Hunston, 2005; Hyland, 2000; Thompson and Ye, 1991), fewer studies have focused on rhetorical strategies as the starting point of the analysis (Bloch, 2003; Burgess and Fagan, 2002;; Gea, 2000; Hyland, F. and Hyland, K., 2001). Following this latter line of research, our

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<sup>104</sup> It is interesting to note that these studies deal with the genre of the book review.



study supports previous findings as well as adds other significant results both from a quantitative and a qualitative point of view. In our analysis, we focus not only on characterising the different types of rhetorical strategies that realise evaluation but also consider their frequency. From a complementary perspective, we are also interested in the examination of specific lexico-grammatical resources such as stance bundles or hedging and boosting devices in connection with positive and negative evaluation. In this regard, Hunston's (2005) study refers to patterns of consensus and conflict in the 'response' article at the time that certain phraseologies that are specific to this type of discourse are examined. However, as mentioned above, findings remain at a qualitative level and therefore do not allow for any comparison with our results.

### **5.2 Results and discussion concerning how writers' evaluation is modified by means of hedging and/or boosting in the 'response' article**

The second research question in the present study addresses the issue of whether evaluation rhetorical strategies are modified by hedging and/or boosting devices in the 'response' article. In this regard, our aim is to try to determine the way in which the writer's choices vary along a continuum of evaluation that extends from a direct to a more indirect end. More specifically, we are interested in examining how these resources are employed, thus contributing to qualify the different strategic choices encountered and allowing the writer to introduce critical comments in a more personal way.

## 5.2.1. Research Question 2

Based on the wide range of evaluative strategies found in our corpus and taking into account the highly controversial and interactive discourse created in the ‘response’ article, we are concerned with how the occurrence of hedging and/ or boosting devices<sup>105</sup> across different evaluation contexts. The following table shows the number of strategies being modified by means of lexico-grammatical hedging and/ or boosting devices:

*Table 8. Total number of writer’s evaluation strategies modified by lexico-grammatical hedging, boosting and combinations of hedging/ boosting.*

<b>Evaluation strategies</b>	<b>Hedging</b>	<b>Boosting</b>	<b>Hedging/ Boosting</b>
Praise	14 (10.94%)	29 (22.66%)	4 (3.12%)
Criticism	217 (34.17%)	59 (9.29%)	28 (4.40%)
Criticism (paired-patterns)	117 (45.88%)	21 (8.23%)	20 (7.84%)

As shown above, hedging, boosting and also a combination of both of these resources may modify the main strategic choices found in the ‘response’ article. First, we observe that the total percentage of strategies that appear alongside some kind of modification amounts to 36.89% within praise, 47.86% within criticism and 61.95 % within paired-patterns. It is significant that modifiers of evaluation occur more frequently within the context of negative evaluation (either as an individual choice or a

<sup>105</sup> See Section 4.4.2 for a categorisation of lexico-grammatical and strategic hedging devices.

combination of strategies). This fact would support the assumption that negative comment requires more complex choices. From a qualitative point of view, therefore, a variety of resources appear to modify the evaluative potential of the different rhetorical strategies encountered in our corpus.

Second, as Table 8 above shows, it is interesting to note that the occurrence of hedging as a modifier is higher when it accompanies criticism (34.17%) and paired-patterns (45.88%) in contrast to praise (10.94%). From a qualitative point of view, this finding signals the connection between hedging and the mitigation of critical comments in academic discourse and particularly so in the case of the 'response' article. However, it is also noticeable that a smaller percentage of hedging (10.94%) accompanies praise, suggesting that in the genre of the 'response' article 'hedged praise' may also be encountered, as a way to show that the approval shown by the writer is only partial or limited.

With regard to boosting, it is interesting to note that a higher percentage of occurrences accompany positive evaluation (22.66%) rather than negative comment (as an individual strategy in 9.29% of cases or as a combination of paired-patterns in 8.23%). This result seems to be in accordance with the function that boosting devices may perform in different discourse contexts. Therefore, where positive evaluation is found, meanings of approval and agreement are conveyed and, thus, boosters are often used to emphasise commitment and solidarity. In contrast, when boosting devices are used within negative evaluation, they are considered to be highly marked and thus less frequent choices. In this context, while adding a personal character to the evaluation, disagreement with the author initiating the interaction is stressed.

In addition, combinations of hedging and boosting may appear modifying either praise or criticism, although this choice is slightly more common within criticism

(4.40% with criticism and 7.84% with paired-patterns, in contrast to 3.12% within praise). From a qualitative point of view, our results point to the fact that negative evaluation involves conflict and thus, it also implies a higher presence of modifiers from a lexico-grammatical as well as a discursal point of view.

Developing further on this issue, we aim to determine whether there is a significant correlation between the two main basic evaluation choices of praise and criticism and the qualitative variables of hedging and boosting. Based on the amount of occurrences of each type of modifier across the different types of strategies in the ‘response’ article, we applied a chi-square correlation. The table below illustrates the number of occurrences of either of these resources:

*Table 9. Total number of occurrences of hedging and boosting throughout the rhetorical strategies found in our corpus*

<b>Evaluation strategy</b>	<b>Hedging</b>	<b>Boosting</b>
Praise	18	33
Criticism	245	87
Criticism (paired-patterns)	137	41

Taking into account the data displayed above, a chi-square test was performed using the statistical package Statgraphics<sup>106</sup> to determine whether or not the variables type of strategy and type of complementing device are independent. The following table shows the resulting p-values:

<sup>106</sup> See Pérez (2002) Statistical Package for Microsoft Windows.

Table 10. Chi-square correlation between type of strategy and type of modifying device

Chi-square	Df <sup>107</sup>	p-value
22.38	1	0.0000
20.93	1	0.0000 (with Yates' correction) <sup>108</sup>

Since the p-values are less than 0.01, the assumption that rows and columns are independent is to be rejected at the 99% confidence level. Thus, this result shows that hedging and boosting bear a significant correlation with praise and criticism respectively. This finding would be in accordance with the fact that whereas hedging is mainly used to mitigate criticism in the 'response' article, boosting tends to be used to mark solidarity.

Bearing this result in mind, we would also like to consider whether there is a significant correlation between type of strategy and type of modifier within the context of paired-patterns, that is, we aim to consider whether lexico-grammatical hedging and boosting devices are used differently depending on the variety of sub-strategies employed in each case. With respect to praise/ criticism patterns, we are especially concerned about how the strategy of praise can differ when it appears within a combination of strategic choices (in contrast to an independent strategy). In this respect, the following table shows the distribution of lexico-grammatical hedging and boosting devices in relation to both sub-strategies within the pattern<sup>109</sup>:

<sup>107</sup> 'Df' represents the degree of freedom.

<sup>108</sup> The p-value with Yates' correction was used, as it should be more accurate for a 2-by-2 table.

<sup>109</sup> Here, we include combinations of praise and criticism regardless of which strategy appears first.

Table 11. Number of occurrences of hedging and boosting in relation to the type of sub-strategies within praise/ criticism patterns

Paired Patterns		Hedging	Boosting
P-C/ C-P	Praise (as a sub-strategy)	27	16
	Criticism (as a sub-strategy)	53	12

As the preceding table shows, the types of modifiers that may appear in the first or the second part of the pair can vary in relation to the two sub-strategies involved. It is significant to observe that hedging occurs across both strategies of the pair and frequently within the context of criticism. However, it must be noted that hedging predominates as a type of modifier in contrast to boosting within the sub-strategy of praise. To see the extent to which this distribution of resources tends to be typical in the 'response' article, we performed a chi-square test:

Table 12. Chi-square correlation between type of strategy and type of modifying device with reference to praise/ criticism paired patterns

Chi-square	Df	p-value
4.09	1	0.0430
3.24	1	0.0717 (with Yates' correction)

Since the p-values are less than 0.10, this result shows that the type of strategy and type of complementing device referred to above are dependent at the 90% confidence level. This result therefore suggests that hedging tends to occur frequently within a negative context<sup>110</sup>. In addition, our findings also reveal that the occurrence of 'hedged praise' is very common, especially within the context of paired-patterns. In this respect, it must be noted that the number of occurrences of hedging within praise (when it appears juxtaposed to negative comment) is greater than that of boosting. This finding differs from the results obtained with regard to the distribution of hedging resources within praise as an individual strategy (see Table 8 above). A possible explanation for this distribution of hedging may have to do with the conventional role it accomplishes in the 'response' article. Because paired-patterns imply that the main focus of the evaluation will be negative, contrasting praise tends to be partial or limited. It is also significant to note that paired-patterns introduce criticism in a mitigated way. As a result, the frequency of use of linguistic features varies across different contextual patterns, depending on the functional role that specific devices are intended to accomplish.

Apart from this, the interactional resources of hedging and boosting may also combine with a concession or a downtoning comment, which are considered strategic choices that come from a less negative end of the evaluation continuum. The following table displays the occurrences of hedging and boosting when the strategy of criticism combines with that of concession:

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<sup>110</sup> It must be noted that the frequent use of hedging in a negative context parallels the tendency observed above in relation to criticism as an independent strategy.

Table 13. Number of occurrences of hedging and boosting in relation to the types of sub-strategies within concession/ criticism patterns

Paired Patterns		Hedging	Boosting
CS-C/ C-CS	Concession (as a sub-strategy)	10	6
	Criticism (as a sub-strategy)	25	3

As the table shows, hedging is used as a modifier across both strategies of the pair. However, to see whether there may be a significant correlation of values between hedging and boosting resources and the type of strategy considered, we performed a chi-square test:

Table 14. Chi-square correlation between type of strategy and type of modifying device with reference to concession/ criticism paired patterns.

Chi-square	Df	p-value
3,35	1	0,0671
2,12	1	0,1452 (with Yates' correction) <sup>111</sup>

As can be seen, the resulting p-values indicates that no significant correlation can be found between type of strategy and type of modifying device. Since the p-values are higher than 0.05, the assumption that these qualitative variables are independent cannot

<sup>111</sup> The p-value with Yates' correction was used, as it should be more accurate for a 2-by-2 table.



be rejected<sup>112</sup>. From a qualitative point of view, on the whole, our findings reveal that hedging is the most commonly used modifier. It should be added that its frequent occurrence within the more positive side of the evaluative comment is due to the specific contextual constraints that paired-patterns establish. Thus, discourse context as well as the personal projection that the writer wishes to establish in the articles, influence the occurrence of either hedging or boosting in relation to both sub-strategies of evaluation included within the type of paired-patterns referred to.

Developing on this issue, we observe a similar tendency with regard to the occurrences of lexico-grammatical hedging and boosting devices within pairs where the sub-strategies of downtoning comment and criticism occur:

*Table 15. Number of occurrences of hedging and boosting in downtoning comment/ criticism patterns*

Paired Patterns		Hedging	Boosting
DC-C/ C-DC	Downtoning Comment (as a sub-strategy)	10	3
	Criticism (as a sub-strategy)	12	1

It is significant that the amount of hedging devices used within downtoning comments (the less negative side of the evaluation) almost equals the occurrence of hedging within negative comment. With reference to the degree of association between the variables type of strategy and device, the following chi-square correlation was performed:

<sup>112</sup> In relation to the result obtained, we must also take into account that the amount of data with reference to this type of pattern is smaller than the data in relation with other types of patterns, since it occurs less frequently in our corpus.

Table 16. Chi-square correlation between type of strategy and type of modifying device with reference to concession/ criticism paired patterns

Chi-square	Df	p-value
1,18	1	0,2770
0,30	1	0,5867 (with Yates' correction)

Since the p-values are higher than 0.05, the correlation in this specific case is not significant. This finding parallels previous results regarding concession/criticism patterns, where no significant correlation was found between type of evaluative comments and modifying devices<sup>113</sup>. However, from a qualitative point of view, it should be noted that hedging is seen to be the most frequent type of modifying device, thus reinforcing the mitigating purpose of this type of pattern. In addition, as pointed out above, whereas certain linguistic and rhetorical choices may be favoured by the members of an academic community, both contextual constraints and the writer's personal preferences also play a relevant role as regards the use of hedging and boosting devices in academic discourse.

With respect to paired patterns, it is important to note that they constitute hedging strategies in themselves, since these patterns allow writers to introduce mitigated criticism. Including positive and negative evaluation, their purpose is that of raising conflict and they therefore have an overall negative focus. These patterns thus are employed to convey hedging in a strategic way (and they may also include lexicogrammatical hedges)<sup>114</sup>. Taking into account these considerations, the following table displays the occurrence of the mentioned hedging resources across negative evaluation:

<sup>113</sup> As regards the lower amount of data examined in relation to this type of patterns, the same consideration mentioned above needs to be noted with regard to its less frequent occurrence in our corpus.

<sup>114</sup> Section 4.4.2 on strategic hedging in connection with paired-patterns.

Table 17. Number of strategies incorporating lexico-grammatical and/ or strategic hedging within negative evaluation

<b>Negative evaluation Strategies</b> (Total: 890)				
Criticism (as an indepent strategy) (Total: 635)		Criticism (paired-patterns) (Total: 255)		
with lexico-grammatical hedging	245	with lexico-grammatical and strategic hedging	137	255
		with strategic hedging	118	

As shown above, whereas strategic hedging is linked to paired patterns, lexico-grammatical hedging occurs across the two types of negative evaluation comments. From a qualitative point of view, both kinds of hedging may combine within a specific context, thus producing a pattern that reinforces the effect of individual devices. This finding also reflects the fact that negative evaluation demands more complex argumentation in order to mitigate the damage that negative critical comment may cause.

Finally, bearing in mind the above results, we would like to consider the extent to which evaluation appears modified by hedging (either lexico-grammatical or strategic), boosting or neither of these resources. Regarding negative evaluation, the following figure represents the total percentages of the choices mentioned above<sup>115</sup>:

<sup>115</sup>These results are based on the data displayed in Tables 8 and 17.

