Academic voices and claims: Reviewing practices in research writing

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Abstract

This paper investigates contrastively how politeness strategies that involve reporting verbs are deployed in the Literature Review (LR) chapters of PhD theses written in English and in Spanish. It analyses a comparable corpus of 20 theses -10 in English and 10 in Spanish- in computer science. It focuses on uses of reporting structures realised through integral and non-integral citations of other texts (Hyland 1999). The research design is based on the model proposed by Thompson and Ye (1991), who distinguished three categories of reporting verbs according to the process they perform: textual, mental and research verbs, and analysed the evaluative potential of verbal processes whose responsibility is ascribed either to the reviewed author or to the reporting writer. We also took as a reference the politeness model offered by Brown & Levinson (1987) to study the presence of specific face-redressive politeness means in the double-voiced dialogue which is established in the corpus of LRs. Data show that English writers show personal commitment and tentativeness, while Spanish writers tend to mask individual voices and avoid personal confrontation.

1. Introduction

The interactive nature of academic discourse is now generally accepted. Written academic discourse is seen as a dialogic construct seeking to persuade the reader to accept the writer's new claims. This has led to growing interest in dialogic relations within academic discourse. A set of studies has analysed how writers express their personal feelings and attitudes in their texts (Biber and Finnegan 1989; Hunston 1993, 1994; Hyland 1999, 2008) and extensive research has been carried out on strategies establishing a relationship with the reader. Interpersonal metadiscourse (Hyland 1998a), hedging (Myers 1989; Hyland 1996, 1998b, 2005) modality (Halliday 1994), voices in the text (Thompson 1996) and dialogicity in discourse (Weigand 2009, 2010) have been investigated. Specific markers of interaction have also been categorised (Stotesbury 2003, Koutsantoni 2004).

Another approach to the interpersonal component of texts is based on politeness theory (Brown and Levinson 1987; Scollon and Scollon 1995), which has been applied to written discourse (Myers 1989, 1992; Garcés-Conejos & Sánchez-Macarro 1998; Kuo 1999; Gea 2000-2001; Hyland 2005; Gil-Salom & Soler-Monreal 2009). Studies from this perspective perceive the writer's interpersonal strategies as expressions of politeness. Positive politeness strategies aim at emphasising shared knowledge and generally accepted claims, so as to enhance solidarity inside the discipline community. Negative politeness strategies help the writer to show respect and deference towards the reader's opinion.

Brown and Levinson (1987) studied speech acts on the basis of the concept of *face* or *public self-image*, which they treated as basic wants reflected in individual action. They distinguished between two types of faces which are inherent in the human

condition: *positive face*, i.e. the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of by others; and *negative face,* i.e. the basic claim to the individual's freedom of action and freedom from imposition (Brown and Levinson 1987: 311). Positive face is related to the need for closeness, a good reputation and contact with others, while negative face refers to the need for distance, individuation and independence (O'Driscoll 1996). In interactions, a balance is needed between the desire to establish ties with others and the desire not to be imposed upon. This compels the participants to two corresponding types of interactive behaviour. The assumption that certain acts may be face-threatening (FTAs) makes it necessary to discern what is appropriate and act accordingly. This motivates the use of positive and negative politeness strategies designed to accomplish a persuasive objective. Following Brown and Levinson (1987), off record acts are performed indirectly and involve ambiguity. Bald on record acts are performed without redress to face. On record acts with redress imply using politeness to counteract the potential face damage of the FTA. To repair the threat or compensate for it in some way, different strategies in a hierarchy of both a positive or solidarity politeness system and a negative or deference politeness system are used.

It is also interesting to consider a third notion of face introduced by O'Driscoll (1996) and related to the value-judgements that people make. This culture-specific face refers to the "foreground conscious desire for good face" (O'Driscoll 1996: 4), or, as Moreno (2011: 3) puts it, the "foreground conscious desire for appropriate face" in a given socio-cultural context and in given circumstances. This implies that a model analysing politeness in one culture needs to take into account that culture's values. This notion may be particularly useful when considering specific genres and for cross-cultural analysis.

In Weigand's (2010) view, however, Brown and Levinson (1987)'s approach to politeness is monological and addresses a restricted and negative aspect of the phenomenon. For her, politeness represents a positive concept which she defines as a component in the balance between *self-interest* and *respect* for the other human being (p. 94). The crucial point for her is the dialogic nature of *paying* respect. Politeness means the respect to be paid to other fellow beings and expected for oneself. According to Weigand, "the self is − with a shift in perspective − the other. On the one hand, we want to pursue our own purposes and interests, on the other hand, we are at the same time the other social being whose interests need to be respected" (p. 98). The double nature of human beings leads them to regulate both their selfish and their social interests so as to achieve acceptance in social interaction. Regulative principles control these double interests of human beings (i.e. their self-interest and the interest in being respected in the community), and mediate between reason and emotion through culturally dependent rhetorical principles and conventions (p.7).