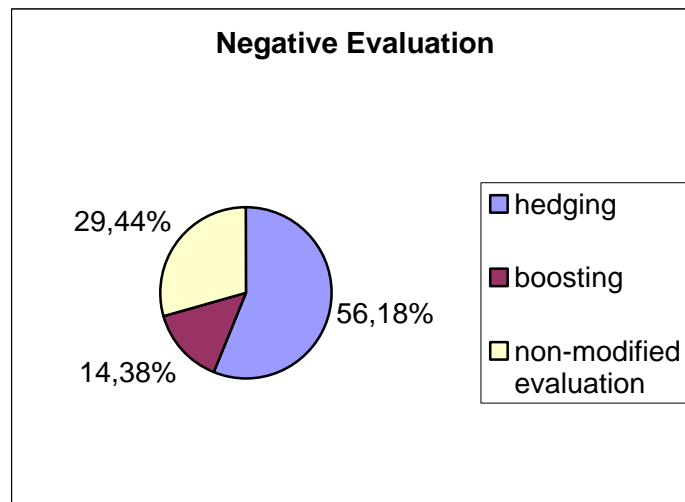


Figure 17. Total percentage of strategies with hedging and boosting across negative evaluation in the 'response' article

As can be seen, hedged criticism represents the highest percentage within negative critical comment (56.18%). The fact that criticism is often hedged reflects a characteristic feature of 'response' articles, since direct criticism is considered to be a threatening choice in the context of written academic texts. It must also be stressed that that boosting is used in 14.38% of the occurrences, thus adding emphasis to critical comments. In addition, we also encounter evaluative choices that do not appear modified by either hedging or boosting in the surrounding context and reach the percentage of 29.44%. In this regard, the fact that most choices occur with some kind of modifier reflects the specific kind of interpersonal communication that is established in the 'response' article.

As far as positive evaluation is concerned, the total percentages of hedging and boosting used to qualify writers' choices are displayed in the following figure, (as well as the total percentage of non-modified comments):

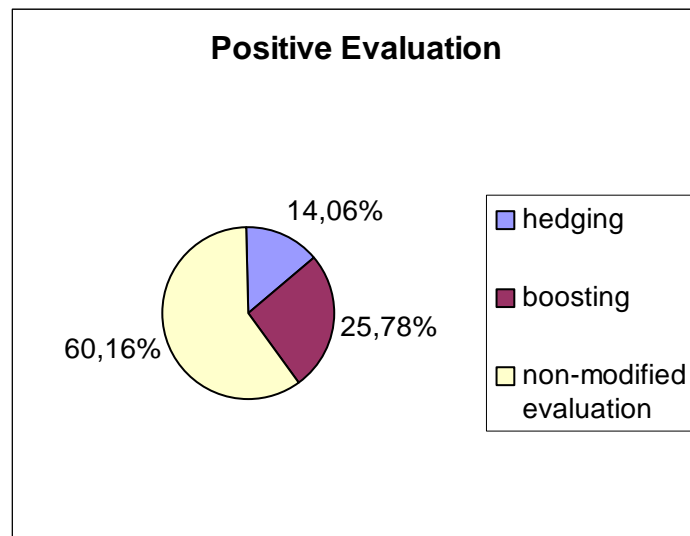


Figure 18. Total percentage of strategies with hedging and boosting across negative evaluation in the 'response' article

In this case, the percentage of evaluative comments complemented by boosting is greater than the amount of those comments occurring together with hedging, which would reflect the fact that positive comments are bound to raise less resistance. However, it must also be stressed that 'hedged criticism' is a frequently used choice by writers in the 'response' article, particularly when positive comment is juxtaposed to negative evaluation. With regard to the percentage of non-modified criticism, it is interesting to note that it is higher in the context of positive comment in comparison with negative evaluation (see Figure 17 above). From a qualitative point of view, as we pointed out above, this result would be in accordance with the fact that negative evaluation demands more complex argumentation choices.

Comparing our conclusions with previous research in connection with the role of hedging and boosting in critical discourse, we notice that some of our results are in line with previous findings. From a qualitative point of view, both resources are considered to provide a highly interactive dimension to academic discourse (Hyland, 1998a;

Hyland, 2000; Martín, 2003b; Oliver, 2004; Saz, 2001). With regard to different disciplines, research suggests that humanities and social sciences contain about two and a half times as many hedging and boosting devices than papers in scientific fields of research (Hyland, 1998c; Hyland and Tse, 2004). Furthermore, particularly in the field of applied linguistics, research shows that the use of hedges and boosters is frequently related to argumentative discourse genres in contrast to traditional research articles (Hyland, 2000, Hyland and Tse, 2004). Along these lines, our results lead to the conclusion that the use of hedges and boosters is related to a great extent to the controversial character of 'response' articles. Drawing on the above-mentioned research, our findings suggest that hedging and boosting resources form part of a set of accepted standards in order to convey evaluation on another colleague's work. Furthermore, in contrast to a view of academic discourse as a form deprived of any personal value, these interactional devices also contribute to provide a personal discourse tone.

Considering the incidence of both interactional features, research shows that mitigation exceeds emphasis in genres such as research articles (Hyland, 1998a), postgraduate dissertations (Hyland and Tse, 2004), textbooks or scientific letters (Hyland, 2000). Sharing this view, we also find that hedging is employed to a greater extent than boosting in the 'response' article<sup>116</sup>. However, it should be noted that, in contrast to the above-mentioned studies (where percentages of use are computed over the total number of words in the text), our work deals with the use of hedges and boosters across positive and negative evaluation strategies. With regard to the distribution of these interactional devices and as far as negative comments are concerned, the results of our analysis lead to the conclusion that hedged criticism is

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<sup>116</sup> On the whole, taking into account negative and positive evaluation, the total percentage of hedged strategies reaches 70.24% in contrast to 40.16% of strategies that appear with boosting.

preferred to unhedged negative comments in the 'response' article. In this sense, our findings support the results obtained by previous research studies (Hyland, 2000; Salager-Meyer and Ariza, 2003; Saz, 2001). In addition to this, despite the greater tendency of hedging to combine with negative evaluation, it is worth noting that this resource also occurs in statements of praise in the 'response' article. As suggested by previous research (Hyland, 2000; Hyland F. and Hyland K., 2001), 'hedged praise' can appear in critical discourse to signal partial agreement, particularly when it is used to balance negative comment. In agreement with this view, our analysis stresses the high incidence of 'hedged praise' in paired-patterns. In this respect, our study expands on the incidence of hedges and the purposes they accomplish when praise occurs as an independent strategy or within a paired-pattern. A further point of interest in relation to criticism and the use of hedging devices concerns the distinction between lexicogrammatical and strategic hedging (realised by means of paired-patterns). In this respect, our findings suggest that strategic hedging is a characteristic feature of evaluative discourse in the 'response' article and that both types of resources may be used in combination. As previous research pointed out (Bloch, 2003; Gea, 2000; Hyland, 2000; Hyland, F. and Hyland K., 2001), the tendency to subordinate the use of praise to criticism gives rise to more balanced and less damaging comments within critical academic discourse.

A further issue of concern has to do with the incidence and role of boosters in critical discourse. Our study points out that boosting modifies mainly positive comments and allows the writer to present critical comments in an assertive way. In this respect, previous research (Hyland, 1998c; 2000; Swales, 2004b) also suggests that intensifiers tend to be found with positive evaluation. However, it must be stressed that boosters also appear in the 'response' article in order to emphasise a divergence of

views or opinions. According to Hunston (2005), this choice represents a challenging option for the writer, bearing in mind that written academic discourse favours forms that convey collegial respect for other authors' views. On the whole, our findings point out that a complex interplay of features needs to be taken into account in order to understand writers' linguistic and strategic choices. Thus, in addition to the writer's personal preferences, both the discourse context and the conventions within a specific academic community are seen to play a central role.

Finally, from a methodological point of view, our study differs from previous ones that have analysed the different types of hedging and boosting devices in academic discourse. Some studies have dealt with the typology of hedging devices found in different academic genres (Fortanet *et al.*, 2001; Martin, 2003b; Posteguillo and Piqué, 2004; Saz, 2001) as well as the frequency of use of these devices (Hyland, 1998a; Hyland and Tse, 2004; Salager-Meyer and Ariza, 2003<sup>117</sup>). However, few studies have attempted to relate these resources to positive and negative contexts of evaluation from an empirical point of view (Bloch, 2003; Hyland, 2000; Hyland, F. and Hyland, K., 2001). In addition, whereas research (Burgess and Fagan, 2002; Martín and Burgess, 2004) has widely dealt with the essential role of hedges and the qualitative variations they introduce, research on boosters has been more limited (Hinkel, 2005; Mendiluce and Hernández, 2005). As a development of these views, we foreground the role of hedging whenever a delicate encounter with a target author is produced and expand on the study of boosters across several evaluative contexts, from a qualitative as well as a quantitative point of view. Finally, it must also be noted that it is difficult to establish any comparisons with previous works because of methodological differences in the

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<sup>117</sup> As pointed out above, hedges were identified by means of contextual analysis and the percentages of use were computed over the total number of words in the text.



design of the investigations and the fact that they deal with genres different from the ‘response’ article.

### **5.3 Results and discussion concerning writer-mediation and stance bundles conveying evaluation**

Our third research question focuses on how writers vary their commitment to the message using first person stance markers, which reflect a wide range of attitudinal and epistemic nuances. For the purposes of our research, our aim is to analyse whether there are certain types of recurrent bundles that allow the writer to introduce critical comments in a personal and subjective way or express different degrees of commitment to the points of view offered by the reviewed author.

#### **5.3.1. Research Question 3**

Our goal here is to focus on the different types of personal stance bundles that occur in the ‘response’ article to convey the writer’s stance and evaluation. The way in which the writer’s presence is introduced in discourse is regarded as an essential issue in order to present his/ her critical comments appropriately and in a persuasive way. From a lexico-grammatical point of view, we have concentrated on those person markers that refer explicitly to the writer of the article. These references include personal pronouns (e.g. ‘I agree...’ or ‘I think...’) and possessive adjectives (e.g. ‘...in my view’). In both cases, they contribute to provide a personal perspective in relation to evaluation. The following figure displays the distribution of both types of markers in the ‘response’ article:

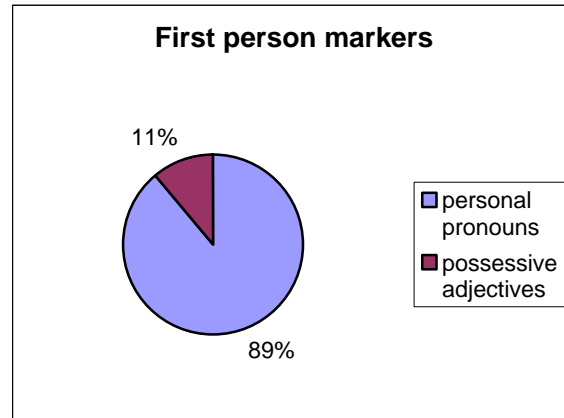


Figure 19. First person markers within writers' evaluative stance bundles

It must be noted that first person pronouns occur more frequently than possessive adjectives across the range of strategies found in our corpus. However, both types of markers are found distributed across the main rhetorical choices encountered, as the table below shows:

Table 18. Distribution of first person markers across the evaluation strategies encountered in our corpus

<i>First person Markers</i>	<b>within praise</b>	<b>within criticism</b>	<b>within paired patterns</b>
820	106	396	318

Apart from this, from a qualitative point of view, first person markers such as 'I' or 'We' are used in combination with a wide variety of verbal phrases to convey critical comments. The following table shows the frequency of the different types of 'writer stance bundles' that occur in our corpus<sup>118</sup>:

<sup>118</sup> For a classification of these choices see Section 4.4.1 above.

Table 19. Total number of writer stance bundles occurring in our corpus

<i>Writer's mediation</i>	<i>Total</i>
<b><i>Attitudinal stance bundles (personalisation A)</i></b>	<b>336</b>
A1- Subject + attitudinal verb/ idiomatic phrase	176
A2- Subject + affective verb	19
A3- Subject + negative verbal phrase	7
A4- Subject + modal verbal phrase	6
A5- Subject + negation + modal verb	15
A6- Subject + copula + compliment/ affective compl.	43
A7- Metadiscoursal framing + verbal phrase	7
A8-Attitudinal noun phrase	63
<b><i>Opinion stance bundles (personalisation B)</i></b>	<b>207</b>
B1- Subject + opinion verb/ idiomatic phrase	122
B2- Subject + opinion affective verb	6
B3- Subject + negative opinion verbal phrase	30
B4- Subject + modal verbal phrase	3
B5- Subject + negation + modal verb	7
B6- Metadiscoursal framing + verbal phrase	9
B7- Opinion noun phrase	30
<b><i>Epistemic stance bundles (personalisation C)</i></b>	<b>32</b>
C1- Subject + epistemic verbal phrase	8
C2- Subject + negative epistemic verbal phrase	17
C3- Subject + verb + complement	7
<b><i>Discoursal stance bundles (personalisation D)</i></b>	<b>154</b>
D1- Subject + discoursal verbal phrase	126
D2- Subject + modal discoursal verbal phrase	25
D3- Subject + affective discourse verb	3

As can be seen, the stance bundles used by the writer in the 'response' article are varied and correspond mainly to four basic types: 'attitudinal', 'opinion', 'epistemic' and 'discoursal' bundles. The following figure shows the total percentages of occurrence of each type:

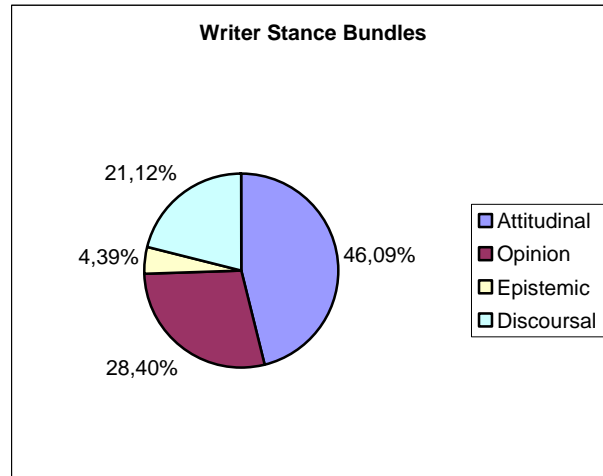


Figure 20. Percentages of occurrence of the different types of writer stance bundles

As regards the range of bundles found in our corpus, ‘attitudinal’ and ‘opinion’ stance bundles constitute the most frequently occurring types (reaching 74.49% of the total). Following in frequency, ‘discourse’ bundles are also widely used and, finally, stance bundles introducing ‘epistemic’ values. As a result, a personal and subjective criticism is offered in relation to the arguments and points of view that are being reviewed.

As far as the range of markers that modify the basic bundle types is concerned, the occurrence of negation, modal verbs (conveying either epistemic or deontic modality) and affective markers, all contribute to confer a peculiar evaluative tone on discourse. The following table shows the total occurrences of each of these features:

Table 20. Total number of stance bundles modified by negation, modality and affective markers

<i>First person stance bundles</i>	Negation <sup>119</sup>	Modality	Affective markers
	76 (10.42%)	95 (13.03%)	60 (8.23%)

<sup>119</sup> There are 22 occurrences (3%) out of the total that include negation and modality together.

Concerning negation, we regard it as an engagement feature that conveys the rhetorical potential of negotiating convergence or divergence from other views. With regard to the distribution of negation, the following table shows its occurrence across different types of stance bundles, as shown below:

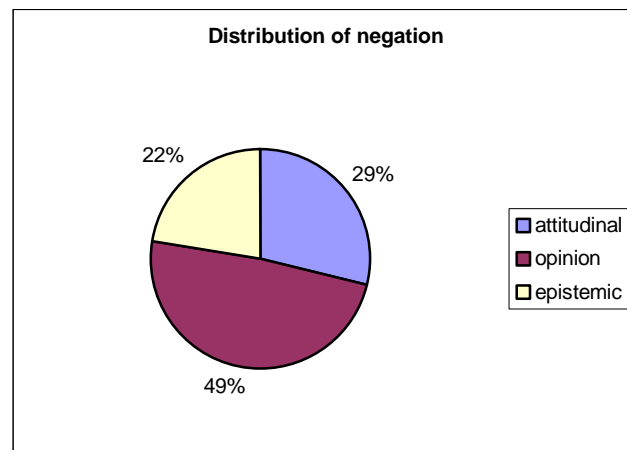


Figure 21. Distribution of negation across first person stance bundles

First of all, the writer's stance bundles classified as 'opinion stance bundles' are the ones that include negation more frequently, followed by attitudinal and epistemic stance bundles<sup>120</sup>. From a qualitative point of view, whereas in attitudinal bundles negation is mainly used to express dissatisfaction with notions put forward by other scholars (e.g. 'I do not advocate/ agree...'), in opinion bundles, it conveys differences of opinion (e.g. 'I do not think that...'), thus helping to delimit the writer's own position. In addition, negation also forms part of a number of epistemic expressions (e.g. 'I am not sure...'/ 'I don't know...'), which contribute to show the writer's degree of commitment. It must be stressed then that the interpretation of negation needs to be

<sup>120</sup> It should be noted that negation can also appear with 'discourse' verbs (as in 'I did not suggest...'). However, its function is not evaluative in this context and thus these uses were excluded from our study.

considered within its actual discourse context<sup>121</sup>. Similarly, when negation appears with modality, it often conveys an emphatic tone that may be interpreted in a positive or negative sense depending on the discourse context (as ‘I couldn’t agree more...’ or ‘I cannot accept...’).

As regards modality, the presence of modal verbs complementing personal stance bundles is intended to qualify their evaluative meaning. As suggested by Posteguillo and Piqué (2004), stance bundles can include ‘epistemic’ or ‘deontic’ modal verbs<sup>122</sup>. The figure below shows the distribution of both types of modality within the writer stance bundles found in our corpus:

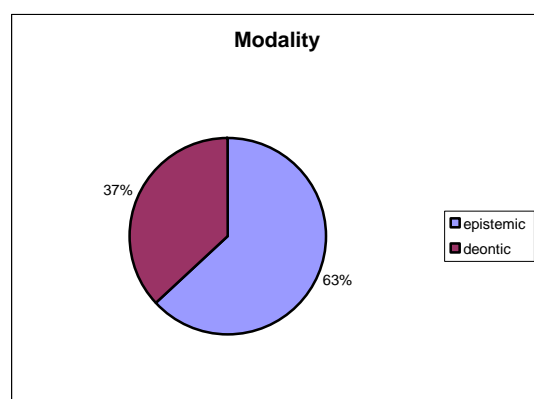


Figure 22. Distribution of modality across first person stance bundles

As regards the incidence of both types of modality, epistemic modality is more extensively used, although deontic values also have a notable occurrence. From a qualitative point of view, modality is seen to introduce critical comments in a mitigated

<sup>121</sup> In this regard, the combination of negation and an attitudinal verb that conveys a negative meaning conveys a meaning of mitigation or partial agreement.

<sup>122</sup> According to Posteguillo and Piqué (2004), the occurrence of this type of modality is closely linked to the type of discourse and field of research involved.

way (e.g. ‘I may agree to a certain extent’ or ‘I would argue that...’). In addition, it may also convey a meaning of obligation (e.g. ‘I must say I suspect...’)<sup>123</sup>.

Developing further on the expression of critical comment, we are also concerned with ‘affective’ stance bundles that show the writer’s personal feelings (e.g. ‘I’m afraid...’ or ‘I’m sad...’). As shown in Table 19 above, the amount of bundles including affective language amounts to 8.3% of the total<sup>124</sup>. It is noticeable that the incidence of ‘affective’ meanings varies across the different types of bundles identified in the ‘response’ article. The following chart shows the distribution of this feature across the different types of stance bundles encountered in our corpus:

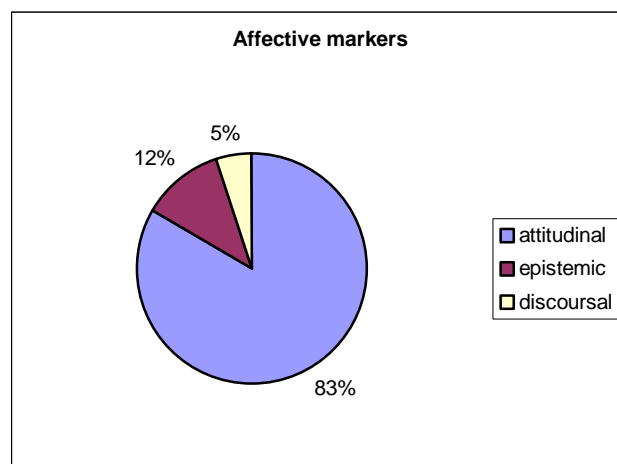


Figure 23. Distribution of affective markers across first person stance bundles

Finally, we also examine the relation between evaluation and tense, as critical comments in our corpus are seen to include verbal phrases mainly in the present tense. Nevertheless, a wide variety of tenses appear in the ‘response’ article, as the following table shows:

<sup>123</sup> It is also interesting to note that the range of meanings introduced by modal verbs can also be reinforced by the presence of other hedging or boosting devices (such as ‘possibly’ or ‘certainly’) in the surrounding context.

<sup>124</sup> This percentage corresponds to the 28 occurrences observed.

Table 21. Frequency of the different tenses encountered within first person stance bundle

TENSES	Number of occurrences	% of all
Present	558	68.04%
Present continuous	7	0.85 %
Past	43	5.24%
Past Perfect	3	0.36%
Present perfect	16	1.95%
Conditional	96	11.70%
Perfect conditional	6	0.73%

As shown above, the present is the most frequently used tense, followed by the conditional and the past tense. From a qualitative point of view, the occurrence of conditional tenses is a consequence of the frequent use of modality, which is often employed in the 'response' article (as outlined above). Additionally, the evaluative past suggests a mixture of probability and respect concerning the views of the reviewed author. It should be noted that other less frequently used tenses include the present perfect, the present continuous, the perfect conditional and the past perfect.

A further aspect worth considering is related to the distribution of writer stance bundles in discourse, as their evaluative function may vary depending on whether they are found within a positive or a negative discourse context. In this respect, the purpose of writers' self-mentions may be reinforced the effect of other resources such as hedging or boosting that may appear within the surrounding discourse context. The following table shows the distribution of hedging and boosting resources when they are used alongside writer stance bundles across different discourse contexts:



Table 22. Total occurrence of hedging and boosting across evaluation strategies containing explicit writer stance bundles

Writer stance Bundles	Hedging	Boosting
Within Praise	17	28
Within Criticism	180	70
Within Paired-patterns	125	44

It is interesting to observe that, whereas hedging seems to be more frequent when writer stance bundles occur within the contexts of criticism and paired-patterns, boosting is most commonly employed when self-mentions occur within praise. In order to evaluate the degree of dependency between these qualitative variables, a chi-square test was performed with the following result:

Table 23. Chi-square correlation between type of modifying device and type of strategy containing writer stance bundles

Chi-square	Df	p-value
23.64	2	0,000

Because the p-value is less than 0.01, the correlation between hedging and boosting used alongside writer stance bundles and the different strategic contexts where they occur is significant at 99% level of confidence<sup>125</sup>. As a result, our results suggest that the preferences in the way writers choose to make their presence explicit in the ‘response’ article vary across different rhetorical patterns. In line with previous

<sup>125</sup> This finding parallels some of the results we obtained for Research Question 2, where we found a significant correlation between different types of complements and strategies.

research findings (Hyland, 2000; Martín, 1993a; Saz, 2001), 'self-mentions' are seen to soften the force of criticism or, on the contrary, to mark certainty. Thus, our analysis shows that the way in which interpersonal meanings of judgement and assertion are conveyed form part of a set of conventions shared by the members of a specific academic community.

With regard to previous research, some of our results support earlier studies that distinguish among different types of evaluative stance bundles (Artiga, 2006; Barbieri and Biber, 2007; Biber *et al.*, 2004; Fortanet, 2004b; Harwood, 2005; Martínez, 2005, Thompson and Ye, 1991)<sup>126</sup>. Drawing on these views, our analysis extends the study of personal stance expressions by focusing on bundles that convey mainly attitudinal, opinion and epistemic values. In addition to the characterisation of stance bundles, we are also concerned with the role of features such as negation, modality and tense that qualify their evaluative meanings.

As regards the role of features such as negation, modality and tense, our results support earlier findings. First of all, we find that negation is used to delimit the writer's position and show divergence from other views in the 'response' article (Hunston, 2005; Thompson and Ye, 1991; Webber, 2004). Second, the occurrence of modality is seen to be a useful rhetorical tool that occurs within different types of writer stance bundles and produces varied linguistic configurations in critical discourse (as pointed out by Hyland, 2000 and Thompson and Ye, 1991). With regard to the 'response' article, although Hunston (2005) deals with the role of negation and modality in stance bundles, the results offered remain to be tested from an empirical point of view<sup>127</sup>. As to the role played by affective markers to convey writer's stance, our findings add to

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<sup>126</sup> Some of these studies (Artiga, 2006; Fortanet, 2004b) focus on spoken academic genres.

<sup>127</sup> It should also be noted that most of the research works mentioned above deal with genres that differ from ours.

previous research, thereby stressing its central role in order to confer a personal and subjective tone on critical discourse (Bloch, 2003; Fortanet, 2004; Hunston, 2005). Thus, against the traditionally impersonal character associated with academic writing, our findings show that in the genre of the ‘response’ article, writers do not only convey their personal opinions about a specific work but also use affective expressions that show their feelings. Additionally, concerning tense and its relation to evaluation, the frequent use of the present tense is pointed out, drawing on previous work on written academic discourse (Gea, 2000; Luzón, 1996).

Finally, regarding the writer’s degree of commitment signalled by stance bundles, our findings support research views that regard them within a continuum of choices that may range from direct to subtle expressions (Fortanet, 2004b; Hyland, 2000; Martín, 2003b; Martín and Burgess, 2004; Saz, 2001). Developing further on this issue, our work goes one step further and examines writer stance bundles that occur alongside hedging and boosting devices<sup>128</sup>. In this regard, our findings contribute to explain the ways in which these frequently occurring lexical phrases may be used to tone down or emphasise evaluation in the ‘response’ article.

#### **5.4 Results and discussion concerning explicit personal references to the author within the ‘response’ article**

Our fourth research question focuses on the interaction between the writer of a ‘response’ article and the author that initiates the interaction. Here, we are interested in studying those cases where evaluative bundles contain explicit references to the author, either by means of third person personal pronouns (such as ‘he’, ‘she’, ‘they’) or possessive adjectives (‘his’, ‘her’, ‘their’). Additionally, we extend our research to

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<sup>128</sup> For instance ‘I might agree...’ or ‘I do agree...’.

consider the ways in which references to the author may be qualified by other elements such as hedging, boosting or writer-mediation bundles (such as ‘I believe’ or ‘in my opinion...’).

#### 5.4.1 Research Question 4

As several researchers note (Hyland, 2000; Martín and Burgess, 2004; Thompson and Ye, 1991), the use of explicit references to the author as well as their varying linguistic configurations shows how writers create a dialogic framework of interaction. Explicit references to the author may appear in verbal factive and counter-factive bundles (as in ‘they point out correctly that...’ or ‘he downplays the importance...’). In addition, noun phrases may also contain possessive adjectives that provide a further choice to refer explicitly to the author in the ‘response’ article (as in ‘their strong point is...’ or ‘...their use of the term is highly confusing...’)<sup>129</sup>. The following figure shows the total number of references to the author that include personal pronouns and possessive adjectives:

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<sup>129</sup> There are also other ways of referring explicitly to the author, such as explicit naming, as in ‘I think Ramanathan and Atkinson are on shaky ground...’ or references to another author’s work, as in ‘Atkinson’s second sentence offers an important insight...’. However, in our work, we are only concerned with pronominal and possessive references to the author.

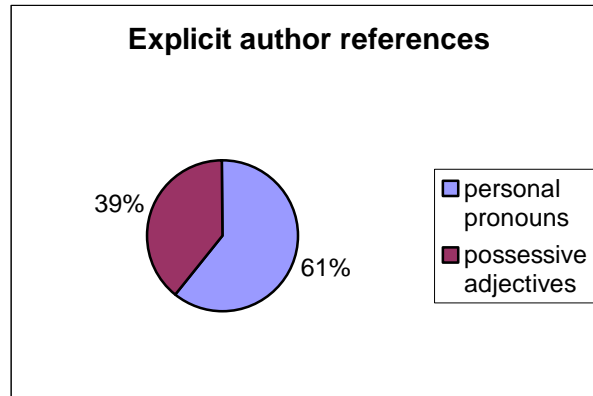


Figure 24. Total number of evaluative explicit references to the author by means of personal pronouns or possessive adjectives

As can be seen, the occurrence of possessive adjectives as explicit references to the reviewed author represents a lower proportion than that of references by means of personal pronouns. It should be noted that explicit author references are distributed across the main rhetorical choices encountered in the 'response' article, as the following table shows:

Table 24. Total number of references to the author within praise, criticism and paired patterns

<i>Explicit author references</i>	<b>within praise</b>	<b>within criticism</b>	<b>within paired-patterns</b>
406	26	269	111

From a qualitative point of view, the occurrence of evaluative bundles where the author is explicitly mentioned by means of a personal pronoun or a possessive adjective is a frequently occurring pattern within the 'response' article. Personal references to the author can occur within positive and negative evaluation (realised either as an individual strategy or a strategic paired-pattern). These explicit references that contain

person markers may refer forwards or backwards to the author of the original article as the evaluative thread develops.