Establishing adequate interpersonal and social relationships is particularly important when reporting on the work of others in literature reviews (LRs). Writers comment on previous achievements and justify their own work. This implies that they have to negotiate their positions and aims within their disciplinary community in dialogue and use effective interpersonal and group techniques to become accepted and show adequate respect towards colleagues, i.e. to come to an understanding or agreement about these positions (Weigand 2010: 59). Research on citation practices, reporting verbs and reporting clauses (Thompson and Ye 1991; Shaw 1992; Thomas and Hawes 1994; Hyland 1999) has revealed how writers create a context for their own work by incorporating stance into their arguments. In this way the writer's voice is heard.

Recent approaches to genre have argued that writing practices and the texts they produce are best categorised based on the social action they accomplish (Miller 1984; Paré et al. 2009). Miller (1984) highlights the important function of genre as a key element that the student has to learn so as to be able to participate in the actions of a discipline community. From this perspective, learning-to-write in order to develop consciousness and disciplinary or professional identity is central. The student undertakes both a learning process and a research process with tutoring supervision so as to achieve full participation in the discipline community (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998).

The PhD thesis, or dissertation in Paré et al.'s terms (2009: 179-180), can be seen as the first significant contribution to a disciplinary conversation which responds to various exigencies in different contexts and performs a range of social actions aimed at satisfying those contexts, which include the doctoral supervision, the doctoral committee, the academic department, the disciplinary community, and the research setting. The thesis is thus a highly complex multi-genre containing different subgenres (the LR, the essay, the experimental article) and engaging the student in several different contexts.

These different contexts of the thesis are related to the types of audience addressed. On the one hand, those people whose task consists in evaluating the work presented, i.e. supervisors and members of examining committees and, on the other hand, a variety of academic readers: researchers and doctoral students of particular disciplines, who can adopt a stance or point of view on the knowledge conveyed in the theses (Bakhtin 1986). So, from a Bakhtinian perspective, doctoral students establish a dialogue with both types of audiences and elaborate their research in relation to these contexts. They should have in mind their colleague readers in the same discipline,

although their efforts are influenced by the need to address the examiners who ultimately judge the value of the text presented in the thesis. Under these circumstances, both doctoral students and researchers have to consider their possible audiences when selecting the form and genre of their writings and they should elaborate their texts according to the responses they expect to obtain from their readers.

The social distance and the differences in power between the doctoral writer, the supervisors, the reviewed authors, the examiners and the community as a whole are great (Koutsantoni 2006). Reviewed authors, supervisors and examiners are people of authority. Reviewed authors and supervisors are accepted and credited members of the discipline community. Examiners have the power to accept and award the PhD title. Thesis writers, conscious of their lower status, must submit their research for assessment and need to present their claims and show their knowledge in conformity to the norms of the academic environment. Claims must be supported with evidence, and writers must demonstrate an understanding of approaches and knowledge in their fields of specialisation, in order to persuade the examiners that the thesis is worthy of the award of a doctorate (Thompson 2005a). Their ultimate goal is to obtain acceptance and membership of the discipline community. Thus, maintaining appropriate interpersonal and group relations with the immediate audience (the examiners) and the discipline community is crucial. The dialogic interaction which is established in the LR chapter of a doctoral thesis creates an interpretive framework which implies demonstrating disciplinary knowledge of the field and understanding of the issues while critically engaging with prior research and with examiners (Hyland and Diani 2009). On the one hand, there is a tendency to agreement and cooperation; on the other hand, acting against other individuals leads to confrontation (Weigand 2010).

Reviewing others' work entails critical evaluations which may disregard respect (Weigand 2010: 94) and involve FTAs. In order to mitigate the threat, the writers' choices of content, language and style of the thesis aim at protecting multiple faces: the writer's, the reviewed authors' and the complex audience's. This leads thesis writers to seek academic community consensus and soften their claims so as to avoid confrontation. In this context, Brown and Levinson's concepts of positive and negative faces and O'Driscoll's notion of good face help to explain specific redressive politeness means and techniques used by thesis writers.

Over the last 25 years, research on doctoral work has been on the increase. A number of studies on corpora in English have analysed the rhetorical structure of theses (Ridley 2000; Paltridge 2002; Kwan 2006; Thompson 2009), while others have focused on lexico–grammatical aspects in order to investigate citation practice and stance in PhD theses in English (Shaw 1992; Thompson 2005a, 2005b; Charles 2006a, 2006b). However, apart from a few contrastive studies on postgraduate academic writing (Cooley and Lewkowicz 1997; LoCastro 2008), cross-cultural studies on the genre of the PhD thesis remain scarce. The purpose of this chapter is to compare the LR sections of PhD theses in two languages and relate argumentative and rhetorical strategies to linguistic features reflecting stance.