Regarding the characterisation of bundles from a lexico-grammatical point of view, we consider factive and counterfactive stance bundles (in contrast to non-factive ones<sup>130</sup>), where the writer explicitly expresses evaluation focusing on the author of the originating article. As the following table shows, different types of verbal bundles are identified:

Table 25. Number of occurrences of factive and counter-factive author bundles in our corpus of 'response' articles

<b>Evaluative Author Bundles</b>	Total	288	% of all
<i>Factive</i>	40		13.89%
F1 (subject + evaluative verb/ idiomatic expression)	10		3.47%
F2 (subject + discourse verb)	17		5.90%
F3 (subject + research verb)	3		1.05%
F4 ((subject + be + complement)	10		3.47%
<i>Counter-factive</i>	248		86.11%
CF1 (subject + evaluative verb/ idiomatic expression)	67		23.26%
CF2 (subject + discourse verb)	64		22.22%
CF3 (subject+ research verb)	15		5.21%
CF4 (subject + negative verb)	56		19.45%
CF5 (subject + modal verb)	33		11.46%
CF6 (subject + be + complement)	13		4.51%

As shown above, it is significant that the number of counter-factive bundles is greater than that of factive ones. As far as our analysis is concerned, the role of factive

<sup>130</sup> The bundles we deal with represent evaluative writer choices in contrast to non-factive ones that only attribute a position to the original author.

and counter-factive bundles needs to be interpreted in relation to the evaluative function they accomplish within the genre of the 'response' article and the explicit dialogic framework that is established.

With regard to evaluative factive bundles, they may be realised by a variety of sequences. First of all, we find a third person pronoun, followed by an 'attitudinal' verb or expression (as in 'he succeeds in...') accounting for 3.47% of the occurrences. In addition, a 'discourse' verb (as in 'he shows a clear appreciation...') may also form part of the bundle and amounts to 5.90%. A small percentage of choices, 1.05%, is also realised by first person pronouns followed by verbs belonging to other categories such as 'research' verbs (e.g. '...the ideas she promotes clearly have worth...'). Finally, a combination of a copula and a complement (as in 'he is right...') is also possible and reaches 3.47%.

On the other hand, concerning counter-factive verbal bundles in our corpus, we find that they are frequently introduced by a third person pronoun, followed by an 'attitudinal' verb or expression (as in 'he misinterprets...') amounting to 23.26% of occurrences. In addition, bundles that include a 'discourse' verb (as in 'he introduces confusion...') occur in 22.22% of the cases, whereas bundles with verbs belonging to categories such as 'research' verbs (e.g. 'she has set up a false dichotomy...') reach a small percentage of 5.21%. Other choices also include the occurrence of negative verbal phrases (as in 'he does not explain...'), which represent 19.45% of the total. A notable percentage of author bundles is realised by a modal verbal phrase (such as 'they may have misinterpreted...') in 11.46 % of the occurrences. Concerning the range of values conveyed by modality, epistemic or deontic values are seen to be available possibilities, as the table below shows<sup>131</sup>:

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<sup>131</sup> See Posteguillo and Piqué (2004) on this distinction.

Table 26. Percentage of epistemic and deontic modal verbs in counter-factive bundles.

MODALITY	Total	% of all
Epistemic	20	76.92%
Deontic	6	23.07%

Although the proportion of modals conveying epistemic values is greater than those conveying deontic modality, it is interesting to note that both types of modality can be found in ‘response’ articles. In this regard, the distribution of modalised bundles needs to be interpreted bearing in mind their functional purpose. Hence, they may be intended to soften the critical comment (as in ‘he may misinterpret...’) or they may convey obligation, thus suggesting an alternative course of action (as in ‘they *should* be aware that their use of the term is highly confusing...’). Apart from this, a combination of a copula followed by a compliment (as in ‘he *was unable* to determine...’) may also occur in our corpus, amounting to 4.51% of occurrences.

Finally, the tense of the verbal phrases outlined above is also a significant feature to be taken into account with reference to evaluation. In this respect, our findings show that the present is the most widely used tense to express critical comment. The following table displays the variety of tenses found in our corpus, as well as their percentages of occurrence:



Table 27. Total number of occurrences of the different tenses used in explicit author evaluative bundles

<b>TENSES</b>	Number of occurrences	% of all
Present	210	72.91%
Conditional	25	8.68%
Perfect conditional	16	5.55%
Past	14	4.86%
Present Perfect	13	4.51%
Past perfect	5	1.73%
Present continuous	5	1.73%

As regards the variety of verbal tenses, the present simple accounts for 72.91% of occurrences, which suggests that this is the writer's preferred tense to convey evaluative meanings. Additionally, the conditional tense and the perfect conditional are often used to suggest other possibilities or alternatives (e.g. 'Ellis would have to compare what is acquired by early instructed learners...', 'Had he done so, he would have discovered..'). Following in frequency, the past tense and the present perfect are used. In the first case (e.g. 'I found problematic Jenkins' assumption...'), an additional layer of mitigation is provided, whereas in the second the immediacy of the interactional encounter is foregrounded (e.g. 'he has not been able to provide successful answers...'). In addition, the past perfect and the present continuous are also used to provide evaluation.

Developing further on the lexico-grammatical characterisation of bundles referring explicitly to the author, we also examine the context of occurrence in order to be able to gain a complete picture of how members of a discourse community introduce author references. Our goal is to examine how 'author bundles' may be influenced by contextual elements such hedges, boosters or the writer's self-mention within the

surrounding context. Based on recent research (Martín and Burgess, 2004), the presence of hedging elements (as in ‘he *possibly* misinterprets...’) or writer-mediation (as in ‘I *believe* his interpretation is misguided...’) is regarded to signal the writer’s desire to project a respectful discourse tone. Additionally, the presence of boosters (as in ‘he *certainly* shows a clear appreciation...’) is found to convey assertion and mark emphasis. Furthermore, co-occurring features may combine in the same context (as in ‘*some* of the ideas she promotes *clearly* have worth...’), thus suggesting that a continuum of choices may influence how evaluation is conveyed.

Following from here and focusing specifically on the occurrence of hedging and boosting devices that accompany evaluative author explicit references, it can be seen that their occurrences may vary across different types of strategies encountered in the ‘response’ article:

Table 28. Total occurrences of hedging and boosting across evaluation strategies containing explicit author references

<b>Explicit author references</b>	<b>Hedging</b>	<b>Boosting</b>
within praise	5	14
within criticism	83	32
within paired-patterns	35	21

As shown above, whereas boosting seems to accompany explicit author references to a higher extent within praise, hedging seems to be more frequent when author references appear within negative evaluation. In order to see whether this correlation of values may be significant or not, we performed a chi-square test with the following result:

Table 29. Chi-square correlation between type of modifying device and type of strategy containing explicit author references

Chi-square	Df	p-value
15.20	2	0.005

Since the p-value is less than 0.01, this result suggests that the relation between the different strategies containing explicit author references and the devices of hedging and boosting is one of dependency at the 99% confidence level<sup>132</sup>. From a quantitative and qualitative point of view, our findings reveal that the use of linguistic features varies across different rhetorical patterns.

Second, we focus on writer-mediation since it may also occur alongside explicit references to the author<sup>133</sup>. With reference to its discourse role, ‘self-mention’ contributes to introduce a personal and subjective voice, thus explicitly marking the writer’s commitment to an idea. The following table shows the number of explicit author references (writer-mediated and non-mediated) as well as their distribution throughout the main rhetorical discourse choices found in our corpus of ‘response’ articles:

<sup>132</sup> This result parallels some of the conclusions we obtained when dealing with the occurrences of hedging and boosting and the different types of strategies encountered in the ‘response’ article (See Research Question 2).

<sup>133</sup> See Section 4.4.1 for a detailed description of ‘writer-mediation’ or ‘self-mention’.

Table 30. Total number of explicit references to the author modified by writer-mediation throughout the different rhetorical patterns encountered in the 'response' article

Explicit author references		Writer-mediated	Non-writer mediated
Positive evaluation	within praise	5 (19.23 %)	21 (80.76%)
Negative evaluation	within criticism	55 (20.44%)	214 (79.55%)
	within paired-patterns	33 (29.72%)	78 (70.27%)

As the table above shows, the presence of writer-mediation in connection with explicit references to the author varies according to the discourse context. Concerning positive evaluation, the number of non writer-mediated strategies is greater than that of writer-mediated ones (80.76% in contrast to 19.23%). This result could be due to the fact that, when writers present positive comments direct references to the target author are not felt as threatening. Furthermore, when writer mediation occurs, it introduces a meaning of emphasis within the context of approval. On the other hand, regarding explicit author references within negative evaluation, it is interesting to point out that writer-mediation modifies these references in 20.44% of the occurrences (within criticism as an independent strategy) and 29.72% within paired-patterns. It must also be noted that these percentages represent a low proportion of explicit author references. Hence, personal references to the author seem to be rather direct as far as written academic discourse is concerned. However, as we shall see below, in order to evaluate the degree of directness of personal references to the author, we also need to take into account the use of hedging devices. On the whole, comparing the extent to which writer-mediation modifies positive and negative evaluation respectively, the percentage of writer-mediated evaluation is found to be slightly higher within negative comment.

Similarly, as far as paired-patterns are concerned, we also find a different distribution of writer-mediation depending on whether it occurs within the positive or negative part of the pair. Thus, the sub-strategies coming from a more positive end of the evaluation continuum (such as praise (P), concession (CS), downtoning comment (DC), question (Q) and suggestion (S)), contain a lower percentage of occurrences of writer-mediation:

*Table 31. Distribution of writer-mediation in combination with explicit author references throughout the different types of paired patterns*

Explicit author references		Writer mediation
Within paired-patterns <sup>134</sup>	P, CS, DC, Q/S (as a sub-strategy)	11 (10.67%)
	Criticism (as a sub-strategy)	21 (20.38%)

Based above considerations, we can suggest that the occurrence of writer-mediation varies depending on the context of use and it seems to be an especially useful strategy to introduce critical comments as signalling one possibility among others.

Finally, in order to have a complete picture of how specific mentions to the author are introduced in the 'response' article, we must also take into account the co-occurrence of writer-mediation and devices such as hedging and boosting, which may modify explicit author references. The combinations that occur concerning positive and negative evaluation are shown below:

<sup>134</sup> The paired-patterns dealt with include combinations of praise and criticism, concession and criticism, downtoning comments and questions or suggestions with criticism.

Table 32. Total number of hedging and boosting devices within positive evaluation with regard to writer-mediated and non-writer mediated explicit author references.

Explicit author references	Writer mediated		Non-writer mediated	
within positive evaluation	5 (19.23%)	With hedging (1)	21 (80.76%)	With hedging (3)
		With boosting (2)		With boosting (11)
		With hedging/ boosting (1)		With hedging/ boosting (-)

As regards explicit author references within positive evaluation, writer-mediated and non-mediated occurrences also combine with hedging and boosting, with boosting occurring more frequently than hedging. From a qualitative point of view, when writer-mediation and boosting appear within a positive evaluation context, ‘self-mention’ contributes to provide emphasis (as in ‘I think he certainly has a strong point...’). However, when writer-mediation combines with hedging it helps to limit praise (as in ‘I largely agree with his proposal...’). Thus, from a qualitative point of view, the combination of rhetorical devices in certain contexts may reinforce the effect of individual devices. In addition, it should also be noted that within positive evaluation contexts, the most frequently occurring choices are found to be non-writer-mediated author bundles accompanied by boosting.

As far as negative evaluation is concerned, we also need to take into account that author references may be modified by writer-mediation in combination with hedging (e.g. I think they may have misinterpreted...’) or boosting resources (I certainly cannot agree with their proposal...’). The combination of these choices leads us to consider the

extent to which explicit author references are realised in a more or less direct way in the 'response' article. The following table shows the combinations that are encountered with regard to negative evaluation:

Table 33. Total number of hedging and boosting devices modifying writer-mediated and non-writer-mediated explicit author references across criticism

Explicit author references	Writer-mediated		Non-writer-mediated	
within criticism	55 (20.44%)	With hedging (23)	214 (79.55%)	With hedging (57)
		With boosting (12)		With boosting (17)
		With hedging/ Boosting (1)		With hedging/ Boosting (2)
within paired-patterns	33 (29.72%)	With hedging (16)	78 (70.27%)	With hedging (17)
		With boosting (6)		With boosting (13)
		With hedging/ boosting (1)		With hedging/ boosting (1)

As shown above, hedging and boosting resources combine with writer-mediated and non-mediated evaluation. It is significant to consider that when writers present negative comments the occurrence of hedging is greater than that of boosting, this tendency being the opposite to the one observed regarding positive evaluation. From a

functional point of view, when hedging is used alongside writer-mediation the intention is for both devices to have a mitigating purpose. With reference to the occurrence of these devices in connection with the degree of directness the writer employs, we can establish (based on the data displayed above) a continuum of choices that may be represented as follows:

*Table 34. Occurrences of explicit author references in combination with writer-mediation and/or hedging within negative evaluation*

Writer-mediated with hedging	Writer-mediated without hedging	Non-writer-mediated with hedging	Non-writer-mediated without hedging
41 (10.79%)	47 (12.37%)	77 (20.27%)	215 (56.57%)

The introduction of explicit author references may be seen as being situated along a continuum, where at one end mitigation devices appear in combination with writer-mediation (e.g. ‘I think he may misinterpret’) and at the other end, bare author bundles occur (e.g. ‘he disregards’) Thus, the percentage of occurrences that include writer-mediation and/ or hedging devices reaches 43.43% of the total, whereas occurrences without any kind of mitigation devices or writer-mediation correspond to 56’57%. As this result shows, this percentage reflects a significant number of direct author references, which endow the ‘response’ article with a marked and controversial character. Thus, depending on the discourse context, the writer can select specific modifiers that give rise to a continuum of evaluative choices.

As far as boosting is concerned and with regard to negative evaluation, varied linguistic configurations can be observed, as shown in the following table:



Table 35. Occurrences of explicit author references in combination with writer-mediation and/or boosting within negative evaluation

Writer-mediated without boosting	Writer-mediated with boosting	Non writer-mediated with boosting	Non writer-mediated without boosting
68 (17.89 %)	20 (5.26%)	33 (8.69%)	259 (68.16%)

Regarding the use of boosting, it is significant to note that the percentage of bundles where this device occurs amounts to 13.95% of author bundles (in contrast to 86.05% where it does not appear). The fact that counter-factive author references include boosting resources (e.g. ‘he certainly disregards...’) is considered to be a very direct and threatening choice within written academic discourse and thus this is a less frequently employed choice. As regards choices where boosting is not employed, 17.89% of occurrences are introduced by means of ‘self-mentions’, which contribute to introduce criticism in a mitigated way. Finally, as the table shows, bare author bundles constitute the most commonly used choices (68.16%).

With regard to previous research, some of our results are in line with previous studies that deal with the interactional framework created by explicit references to the author who is the target of the evaluation (Burgess and Fagan, 2002; Hyland, 2000; Thompson and Ye, 1991). From a semantic and functional point of view, drawing on Hyland (2000) and Thompson and Ye (1991), we find two types of evaluative author bundles that convey positive and negative stance (in contrast to non-factive bundles). Within this context, we are concerned about the characterisation, variety and frequency of these types of bundles. In this regard, our analysis expands on the study of factive and counter-factive author bundles within the ‘response’ article, showing that

evaluative critical bundles aimed at a specific author constitute conventional discourse choices in the 'response' article.

In connection with the incidence of author bundles in academic discourse, some of our results differ from those obtained in previous investigations. First of all, regarding the proportion of each type of evaluative bundles, Hyland's (2000) research with reference to academic attribution on papers, reveals that the proportion of factive bundles exceeded that of non-factive ones<sup>135</sup>. In contrast, our findings point to the opposite tendency (with 86.11 % of counter-factive occurrences in contrast to 13.89 % of factive ones). These quantitative differences give rise to qualitative ones and may be explained bearing in mind the different functional purposes that research and 'response' articles imply. Within this perspective, our results are in line with Hunston's (2005) study that compares a corpus of research papers to another one consisting of 'conflict' articles ('conflict' being the term used in her study to refer to 'response' articles). As Hunston (2005) points out, there are certain types of attribution that appear more frequently in the corpus of 'conflict' articles, especially cases where the verbs used explicitly indicate that the reported author's ideas are mistaken. In agreement with this suggestion, our findings show that these verbal phrases constitute frequent choices in the 'response' article. As a development of this, we expand on Hunston's (2005) conclusions by offering a quantitative analysis of the different types of evaluative bundles found in the 'response' article.

Apart from genre constraints, the specific field of study is also seen to influence the discourse choices employed by writers. Thus, Hyland (2000) found a greater presence of author bundles that are explicitly critical within humanities and social science

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<sup>135</sup> Thompson and Ye (1991) also stress the fact that counter-factive bundles are considered to be too blunt and thus they are rarely chosen for use by writers of academic papers.

papers. Similarly, our results would also support the fact that critical author bundles are common within the field of applied linguistics. In connection with this, Burgess and Fagan (2002) also point out that the study of author bundles in academic texts may help to gain a more precise picture of how intense academic criticism may seem within different disciplinary fields.

From a lexico-grammatical point of view, a further point of interest regards the use of modifiers such as negation and modality in connection with counter-factive bundles. In this respect, we agree with previous research (Hyland, 2000; Webber, 2004), which suggests that author bundles where negation is included offer an additional alternative to show disapproval with other colleagues' research<sup>136</sup>. In addition, our findings point out that the use of modality along counter-factive bundles implies that the author had not explained his ideas clearly or the writer had not been fully able to understand them (as suggested by Thompson and Ye, 1991). Apart from this, as regards verbal stance bundles, research relates the use of the present tense in discourse to the function of evaluation (Gea, 1998; Luzón, 1996). In sum, quantitative as well as qualitative findings show that the characterisation of author bundles is dependent on the role they accomplish, contextual discourse constraints and the conventional norms favoured in specific academic communities.

Additionally, concerning resources that influence the degree of directness conveyed by evaluation, several studies suggest that the damaging effect of counter-factive bundles may be downtoned by the use of hedges (Hyland, 2000; Thompson and Ye, 1991) or writer-mediation (Hyland, 2000; Martín and Burgess, 2004; Saz, 2001). Hence, criticism appears as the writer's individual opinion rather than an objective

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<sup>136</sup> As shown above, negation appears in 19.45% of bundles.

feature of the work under examination<sup>137</sup>. In this vein, our analysis also shows that writers use both hedging and writer-mediation in combination with author bundles as ways of mitigating negative evaluation comments. However, our analysis emphasises the fact that the incidence of evaluative author bundles without any kind of mitigating devices reaches a high percentage (a total of 56.57%). This result may be due to the interactive and controversial character of this kind of written academic discourse.

Finally, it should be noted that despite the fact that hedging is often linked to negative evaluation, our study shows that it may also be seen modifying factive bundles and, in this case, signalling limited approval. On the other hand, boosting may also occur in combination with counter-factive bundles, which gives rise to marked and direct discourse choices. In this respect, our results note that whereas boosting seems to accompany explicit author references to a higher extent within praise, hedging seems to occur more frequently alongside author bundles in negative contexts. Thus, the crucial role of context in relation to writers' evaluative resources is emphasised by our research.

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<sup>137</sup> The use of hedging resources is also dependent on cultural background. Thus, Martín and Burgess (2004) show that non-writer-mediated criticism is generally modified by hedging in English abstracts, whereas the opposite trend is found regarding Spanish texts.

## **CONCLUSION**



The aim of the present study was to analyse praise and criticism as rhetorical evaluation strategies that reflect the writer's stance in the 'response' article. Since the act of criticising peers demands an awareness of the most appropriate rhetorical choices, the study of the preferred practices within a given discipline becomes crucial in order to understand the complex social interactions created in specific academic genres. Since the 'response' article has hardly been researched, our goal was to throw some light on the evaluative resources used by writers, by drawing on previous research that analysed the expression of evaluation within a variety of critical genres such as research papers (Luzón, 1996; Salager-Meyer *et al.*, 2003; Burgess and Fagan, 2002), book reviews (Motta-Roth, 1998; Gea, 2000; Hyland, 2000), letters to the editor (Bloch, 2003; Magnet and Carnet, 2006) or research article abstracts (Hyland and Tse, 2005; Martín, 2003a; Martín and Burgess, 2004). In addition, we aimed to analyse the role of the 'response' article as a means of interaction among the members of a specific academic community. More specifically, we were interested in expanding our knowledge on the rhetorical strategies employed in academic criticism. In this regard, we also aimed to examine the extent to which devices such as taking hedging, boosting or the use of specific writer stance bundles contributed to introduce qualitative variations regarding critical comments.

Based on previous research in the field and the motivations guiding our study, we formulated the following research questions:

*Research Question 1:* Is there a variety of rhetorical strategies used to convey evaluation in the 'response' article? If so, do they reflect any distinct orientations in academic discourse? (Bloch, 2003; Gea, 2000; Luzón, 1998; Motta-Roth, 1998; Hyland, 2000; Suárez and Moreno, 2006, 2008).

*Research Question 2:* Does evaluation appear together with any modifiers in the ‘response’ article? If so, how is it realised? (Fortanet *et al.*, 2001; Hyland, 2000; Martín, 2003; Martín and Burgess, 2004; Mendiluce and Hernández, 2005; Saz, 2001).

*Research Question 3:* As far as the writer-mediation dimension is concerned, are there different types of stance bundles used to carry out evaluation? If so, how are they realised? (Biber *et al.*, 2004 ; Cortés, 2004 ; Fortanet, 2004b).

*Research Question 4:* As far as the interaction between the writer of the article and the reviewed author is concerned, do explicit references to the author appear? If so, do they appear alongside writer-mediation and/ or hedging devices? (Burgess and Fagan, 2002; Martín and Burgess, 2004).

In relation to our first research question, we examined the strategies that writers used to express their position with regard to the work of a fellow researcher. In this regard, our findings showed that evaluative comments were spread along a continuum of evaluation comprising positive and negative orientations in the ‘response’ article. With respect to their discourse purpose, praise occurred in our corpus as a means of conveying approval, agreement or admiration in relation to another author’s work, thus contributing to create a dialogic framework of solidarity. On the other hand, criticism strategies were widely used and mainly pointed out weak points with reference to another colleague’s work, signalled disagreement or misalignment of positions and points of view. As regards the range of choices employed by writers, our analysis also pointed out that rhetorical strategies vary with regard to degrees of explicitness and



directness. Hence, rhetorical choices such as questions or suggestions were used to present critical comments in an implicit way. In addition, the use of hedges, as we shall see below, is also seen to influence the writer's degree of commitment to another author's views. Apart from this, from a discursal point of view, our analysis suggested that negative comments can occur as independent strategies or in combination with other rhetorical choices. In this regard, combinations of positive and negative comments frequently occurred in our corpus as a way to present critical comments, while showing points of approval or convergence with the reviewed author. As regards the characterisation of these pairs, our findings extended previous research by dealing with a wide variety of paired-patterns (Bloch, 2003; Gea, 2000; Hyland, 2000; Motta-Roth, 1998). Additionally, from a discursal point of view, it should be noted that negative comment was seen to occur commonly in the second part of the pair, due to the fact that before providing evaluation that may be damaging, the writer preferred to frame it with other choices coming from the more positive end of the continuum.

As regards the frequency of the different rhetorical strategies, our findings showed that criticism strategies occurred more frequently than praise ones, in accordance with the critical role of the 'response' article. In addition, it should be noted that explicit criticism was the most commonly used strategy, followed by 'paired-patterns', where a balance of positive and negative evaluation is conveyed. In connection with these patterns, we found that the most frequent combinations were the ones where praise occurred together with criticism, followed by combinations that included concessions or downtoning comments alongside criticism. Apart from this, our analysis revealed that the frequency of positive comment was similar when praise occurred as an independent strategy and as a sub-strategy within a paired-pattern, which reveals its relevant role as a mitigator of criticism. Finally, our study contributed to throw some

light on the strategies used by writers in a hardly researched genre, emphasising the relation between the strategies employed and the specific contexts of use.

Our second question examined the ways in which hedging and boosting may influence the evaluative meaning of the rhetorical strategies encountered in our corpus. First of all, we were concerned with lexico-grammatical realisations of hedging and boosting. In this respect, our results showed that whereas hedging devices tend to be used alongside criticism to soften the damage caused by negative comments, boosting tends to appear in the context of positive evaluation, thereby contributing to signal the writer's solidarity and commitment. More specifically, our findings revealed that the variables type of strategy and type of modifying device correlated significantly. Thus, our analysis showed that certain combinations of resources were favoured in our corpus. However, we also point out that other choices were also found, albeit to a lesser extent. Hence, the occurrence of 'hedged praise' (when the writer wishes to show limited rather than genuine approval) or the use of boosting together with criticism (when the writer chooses to emphasise divergence of views), were also distinctive choices that conveyed the writer's personal attitude in the 'response' article. In the first case, the frequent occurrence of 'hedged' praise revealed that the presence of genuine praise is rather limited due to the controversial character of this kind of critical discourse. As regards the use of boosting in negative evaluation contexts, this choice was regarded as a marked one in academic discourse due to its threatening value.

Bearing the above findings in mind, a further issue of concern regards the distribution of lexico-grammatical hedging and boosting within the most widely used types of paired-patterns. In this respect, our results indicated that certain tendencies were favoured in relation to contexts where the strategies of praise, concession and downtoning comment appeared juxtaposed to criticism. First, with regard to hedging

devices employed within the sub-strategy of criticism, our findings supported previous results, which revealed that this resource was employed to a greater extent within negative comments. However, in contexts where sub-strategies belonging to the positive and negative ends of the evaluation continuum were juxtaposed, we noted a higher frequency of hedging resources on the more positive side of the critical comment. And more specifically, this strategic choice was especially relevant when praise occurred next to criticism. Hence, the tendency to use ‘hedged praise’ alongside criticism results from the writer’s need to show limited approval, while negative evaluation is being conveyed. Boosting, on the other hand, was mainly used on the more positive side of evaluation and conveyed emphasis on the part of the writer. Our analysis thus contributes to expand on the study of hedging and boosting by dealing with their role, frequency and distribution across different rhetorical patterns. From a qualitative point of view, our findings indicate that context exerts a great influence on the occurrence of rhetorical devices, apart from the writer’s personal preferences or the influence that favoured patterns and practices may have within different academic communities.

As a development of this, we also aimed to extend our analysis of hedging resources beyond lexico-grammatical choices. More specifically, we were concerned with the role of strategic hedging with regard to negative comments in the ‘response’ article, since a combination of positive and negative evaluation is seen to provide an additional choice that allows writers to deal with complex interactional encounters<sup>138</sup>. As regards the amount of hedged and non-hedged criticism, our findings revealed that the total percentage of hedged comments was higher than that of non-hedged ones. This finding implies that the use of hedging is favoured in the context of negative evaluation,

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<sup>138</sup> See Chapter 4 (Section 4.4.2) on hedging devices in written academic discourse with regard to lexico-grammatical (Hyland, 2000; Martín, 2003; Saz, 2001) and strategic choices (Bloch, 2003; Hyland, 2000).

as a consequence of the writer's wish to show respect for other researchers' views. It is also interesting to note that strategic and lexico-grammatical hedging can combine in academic discourse producing patterns that reinforce the effect of individual devices. Our conclusions thus extend previous research (Hyland, 2000; Swales, 2004b), which notes that the distribution and frequency of hedging resources may be explained as a result of the degree of challenge that commenting on other authors' articles involves and the writer's wish to show his/her point of view in an assertive way.

Our third research question examined the stance bundles used by the writer in the 'response' article and the extent to which they contributed to the marking of personal stance and commitment. Drawing on research by Biber *et al.* (2004) and Fortanet (2004b), we conclude that the genre of the 'response' article presents a wide variety of stance bundles that contribute to introduce critical comments in a personal, subjective and more or less committed way. In this regard, evaluative meanings were conveyed by means of four basic types of bundles identified: 'attitudinal', 'opinion', 'epistemic' and 'discoursal' stance expressions. As regards frequency, our results suggested that 'attitudinal' and 'opinion' stance bundles constitute the most commonly occurring types. In addition, we were also interested in analysing the range of markers that modified these main types of bundles such as the occurrence of modal verbs (either epistemic or deontic<sup>139</sup>), negation and affective markers. Apart from this, our analysis also considered evaluation and tense, pointing out that the present tense was used predominantly in the 'response' article, followed by other tenses such as the past tense and the conditional<sup>140</sup>. On this issue, our findings are in line with earlier research (Gea,

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<sup>139</sup> Our findings showed that, in agreement with Posteguillo and Piqué (2004), the epistemic modality was more extensively used.

<sup>140</sup> Other tenses used to a smaller extent included the present perfect, the present continuous, the perfect conditional and the past perfect.

1998; Luzón, 1996) that already stressed the relationship between tense and functional purpose in academic discourse.

A further aspect taken into account regards the context within which stance bundles were found with reference to resources such as hedging or boosting. Our results revealed that the use of writer stance bundles within the contexts of criticism or praise rhetorical strategies contribute (in combination with hedges or boosters) to soften the force of criticism or, on the contrary, to reinforce evaluation and mark certainty. Our analysis thus contributes to examine the stance bundles used by writers to express their personal opinions in the 'response' article, suggesting that the way in which writers express evaluation should be regarded as part of a set of conventions shared by the members of a specific academic community.