This study investigated personal voices, both those assumed by the writer and those attributed to others. Our aim was to explore how LRs manifest writers' voices and reflect cited authors' voices and show interaction with the reader and the whole discourse community, in different languages and in individual texts. We analysed politeness strategies which writers employ to assess previous research and give significance to new claims through citations and reporting verbs in two corpora of LR

chapters of PhD theses in the disciplinary field of computer science in English and in Spanish.

2. Corpus and method

The LR texts analysed for this study were taken from two comparable corpora of 10 theses in computer science written by native speaker students of English at the University of Glasgow, UK, and 10 theses written by native speaker students of Spanish at the Polytechnic University of Valencia, Spain. The 20 theses were obtained from the theses repositories of both universities. They were written between 2003 and 2010 and deal with a variety of topics related to the sub-fields of computation and computer engineering.

As to their rhetorical structure, one thesis in each corpus has a problem-solution pattern. One thesis in each corpus is topic-based and another thesis in Spanish is a compilation of RAs. However, most theses (nine in English, eight in Spanish) exhibit the traditional rhetorical format: introduction, literature review, method, results, discussion and conclusions (I-LR-M-R-D). Organisational patterns are either simple or complex (Paltridge 2002). Five Spanish theses present the simple traditional format, i.e. the theses report on a single study and follow the typical I-LR-M-R-D pattern. Six English theses prefer the complex format. As they usually report on more than one study, they typically start with an introduction and a review of the literature. Some include a general methods section and all end with a general conclusions section. But the intermediate sections reproduce the simple traditional structure of introduction, method, results and discussion for each of the individual studies reported.

The theses have separate dedicated chapters with generic headings of the type *Literature Review, Background* or *Overview* in the English theses, and *Estado del Arte* or *Antecedentes* in the Spanish corpus. Most of these chapters follow the introduction (nine theses in the English corpus and eight theses in the Spanish corpus). Only one thesis in the English corpus presents recursive chapters reviewing literature for each topic in the thesis. Those chapters with headings devoted to the review of previous studies were selected for analysis.

The LR texts examined vary in length, from five to 90 pages in the Spanish theses and from 13 to 52 pages in the English corpus. Extensive LR chapters include a number of sub-divisions with topic-based headings referring to the various objects related to the research. Our data show that English theses are shorter than their Spanish counterparts (average length: 204.2 pages and 227.7 pages, respectively). The average length of the LR sections in the English corpus is 35.5 pages, which represents 17.3% of the whole text. In the Spanish corpus 14.6% of the whole text is dedicated to this section (i.e. 30.3 pages).

In terms of their rhetorical organisation, the LRs follow Kwan's (2006) model, based on Swales' CARS (1990) model: Move 1 *Establishing one part of the territory of one's own research*, Move 2 *Creating a research niche (in response to Move 1)*, Move 3 *Occupying the research niche*. In fact nine out of 10 LRs present the structure Move 1-Move 2-Move 3 in both corpora. Only one LR in each corpus has a Move 1-Move 2 pattern. Due to the length of the section and the number of items reviewed, Move 1 and Move 2 are realised recursively throughout the LRs. However, Move 3 is granted comparatively less space than the other two moves and is not recurrent in the LRs.

This shows that the main purpose of the LR is to map out the author's territory and establish what the gap in present knowledge is. Writers draw on the research

networks and disciplinary knowledge of the field but also on an interpretive framework, which is potentially threatening to other members of the discipline community and requires the negotiation of interpersonal relationships. The corpus-based analysis of the LRs that follows will demonstrate ways in which language is used for these purposes.

The LR texts were searched for the fragments of text in which authors were reviewed so that reporting verbs could be extracted and quantified. The study employed a semantic and pragmatic approach. A detailed examination of cases was carried out in context. We used Thompson and Ye's (1991) three categories of reporting verbs according to the process they perform: (1) textual verbs (discourse verbs, in Hyland's terms (1999, 2002), e.g. *state, write, point out*; (2) mental verbs (cognition verbs in Hyland's terms), e.g. *believe, think, focus on*; and (3) research verbs, e.g. *find, demonstrate, calculate*. We also used Thompson and Ye's distinction between author's stance towards the report and writer's stance of acceptance, neutrality or rejection towards the cited research. The evaluative potential of reporting verbs was the main interest of this study as it implies interpersonal strategies. We wished to explore to what extent and in which ways LRs in PhD theses (in two different languages and in individual texts) display traces of cited authors and thesis writers and their interaction with the reader and the whole discourse community, with a particular focus on the manifestation of different voices.