Our fourth research question focused on the interaction between the writer of a 'response' article and the reviewed author, who initiated the dialogic encounter. We were interested in examining evaluative bundles containing explicit references to the target author that included either personal pronouns or possessive adjectives. It must be noted that these type of bundles, which are considered to be marked choices in written academic discourse (Hyland, 2000; Thompson and Ye, 1991), are commonly used in the 'response' article due to the controversial character of this genre. From a functional and semantic point of view, we found 'factive' and 'counterfactive' references to the author of the reviewed article, depending on whether evaluative bundles showed meanings of approval or disapproval. Additionally, our findings showed that the amount of counter-factive bundles was greater than that of 'factive' ones, since the 'response' article has first and foremost a critical function. As regards the variety of realisations encountered, it is notable that author bundles were mostly realised by verbal phrases. In this respect, factive bundles often contained an 'attitudinal' verb or

expression, a 'discourse' verb or a combination of a copula and a complement. As regards counter-factive bundles, writers often employed 'attitudinal' verbs or expressions (together with negation or modality as possible modifiers of the verbal phrase). In addition, in relation to the verbal tense used in these bundles, the present tense was the most widely used form (as we had already noted above in relation to writer bundles).

A further aspect examined concerned the occurrence of writer-mediation as well as hedging and boosting within the context of author stance bundles. In this regard, our findings suggested that when explicit mentions to the target author were found in the context of praise, the frequency of boosting as a type of modifier was greater, contributing thus to reinforce assertion. In contrast, with regard to the occurrence of author bundles within negative evaluation, hedging devices occurred to a greater extent, as a result of their mitigating function. It must also be noted that lexico-grammatical hedging and boosting can also co-occur with writer-mediation, introducing qualitative variations in relation to explicit references to the author of the reviewed work. In this respect, our findings revealed that writer-mediation contributed to reinforce the meanings conveyed by hedging and boosting across positive and negative evaluation contexts respectively, thus conveying mainly meanings of mitigation and assertion. Hence, from a qualitative point of view, a continuum of choices emerged with regard to different discourse contexts. It should also be emphasised that the wide range of choices available helped writers to present criticism as signalling the writer's individual opinion rather than an objective feature of the work under examination.

Developing further on the degree of directness conveyed by evaluation, we were particularly concerned with the direct and marked character of counter-factive bundles. And more specifically, we were interested in examining the extent to which the

controversial tone these type of bundles conveyed on discourse was mitigated by the use of hedges (Hyland, 2000; Thompson and Ye, 1991) and/or writer-mediation (Hyland, 2000; Martín and Burgess, 2004; Saz, 2001). In this regard, our analysis showed that the occurrence of evaluative author bundles without any kind of mitigation reaches a high percentage (a total of 56.57%). Therefore, the marked character of direct personal references aimed at the target author is signalled as a relevant feature that characterises the communication framework created in the 'response' article. This result may be due to the interactive and controversial character of this kind of written academic discourse and needs to be understood in relation to the conventions favoured in specific genres and disciplinary contexts.

To sum up, our research has shown that writers' strategies to manage the expression of evaluation depend to a great extent on the context of use and the favoured conventions within specific academic communities. Hence, our analysis supported previous studies (Bloch, 2003; Hyland, 2000; Gea, 2000; Martín and Burgess, 2004), which point out that the variety of strategies used as well as their degree of explicitness and directness are both linked to the way in which academics interact in specific disciplinary fields. Apart from this, our study has also emphasised the crucial role of interactive devices such as hedges and boosters in order to address readers, convey deference for colleagues' views and mark involvement with the audience. More specifically, our findings have noted certain common distributional patterns according to which hedges and boosters tend to occur in specific evaluative contexts in the 'response' article.

In the light of these findings, some implications may be derived. In the first place, it is worth noting that writers need to develop an awareness of appropriate resources to convey evaluation, which allow them to become accepted members within their

communities. With the aim of raising awareness of aspects related not only to vocabulary or syntax but also to the rhetorical strategies favoured by each type of argumentative discourse, an increasing number of academic writing courses have emerged (Hyland, 2000; Martínez, 2005; Swales and Feak, 2004; Vold, 2006). Furthermore, the study of contemporary corpora of academic discourse, in contrast to traditional normative principles, is also proposed as a useful tool in order to raise awareness of rhetorical discourse strategies (Campoy, 2001; Lee and Swales, 2005). In addition, studies addressing the use of specific resources in relation to different cultural backgrounds are needed. As research points out (Cheng, 2006; Hirose, 2006; Martín and Burgess, 2004; Hyland, 2001a, 2002b, 2004; Mišák *et al.*, 2005; Vold, 2006), certain similarities and differences regarding the language background may affect conventions such as the expression of personal standing or the directness of critical claims. In sum, the teaching and learning of conventions that relate to the establishment of an appropriate scholarly identity remains a crucial implication.

The limitations attributed to the present study and a number of other aspects that deserve to be investigated in future studies are outlined below. One of the first limitations that may be considered regards the evaluation strategies selected as target units. Our interest in choosing a specific set of strategies that included explicit mentions to the writer of the article and/or the reviewed author derived from the fact that these strategies contributed reflect the personal character of the interactional encounter that takes place in the 'response' article. However, these strategic choices represent only some of the rhetorical options available to the writer. Thus, it would be interesting to analyse whether the selection of other less personal target forms (e.g. 'the article does not explain...') would lead us to obtain similar results regarding the variety of



strategies employed. Additionally, the role of resources such as hedging and boosting could also be analysed to see whether any similar findings emerge.

Apart from this, a second limitation concerns the main unit of analysis considered in our study. Having chosen to analyse functional discourse units, issues of interpretation and the role of subjectivity may pose some difficulties (as a result of the polypragmatic nature of language). Taking this consideration into account, to be able to select the strategies that are evaluative as well as to distinguish a variety of evaluative purposes, we examined each instance within the context in which it appears in discourse. In addition to this, in order to minimise the role of subjectivity, another researcher worked independently to be able to achieve inter-rater reliability.

In connection with the considerations mentioned above, a third aspect that may also involve some difficulty has to do with the sequencing of functional elements. As stretches of text often contain a nucleus of criticism and previous or subsequent related elements, the issue of where a strategy starts and finishes needs to be carefully considered by the analyst. It should be stressed that despite these limitations, a functional perspective was needed in order to throw some light on the preferred rhetorical procedures of a discourse community, which were the main focus of our research.

Finally, the present study opens up several lines of future research. First of all, the study of text patterns and evaluation strategies across different genres offers a fruitful field of study. In this respect, the analysis of evaluative patterns may be extended to review genres such as state-of-the-art articles, pre-prints or Internet forums of discussion, which have hardly been researched (Gains, 1998; Hyland, 2000). Additionally, regarding the study of writers' interpersonal choices, research could also be conducted across different genres to examine the distribution and frequency of

resources such as hedging and boosting in relation to the main discourse functions employed. Apart from this, typical text patterns and functions may also be examined within and across different disciplines taking into account the influence of the addressed audience as regards the construction of interaction. Finally, studies should also consider evaluation as a socio-culturally bound feature, trying to raise awareness of the most appropriate ways for novice writers and second-language researchers to express evaluation in critical academic discourse.

In conclusion, and despite the limitations mentioned above, the present study has contributed to show that specific genres and academic communities show preferences for certain rhetorical strategies that writers need to exploit for persuasive purposes. Further complementary issues enlightened by our research concern how the writer contributes to the projection of personal stance with the help of certain resources, such as hedges, boosters or specific types of stance bundles. Our findings show that the 'response' article is a highly complex genre where praise and criticism are combined for specific purposes. More specifically, we suggest that in contrast to the view that holds academic discourse to be deprived of a personal voice, the 'response' article contributes to build a highly personal framework of interaction.

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## **APPENDIX**



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**NORMATIVA ACÁDEMICA DE LA UNIVERSITAT  
JAUME I PARA TESIS DOCTORALES ESCRITAS EN  
UNA LENGUA DISTINTA A LAS OFICIALES**

**LA EVALUACIÓN ACADÉMICA EN EL CONTEXTO DEL  
ARTÍCULO DE OPINIÓN DENTRO EL CAMPO DE LA  
LINGÜÍSTICA APLICADA: UN ANÁLISIS DE LAS  
ESTRATEGIAS RETÓRICAS DE ELOGIO Y CRÍTICA**



## **1. Justificación y objetivos de la investigación**

El intercambio dinámico de ideas y opiniones con respecto a un área de interés determinada en el contexto de una comunidad académica conlleva la necesidad de que los escritores e investigadores tengan que posicionarse, y por tanto las interpretaciones críticas son esenciales de cara a que los lectores acepten sus puntos de vista. Para participar en este tipo de interacción, los investigadores necesitan ser capaces de producir intercambios críticos que sean apropiados dentro de la comunidad académica a la que pertenecen. Desde esta perspectiva, esta investigación se centra en el género del ‘artículo de opinión’ y en el contexto del discurso académico escrito. Este género apenas ha sido objeto de estudio dentro del campo de la lingüística aplicada, a pesar de tener una influencia enorme en la comunidad académica. Nuestro interés en este tipo de discurso deriva de la gran influencia que tiene en el ámbito académico, pues contribuye en gran manera a la presentación y diseminación de conocimientos nuevos. Conviene destacar que el principal objetivo de este género es el de evaluar y revisar el trabajo de otros investigadores, contribuyendo de esta forma al progreso de una disciplina concreta, ya que promueve el intercambio de ideas y opiniones entre los diferentes miembros de una comunidad académica. De manera más específica, en nuestro estudio, nos proponemos identificar una serie de particularidades y estrategias retóricas distintivas del ‘artículo de opinión’ a la hora de evaluar trabajos de investigación realizados por los diferentes miembros de una comunidad académica.

En cuanto a la literatura que se centra en el discurso académico escrito podemos distinguir dos líneas principales de análisis. Por un lado, cabe destacar la investigación basada en el análisis del corpus, que estudia la construcción de los textos partiendo del nivel léxico-gramatical, e incide sobre los distintos tipos de expresiones y colocaciones

típicas en el contexto de diferentes registros y géneros académicos (Biber y Finegan, 1988, 1989, 1994; Conrad y Biber, 2000; Hunston y Thompson, 2000). Por otro lado, una línea complementaria de investigación analiza los aspectos relacionados con la función retórica de los diferentes elementos textuales utilizados por los escritores, prestando atención no sólo a su forma léxico-gramatical, sino sobre todo a su función comunicativa (Hyland, 2000; Hyland y Tse, 2004). Más concretamente, la investigación se focaliza en las diversas estrategias evaluativas, principalmente la muestra de aprobación y la crítica, que van unidas a géneros específicos (Bloch, 2003; Gea, 2000; Hyland, 2000; Hyland, F. y Hyland, K. 2001; Hunston, 2005; Martín y Burgess, 2004). Los estudios realizados sobre el uso de las estrategias de evaluación por parte de los escritores coinciden en señalar la complejidad de estas, ya que en ocasiones conllevan una mezcla de comentarios tanto negativos como positivos, dirigidos estos últimos a suavizar la crítica (Motta-Roth, 1998; Suárez, 2005; Suárez y Moreno, 2008).

Aparte del enfoque aportado por los estudios mencionados anteriormente, la evaluación también se ha tratado desde un punto de vista metadiscursivo, como una estrategia que engloba no sólo ciertos marcadores de actitud sino también matizadores discursivos y otros elementos ligados a cómo se muestra el escritor del artículo (Hyland and Tse, 2004; Hyland, 2005). Así pues, este enfoque analiza todas aquellas características que de un modo u otro contribuyen a revelar la postura más o menos personal, cautelosa o asertiva del escritor<sup>1</sup> con relación al trabajo que esta comentando. En esta línea, se sitúan los estudios que analizan diversos elementos discursivos utilizados por el escritor para atenuar ('hedges') o intensificar ('boosters') el grado de

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<sup>1</sup> En esta tesis al referirnos al 'escritor' ('writer') hacemos referencia a la persona que crea el 'artículo de opinión' y reservamos el término 'autor' ('author') para referirnos al investigador que esta siendo evaluado.

acuerdo o desacuerdo con un punto de vista determinado (Hyland, 1998a, 1998b, 2000; Martín, 2003; Salager-Meyer, 1994; Saz, 2001; Mendiluce y Hernández, 2005; Vassileva, 2001). Asimismo, otros trabajos se centran en el estudio de diversas expresiones léxicas ('stance bundles') que incluyen referencias explícitas al escritor del 'artículo de opinión' y que denotan su grado de implicación con relación a las opiniones que se exponen, a la vez que ayudan a construir un marco de interacción apropiado con el posible lector (Biber *et al.*, 2004; Fortanet, 2004; Martinez, 2005). Es importante señalar que en este contexto, el estudio de las distintas marcas discursivas relacionadas con el escritor, se aborda teniendo en cuenta la disciplina que es objeto de estudio (Burgess y Fagan, 2002; Hyland, 2000; Martín y Burgess, 2004), así como los posibles receptores (Hyland y Tse, 2004; Nwogu, 1991; Varttala, 2001). Por tanto, el hecho de que el posible receptor del 'artículo de opinión' sea experto en un determinado campo resulta de especial importancia a la hora de crear un marco comunicativo específico y seleccionar recursos lingüísticos apropiados. A partir de aquí y desde un punto de vista discursivo, otros trabajos analizan la función determinante de la evaluación en la creación de la cohesión y coherencia textual (Hyland, 2000; Moreno y Suárez, 2006; Motta-Roth, 1998; Thompson and Zhou, 2000; Vázquez, 2005).

Finalmente, los estudios de retórica comparada subrayan la necesidad de estudiar la evaluación desde un punto de vista cultural (Connor, 1996; Kaplan, 1996), ya que la manera en que los escritores muestran sus actitudes dentro de contextos académicos concretos refleja un posicionamiento socio-cultural característico (Bloch y Chi, 1995; Taylor y Chen, 1991; Valero-Garcés, 1996). Por tanto, la necesidad de manejar diferentes estilos de escritura (tanto por escritores nativos como por aquellos que no lo son), ha llevado a la aparición de cursos especializados en la enseñanza del Inglés con fines académicos (EAP). De este modo, los escritores se familiarizan con diversas

estrategias retóricas y recursos de evaluación específicos relacionados con una disciplina y comunidad académica concretas (Hewins y Hewins, 2002, Hinkel 1997, 1999, 2005; Hyland 1995, 2001a, 2002b; Martínez, 2005).

Teniendo en cuenta lo dicho anteriormente y dado que nuestro interés se centra en el análisis del lenguaje crítico en el contexto del discurso académico escrito, nuestro estudio se basa en un acercamiento al texto escrito desde el concepto de género. De este modo, el discurso se enfoca de una forma integral, teniendo en cuenta tanto los elementos lingüísticos como contextuales que intervienen de cara a conseguir un discurso convincente. Por lo que respecta a las aportaciones de nuestro estudio, es necesario destacar algunas similitudes y diferencias en relación con otros estudios previos. Por un lado hay trabajos que se centran en el análisis de la variedad de recursos evaluativos léxico-gramaticales en géneros específicos, ya sean sustantivos (Stotesbury, 2003; Pisanski, 2005), pronombres (Fortanet, 2004; Hyland, 1998; Kuo, 1990; Martínez, 1995), adjetivos (Soler, 2003; Hunston y Thompson, 2000), verbos (Gea, 1997; Luzón, 1996) o adverbios (Aijmer, 2005; Charles, 2003). Aparte de esto, otros estudios tienen como objetivo fundamental la clasificación y cuantificación de aquellos recursos utilizados por el escritor para suavizar (Salager-Meyer, 1994; Posteguillo *et al.*, 2001; Varttala, 2001) o enfatizar sus valoraciones críticas (Hyland, 2000, Mendiluce y Hernández, 2005), así como para posicionarse de una manera más o menos subjetiva o personal con respecto a un tema (Artiga, 2006; Biber *et al.*, 2004).

Por otro lado, una línea complementaria de investigación hace hincapié en el análisis de diferentes estrategias retóricas, y teniendo en cuenta que éstas engloban los elementos anteriormente mencionados, se centra primordialmente en describir determinadas preferencias estratégicas en la expresión (Bloch, 2003; Fagan y Martín, 2002; Hyland, 2000; Hyland, F. y Hyland, K., 2001; Martín y Burgess, 2004). Como



desarrollo de esta segunda línea de investigación, nuestro estudio profundiza en el plano discursivo y analiza las principales estrategias retóricas de crítica en el género que nos ocupa. Asimismo, las funciones desempeñadas por diferentes elementos lingüísticos (atenuantes o intensificadores), que contribuyen a matizar las valoraciones del escritor, son analizadas teniendo en cuenta el contexto positivo o negativo de los comentarios. Por tanto, nuestro estudio enmarcado dentro de la perspectiva del género, contempla varios niveles de análisis, tanto dentro del plano lexico-gramatical como discursivo.

Otra característica que diferencia nuestro estudio respecto a otras investigaciones se refiere al género objeto de investigación. Mientras que diferentes géneros críticos han sido objeto de estudio, como reseñas de libros (Gea, 2000; Hyland, 2000; Motta-Roth, 1998; North, 1992; Römer, 2005), cartas al editor (Bloch, 2003; Magnet and Carnet, 2006; Vázquez, 2005), o editoriales (Flowerdew y Dudley- Evans, 2002; Le, 2004; Vázquez, 2005), nuestro análisis se centra en el ‘artículo de opinión’ que ha sido escasamente investigado. Por lo que nos consta, el estudio de Hunston (2005) es una excepción, y contribuye a arrojar luz con referencia a las estrategias de evaluación utilizadas para expresar acuerdo o conflicto en este género. Aunque este trabajo representa una contribución muy valiosa de cara a explicar la forma en la que los investigadores se posicionan con relación a otros trabajos publicados dentro de un mismo campo, su foco central es más bien teórico que empírico. Por tanto, en nuestro estudio hemos intentado profundizar en las limitaciones mencionadas anteriormente, por un lado, (1) extendiendo nuestro análisis desde un punto de vista léxico-gramatical a una perspectiva discursiva y retórica, y por otro, (2) integrando aspectos teóricos y empíricos, mediante la combinación de un enfoque cualitativo y cuantitativo, que sea capaz de explicar satisfactoriamente el fenómeno de evaluación que nos ocupa.

Por lo que respecta a nuestro objeto de estudio, nos proponemos contribuir a la identificación de aquellas estrategias retóricas más frecuentemente utilizadas para expresar evaluación positiva y negativa en el ‘artículo de opinión’ dentro del campo de la lingüística aplicada. Dichas estrategias seleccionadas como unidades de análisis reflejan el punto de vista personal de un investigador con respecto al trabajo de otro académico. El presente trabajo, basado en un corpus de ‘artículos de opinión’ pertenecientes a reconocidas publicaciones en el campo de la lingüística aplicada, pretende enmarcar dichas estrategias retóricas dentro de un estilo académico convencional en un contexto específico. Aparte de esto, como hemos indicado anteriormente, también pretendemos examinar ciertos matizadores discursivos, cuyo uso es decisivo en el tipo de género que nos ocupa, ya que contribuyen a atenuar o intensificar la fuerza de la evaluación.

Los aspectos mencionados anteriormente nos han llevado a formular las cuatro preguntas de investigación de nuestro estudio:

*Pregunta de investigación 1:* ¿Existe una variedad de estrategias retóricas utilizadas para expresar evaluación en el ‘artículo de opinión’?. En este caso, ¿son reflejo de diferentes orientaciones dentro del discurso académico? (Bloch, 2003; Gea, 2000; Hyland, 2000; Luzón, 1996, 1998; Motta-Roth, 1998; Suárez and Moreno, 2006, 2008).

*Pregunta de investigación 2:* ¿Aparece la evaluación acompañada de otros matizadores?. En este caso, ¿qué elementos la llevan a cabo? (Fortanet *et al.*, 2001; Hyland, 2000; Martín, 2003b; Martín and Burgess, 2004; Mendiluce and Hernández, 2005; Saz, 2001).

*Pregunta de investigación 3:* En cuanto a elementos discursivos que indican la presencia del escritor de forma explícita en el texto, ¿existen diferentes tipos de referencias usadas por el escritor?. En este caso, ¿cómo se caracterizan? (Biber *et al.*, 2004; Cortés, 2004; Fortanet, 2004).

*Pregunta de investigación 4:* Por lo que respecta a la interacción entre el escritor del ‘artículo de opinión’ y el autor objeto de la evaluación, ¿podemos reconocer referencias explícitas a este último?. En este caso, ¿aparecen junto con otros elementos que suavizan la evaluación, ya sea ciertos atenuadores o referencias explícitas al escritor, que contribuyen a mediatizar la evaluación desde un ángulo personal? (Burgess and Fagan, 2002; Martín and Burgess, 2004).

## **2. Planteamiento y metodología utilizada**

La propuesta metodológica que hemos seguido en esta investigación es el resultado de combinar un acercamiento léxico-gramatical así como funcional y retórico, que aúna tanto elementos de lingüística del corpus como del análisis del género. De este modo, nos hemos centrado en analizar ciertas estrategias de evaluación en las que aparecen referencias explícitas, tanto al escritor del ‘artículo de opinión’ como al autor que está siendo evaluado, ya que conforman un marco de interacción específico en este tipo de discurso académico. A partir de aquí, aquellos fragmentos discursivos en los que ciertos pronombres personales (‘I’, ‘we’, ‘he’ or ‘she’, ‘they’) y adjetivos posesivos (‘my’, ‘our’, ‘his’, ‘her’, ‘their’) aparecen, son seleccionados con la ayuda de un software que los muestra dentro del contexto específico en el que son usados por el escritor del texto (y que llega a abarcar 150 palabras). Sin embargo, con el fin de identificar la función

de un determinado elemento, resulta imprescindible la consideración del mismo en su contexto discursivo por parte del investigador, a fin de determinar desde un punto de vista pragmático si el fragmento seleccionado expresa la evaluación del escritor, o por el contrario, otras funciones comunicativas.

Por otro lado, con el fin de caracterizar cada una de las unidades retóricas analizadas en nuestro corpus, una base de datos se ha empleado con el objeto de consignar por cada una de las estrategias su orientación positiva o negativa, así como el grado de evaluación expresado. A tal efecto, dentro de las estrategias de crítica, se distinguen diferentes opciones retóricas más o menos explícitas, como expresar desacuerdo, o usar sugerencias o preguntas con fines críticos. Asimismo, con relación a los comentarios positivos, en nuestro corpus encontramos estrategias que elogian el trabajo de otro investigador con referencia a sus puntos de vista, forma de proceder y analizar los asuntos de interés tratados así como muestras de acuerdo sobre un tema u opinión. Aparte de esto, el hecho de que la estrategia evaluativa considerada aparezca de forma independiente o en combinación con otras es considerado un dato relevante. En este último caso, se identifican varias combinaciones de estrategias con distinta polaridad dando lugar a los llamados ‘pares mixtos’ (‘paired-patterns’). Asimismo, se consigna si en el contexto discursivo específico aparecen matizadores discursivos como elementos atenuadores o enfáticos. Finalmente, las referencias explícitas al escritor del artículo o al autor que está siendo evaluado, se clasifican en grupos de acuerdo con rasgos semánticos y formales.

De las consideraciones anteriores se desprenden dos puntualizaciones que es necesario señalar. Por un lado, conviene señalar la importancia decisiva del contexto lingüístico de cara a identificar cada una de las estrategias empleadas. Y por otro el hecho de que el carácter multifuncional del discurso conlleva ciertas dificultades

relacionadas con la identificación de las estrategias retóricas básicas, así como con aspectos relacionados con su secuenciación en el discurso. Por tanto, la responsabilidad de dicho proceso recae en el investigador. Finalmente, es interesante resaltar que los resultados obtenidos de este estudio son el resultado de un análisis tanto cualitativo como cuantitativo y pretenden dar cuenta de las preferencias concretas de los escritores para expresarse en el contexto del ‘artículo de opinión’.

### **3. Aportaciones originales**

Por lo que respecta a nuestra primera pregunta de investigación, nos centramos en analizar las diferentes estrategias que los escritores utilizan para expresar su posición con relación al trabajo de otro investigador. Nuestros resultados demostraron que los distintos tipos de comentarios evaluativos se enmarcaban dentro de una gradación que incluía orientaciones tanto positivas como negativas. Concretamente, la estrategia de elogio se utilizaba para expresar aprobación, acuerdo o admiración por el trabajo de otro autor. Por lo que respecta a su propósito discursivo, nuestro análisis reveló que los comentarios positivos contribuían a crear un marco de solidaridad, mitigando así las críticas negativas en el ‘artículo de opinión’. Por otro lado, el análisis de las críticas negativas reveló que el contenido evaluativo del discurso señalaba, principalmente, los puntos débiles del trabajo de otro autor, o bien indicaba un desacuerdo o distanciamiento de puntos de vista. Adicionalmente, otras estrategias menos explícitas también incluían preguntas o sugerencias con función evaluativa. Finalmente, cabe destacar que estrategias orientadas a la crítica aparecían en ocasiones reforzadas por una combinación de diversas opciones retóricas, los llamados ‘pares mixtos’.

En referencia a la frecuencia de las diferentes opciones retóricas, nuestros resultados sugieren que las estrategias de crítica explícitas, fueron las opciones más utilizadas, seguidas por el uso de los llamados ‘pares mixtos’ (o ‘paired-patterns’, donde aparece un equilibrio entre una estrategia de evaluación negativa y otra positiva). A propósito de esto, la muestra de aprobación se utilizó para acompañar comentarios negativos con mayor frecuencia, seguida por otras opciones como concesiones, comentarios atenuadores y finalmente preguntas o sugerencias. Así pues, estos ‘pares mixtos’, en lo que a la evaluación se refiere, reflejan una tendencia a señalar lagunas de conocimiento o puntos débiles sobre otros trabajos o artículos publicados anteriormente, al tiempo que muestran coincidencias y puntos de acuerdo.

De esta forma, queremos señalar que la evaluación negativa da lugar a recursos más complejos desde el punto de vista retórico, ya que el objetivo de cualquier escritor que opine sobre el trabajo de otro autor es mostrar su opinión de la manera más respetuosa posible y minimizando los efectos de los comentarios críticos negativos al máximo. Por lo que se refiere a los comentarios positivos, fue notorio que su frecuencia de uso resultó similar tanto si nos fijamos en estrategias empleadas de manera independiente, o considerando las usadas en el contexto de los mencionados ‘pares mixtos’. Este resultado mostró que las muestras de aprobación genuinas en el ‘artículo de opinión’ deben ser valoradas teniendo en cuenta que otra gran parte de las estrategias de elogio, tienen como propósito principal mitigar la crítica a la que acompañan. Finalmente, con relación al número total de estrategias que reflejan una orientación positiva o negativa, nuestros resultados indicaron que las estrategias de crítica fueron utilizadas con una mayor frecuencia, resultado que se explica por el carácter crítico y controvertido del ‘artículo de opinión’. Así pues, nuestro análisis corrobora conclusiones obtenidas anteriormente por otros estudios que analizaron la frecuencia, variedad y complejidad

funcional de las estrategias de evaluación empleadas en el discurso crítico académico (Bloch, 2003; Gea, 2000; Hyland, 2000; Motta-Roth, 1998).

Nuestra segunda pregunta de investigación tenía como objetivo analizar la influencia de ciertos matizadores discursivos usados con el fin de atenuar (mitigadores) o enfatizar (enfanzadores) la fuerza evaluativa de las distintas estrategias que encontramos en nuestro corpus. Primeramente, considerando la distribución de estos recursos a nivel léxico-gramatical, nuestros resultados demostraron que mientras que los mitigadores fueron utilizados más frecuentemente en el contexto de la crítica y con el fin de atenuar el efecto de los comentarios negativos, los enfanzadores, se emplearon con más frecuencia en el contexto de la evaluación positiva, contribuyendo a señalar énfasis y solidaridad por parte del escritor. A este respecto, nuestros datos confirmaron que la correlación entre las variables tipo de estrategia y tipo de modificador es significativa. Sin embargo, aunque nuestro análisis reveló la tendencia a usar ciertos recursos en determinados contextos, es importante destacar que también se encontraron otras opciones evaluativas utilizadas con menor frecuencia. En este caso, la aparición de un elogio matizado (cuando el escritor muestra una aprobación o acuerdo parcial en lugar de total), o una crítica reforzada por medio del uso de intensificadores (cuando el escritor quiere enfatizar la divergencia de puntos de vista), fueron otras opciones empleadas por el escritor a la hora de expresar su opinión personal en el artículo de opinión.

Teniendo en cuenta lo dicho anteriormente, analizamos también la distribución de los mitigadores o enfanzadores desde un punto de vista léxico-gramatical en los mencionados 'paired-patterns' o contextos donde se yuxtaponen dos sub-estrategias que representan, respectivamente, el polo positivo y negativo de la evaluación. Primeramente, y con respecto a los mitigadores empleados en la sub-estrategia de la

crítica, nuestro análisis refuerza resultados previos que hacían hincapié en el hecho de que estos recursos se emplean frecuentemente para mitigar comentarios negativos. Sin embargo, hay que señalar que encontramos una gran frecuencia de recursos mitigadores en el contexto de la evaluación positiva, y más concretamente, esta opción resultó especialmente relevante cuando la estrategia de elogio aparecía junto a la de crítica. Así pues, la necesidad del escritor de mostrar un acuerdo parcial o con ciertas limitaciones, conduce a mostrar una aprobación atenuada o matizada. Por lo que respecta a los enfatizadores, estos recursos se encontraron principalmente en el contexto de la evaluación positiva (tal como habíamos mencionado anteriormente con respecto a nuestro análisis de estrategias retóricas utilizadas de manera independiente). Desde un punto de vista cualitativo, estos resultados indican además de las preferencias personales del escritor y las tendencias convencionales dentro de las diversas comunidades académicas, los factores contextuales ejercen una gran influencia sobre el uso de los diferentes recursos evaluativos.

Por último y con relación a los recursos mitigadores, nuestro análisis tenía como objeto profundizar más allá del plano léxico-gramatical. Así pues, el equilibrio de estrategias retóricas que implican los ‘pares mixtos’ con el objeto de atenuar la crítica, es considerado como un recurso atenuador característico del ‘artículo de opinión’ desde un punto de vista estratégico. Teniendo esto en cuenta, nuestro objetivo fue mostrar el porcentaje total de evaluación atenuada (tanto a nivel léxico-gramatical como estratégico) dentro del ‘artículo de opinión’. Con respecto a la evaluación negativa, nuestros resultados revelaron que el porcentaje total de crítica atenuada resultó ser superior (a la crítica que no presentaba ningún matizador). Desde el punto de vista cualitativo, como hemos mencionado anteriormente, este resultado se explica por el hecho de que el objetivo del escritor es expresar su punto de vista a la vez que mostrar



respeto por las opiniones de otros investigadores. Por otro lado y con el fin de ofrecer una visión lo más completa posible de los comentarios críticos, así como de los modificadores que se emplearon con mas frecuencia, encontramos que el porcentaje más alto de enfatizadores aparecía junto con la evaluación positiva, ya que ésta resulta más fácil de aceptar por los lectores. De aquí que nuestras conclusiones corroboran los resultados de otros estudios anteriores (Hyland, 2000; Swales, 2004) que destacaron que la distribución y frecuencia de los elementos atenuadores y enfatizadores puede ser interpretado teniendo en cuenta el grado del desafío que conlleva evaluar el trabajo de otro autor.

Nuestra tercera pregunta de investigación hacia referencia a la inclusión en el discurso de referencias explícitas al escritor del ‘artículo de opinión’ (conocidas como ‘stance bundles’), a través de pronombres personales y posesivos<sup>2</sup>. Respecto a su variedad, llegamos a la conclusión de que el ‘artículo de opinión’ presenta referencias explícitas al escritor en relación con la expresión de diferentes posturas personales o grado de compromiso en lo que respecta a la evaluación. Nuestros resultados sugirieron que las expresiones evaluativas referidas al escritor se relacionaban en mayor manera con la actitud, seguidas por las de opinión. Aparte de este aspecto, nuestro interés también se centró en analizar los modificadores que acompañaban a las expresiones evaluativas ya referidas. En primer lugar, se observó que el uso de verbos modales resulta de gran utilidad a fin de introducir variaciones cualitativas con relación a las valoraciones críticas estudiadas. Así pues, nuestros resultados mostraron que la modalidad epistémica fue usada de manera más recurrente en comparación con la epistemica, de acuerdo con la tendencia observada por Posteguillo y Piqué (2004) en el

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<sup>2</sup> Por ejemplo, ‘I disagree’ (no estoy de acuerdo..), ‘in my opinion’ (en mi opinión...’).

discurso académico<sup>3</sup>. Aparte de esto, la negación y el uso de marcas subjetivas de afectividad también añaden una variedad de matices a las valoraciones del escritor, que pretende mostrar su opinión de manera asertiva y personal. Como aspecto igualmente relevante, se observó que el tiempo verbal que se utiliza de manera predominante en las diferentes estrategias es el presente simple, seguido por el condicional y el pasado simple. Otros tiempos verbales utilizados con menor frecuencia fueron el presente perfecto, el presente continuo, el condicional perfecto y el pasado perfecto. A este respecto nuestro resultado avala estudios previos que señalaban la relación entre tiempo verbal y función en el discurso académico (Gea, 1998; Luzón, 1996).

Otro aspecto complementario de interés se refiere a la interacción entre los recursos de mitigación y énfasis y las expresiones referencias explícitas al escritor dentro del contexto de las estrategias retóricas de crítica o aprobación. Los resultados revelaron un efecto conjunto de cara a suavizar la fuerza de los comentarios críticos, o por el contrario a reforzar la evaluación positiva. De este modo, podríamos concluir que los modelos encontrados con referencia a cómo los escritores expresan la evaluación, ayudan a caracterizar el género del 'artículo de opinión' dentro del contexto del discurso crítico.

Nuestra cuarta pregunta de investigación se centró en examinar las expresiones evaluativas que contenían referencias explícitas centradas en el autor cuyo trabajo está siendo evaluado, a través de pronombres personales de tercera persona o adjetivos posesivos<sup>4</sup>. De esta forma, queda patente de forma explícita el marco interactivo entre el escritor del 'artículo de opinión' y el autor objeto de la evaluación. Así pues, resulta interesante enfatizar el hecho de que estas referencias explícitas al autor resulten

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<sup>3</sup> Hay que tener en cuenta que la investigación de estos autores está referida al artículo de investigación dentro del ámbito académico.

<sup>4</sup> Por ejemplo, 'he succeeds in...' ('él acierta en...'), 'his point is confusing...' ('su punto de vista es confuso...').

frecuentes dentro del ‘artículo de opinión’, ya que como mencionan algunos investigadores (Thompson y Ye, 1991), su presencia en ciertos contextos académicos constituye una opción demasiado directa y poco común (por ejemplo, en el artículo de investigación). En relación con su orientación evaluativa, el número de referencias que reflejan desaprobación (‘counter-factive bundles’) resultó superior al de las que conllevan evaluación positiva (‘factive bundles’), ya que el ‘artículo de opinión’ tiene una función primordialmente crítica y controvertida. Con respecto a la caracterización de las referencias positivas, éstas estaban formadas por un verbo evaluativo, discursivo o por una combinación de verbo copulativo seguido de un complemento. Con referencia a las negativas, es frecuente la aparición de un verbo o expresión evaluativos junto con el uso de recursos como la negación o modalidad<sup>5</sup>. Además de lo expuesto hasta ahora y en relación con el tiempo verbal utilizado, nuestros resultados indicaron que el tiempo presente fue el más utilizado (como habíamos destacado anteriormente en referencia a nuestra tercera pregunta de investigación).

Otro aspecto examinado con relación a las referencias explícitas al autor, se refiere a la aparición en este contexto de otros recursos atenuadores o enfáticos, así como referencias explícitas al escritor que mediatizan las valoraciones de forma más subjetiva y personal. Primeramente, nuestras conclusiones mostraron que la combinación de estos elementos da lugar a una gradación en la que estos recursos pueden tener el propósito de conllevar énfasis o señalar limitaciones, según los diferentes contextos de evaluación<sup>6</sup>. En segundo lugar y dado que las referencias explícitas al autor en un contexto de desaprobación sugieren un alto grado de tensión, es importante señalar que el número de referencias en las que no aparece ningún tipo de

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<sup>5</sup> Por ejemplo, ‘he does not explain...’ (‘no explica...’) o ‘he may have misinterpreted’ (‘puede que haya pasado por alto...’).

<sup>6</sup> Como en ‘I think he certainly has a strong point in...’ (‘ciertamente, pienso que él acierta en...’) o ‘in our opinion, they are possibly mistaken...’ (‘desde nuestro punto de vista, puede que se confundan en...’).

atenuador o matizador de la evaluación supera al de referencias que son suavizadas de algún modo. Este resultado sugiere, como ya señalaban algunos autores (Burgess y Fagan, 2002; Hyland, 2000; Thompson and Ye, 1991), que la mención explícita del autor objeto de la evaluación con fines críticos es una opción que conlleva un tono directo y controvertido dentro del discurso académico escrito.

#### **4. Conclusiones obtenidas y futuras líneas de investigación**

Nuestra investigación ha demostrado que las estrategias que los escritores utilizan para expresar críticas satisfactoriamente dependen en gran manera de la función discursiva y el contexto de uso. Así pues, nuestro análisis afianzó resultados de estudios anteriores (Bloch, 2003; Hyland, 2000; Gea, 2000; Martín and Burgess, 2004) que señalaron que la variedad de estrategias utilizadas de forma más o menos explícita o directa esta relacionada con el modo en el que los académicos interactúan dentro de determinadas comunidades discursivas. En este contexto, nuestro estudio amplía la gran variedad de estrategias encontradas de cara a valorar trabajos de otros investigadores, haciendo hincapié en el papel preponderante que tiene la combinación de estrategias retóricas positivas y negativas en el género que nos ocupa. Aparte de esto, se destaca el papel decisivo que tienen ciertos recursos matizadores discursivos (tales como los mitigadores y enfatizadores) a la hora de presentar valoraciones críticas de forma apropiada y con la debida delicadeza que este tipo de intercambios exige. En particular, nuestros resultados señalan ciertas tendencias recurrentes de acuerdo con las que tanto los recursos de mitigación como los enfatizadores tienden a aparecer en contextos evaluativos específicos dentro del ‘artículo de opinión’.

Teniendo en cuenta nuestros resultados, se pueden proponer varias líneas de investigación que a su vez se desprenden de las limitaciones a las que nuestro estudio está sujeto. Una de las primeras limitaciones que se pueden considerar al interpretar nuestros resultados está relacionada con el hecho de que nuestro estudio se ha basado en analizar estrategias de evaluación que contenían referencias personales o bien al escritor del artículo o al autor objeto de la evaluación, dejando fuera de nuestro análisis una gran parte de estrategias críticas introducidas a través de formas más impersonales. Sin embargo, el hecho de habernos centrado en esta selección deriva de nuestro interés en analizar aquellas opciones lingüísticas y retóricas que se relacionan de forma más explícita con el marco interactivo que se establece en el ‘artículo de opinión’ y que resultan de este modo más controvertidas. Además, de esta forma se pretendió actuar de forma más sistemática, maximizando la exhaustividad del análisis. Teniendo en cuenta estas consideraciones, sería interesante examinar una selección más amplia de estrategias de cara a observar si obtenemos resultados similares en lo que respecta a la variedad de estrategias y recursos, así como a las funciones desempeñadas por los mismos. Al mismo tiempo, se podría ampliar el número artículos considerados, así como la variedad de las publicaciones objeto de estudio.

Partiendo de las consideraciones anteriores, sería interesante profundizar en el estudio de las estrategias que aparecen en otros contextos evaluativos, su frecuencia, caracterización y grados de complejidad. De esta forma, el análisis de aquellas opciones lingüísticas y estratégicas usadas por los escritores para llevar a cabo sus valoraciones críticas se podría extender a géneros poco estudiados, como los llamados ‘state-of-the-art articles’, ‘pre-prints’ o incluso a foros de debate en Internet. Aparte de estos aspectos, la investigación también podría contemplar diferentes comunidades académicas, teniendo en cuenta diversos contextos disciplinarios. Así pues, se podría

ampliar el conocimiento acerca de las convenciones evaluativas usadas por los miembros de diferentes comunidades con el objeto de mostrarse más o menos directos, cautelosos o asertivos en sus valoraciones. Finalmente y como consecuencia de la influencia que ejercen los aspectos socio-culturales de cara a llevar a cabo valoraciones críticas, futuros estudios podrían profundizar en la influencia de los mismos en el contexto del aprendizaje y enseñanza de una segunda lengua.

Una segunda limitación se refiere a la unidad de análisis objeto de nuestro estudio. Al habernos centrado en unidades discursivas dentro de un contexto funcional dado, aspectos tales como la subjetividad del analista pueden crear dificultades interpretativas. Teniendo esto en cuenta, y por tanto, para tratar de minimizar estas limitaciones, un segundo experto en el campo de la lingüística aplicada trabajó conjuntamente con investigador a la hora de codificar las diferentes unidades retóricas de nuestro corpus y determinar su función. Por este motivo, como señala Crookes (1986), es esencial tener en cuenta, aspectos relativos a la validación de resultados, principalmente por el contraste de cuestiones específicas con otro experto en el ámbito de la lingüística aplicada. Asimismo, de acuerdo con Hyland (2000), se podría valorar el hecho de que un equipo de investigadores pudiera trabajar conjuntamente a fin de abarcar un mayor número de aspectos dentro del marco pragmático del estudio.

Un tercer aspecto relacionado con el anterior y que conviene tener en cuenta, se refiere a los límites de las unidades funcionales concebidas como segmentos textuales. Al contener un núcleo que expresa una evaluación crítica y que a su vez puede ir precedido o seguido de ciertos modificadores o complementos, su secuenciación requiere un análisis minucioso por parte del investigador. A estos efectos, nos remitimos a las consideraciones anteriormente mencionadas, con referencia a las valoraciones contrastadas con otro investigador de cara a la validación de resultados. A

pesar de estas dificultades, hay que señalar que el análisis de las diferentes opciones retóricas que son objeto de investigación en nuestro estudio sólo se puede enfocar desde una perspectiva funcional y pragmática.

Como conclusión, y a pesar de las limitaciones mencionadas, nuestro estudio ha contribuido a demostrar que determinados géneros y comunidades académicas muestran ciertas preferencias con relación a los recursos retóricos y estrategias que los escritores utilizan y necesitan explotar con fines persuasivos. Otros aspectos destacados de nuestra investigación se refieren a cómo el escritor interacciona con el lector mediante el uso de ciertos matizadores discursivos, como son los mitigadores y enfatizadores, al tiempo que proyecta su posicionamiento personal en diferentes contextos evaluativos. Nuestros resultados muestran que el ‘artículo de opinión’ constituye un género complejo donde las estrategias de aprobación y crítica se complementan para conseguir efectos retóricos determinados. Más específicamente, habiéndose relacionado tradicionalmente el discurso académico con un tono carente de voz personal, el ‘artículo de opinión’ refleja un marcado carácter personal con su tono crítico y con frecuencia controvertido.