We took as a reference the politeness model offered by Brown and Levinson (1987) to study the presence of face-redressive politeness strategies in this double-voiced dialogue (between the writer and the cited author) with a complex audience which is established in the corpus. We studied positive politeness strategies seeking self-respect and showing both the cited author's and the writer's desire to be approved of, and negative politeness strategies reflecting attitudes of deference and respect to the

community when-presenting dialogic claims. Finally, we compared the data obtained for each set of theses so as to determine variation in the way English and Spanish thesis writers choose to present arguments and report others' findings.

3. Results of analysis

3.1. Types of citations

The selection of the authors to report on is seen as a positive politeness strategy that emphasises the solidarity of the writer with the cited author and of cited authors with others. Citations serve to acknowledge previous claims and show how well authors cooperate in constructing knowledge.

A previous study on the types of citations used in LRs (Soler-Monreal and Gil-Salom 2011) showed that in the English corpus, the use of integral citations and direct quotations (56.55%) is higher than the use of non-integral citations (43.44%). Active forms are the dominant verb forms (84. 93%). However, in the Spanish corpus non-integral citations (61.98%), passives and *se pasivo reflejo* constructions (56%) are prevalent. This suggests that the English writers' choices emphasise individual commitment towards the reported claims. The results for Spanish citations, in contrast, reflect a preference for distancing strategies.

Integral citations are author prominent. The writer reviews the findings of different studies, which are used to compare or support a statement, and attributes responsibility for a claim to the cited author. A positive politeness strategy shows an interest on the part of the writer in showing agreement among the community of

experts. In the examples that follow the reporting verb *share* and the citing of different authors who have similar research interests emphasise common ground. Exemplifying also serves the writer's interest in engaging the reader in the reasoning:

(1) *This is a view also shared by Graves and Mockus [29]* who thought that corrective maintenance required 1.8 times more effort than adding code. TE2

(2) *Implicit feedback techniques have been successfully applied to retrieval systems in the past. For instance, White [2004] and Joachims et al. [2005] defined and evaluated* several implicit feedback models on a text-based retrieval system. TE7

(3) *Ha sido comprobado* que bajo ciertas condiciones las redes recurrentes pueden utilizarse para aproximar a una precisión arbitraria una descripción discreta en variable de estado, *según [Nikiforuk & Gupta 1995], [Sontag 1993] y [Pham & Xing 1995]*. TS1

(4) *En el caso de los robots manipuladores existe una abundante bibliografía, ver por ejemplo [Fu et al.88] y [Ollero 01]*, que aborda su modelo cinemático, dinámico y/o control. TS4

On the other hand, integral citations and direct quotations present claims as personal beliefs; therefore, the imposition of the FTA on the community is minimised. In the examples, responsibility for claims is attributed to the individual cited author. This serves to protect both the writer's negative face, since s/he avoids personal commitment to the propositions, and the examiners' negative face, since they are not asked to agree:

(5) In 2008, Marissa Mayer, the Vice President of Search and User Experience of Google Inc. predicted in an interview held at the LeWeb conference that *"in the future personalized search will be one of the traits of leading search engines"* [Mayer, 2008]. TE7

(6) *Según (Ljung, 1999)* lo conveniente en este caso es excitar al sistema a identificar por un rango completo de señales tanto en amplitud como en frecuencia, por lo que las señales con dos valores de amplitud (binarias) no son apropiadas. TS7

As regards non-integral citations, the Identification, Source and Origin types (Thompson 2002) help to efface the cited author's individuality and give prominence to the reported information rather than the researcher. Passives allow the topic to be thematised. Impersonal constructions and non-human subjects also contribute to de-emphasising the role of the researchers. The use of research-related nouns allows the writer to offer assessment of other authors' propositions. Such 'abstract rhetors' (Hyland 2005) imply that no reviewed author is involved in the interpretation, which mitigates the FTA. To a certain extent, disciplinary convention plays a part here; it is conventional in scientific writing to de-emphasise the role of the researchers, particularly in controlled experiments, where the claim is that the human factor is not consequential (Thompson and Tribble 2001: 99). In fact, depersonalisation is one of the most common negative politeness strategies and responds to a doublefold purpose: it allows the cited author's self-protection before potential criticism and it also propitiates the cited author's self-effacement, which permits the reader to feel free to interpret the author's claims. In the following examples the human activity behind the research is placed in theme position within the sentence:

(7) *The original surveys* did not measure this, nor did they set out to measure it *[73]*. TE2

(8) *A number of studies* from the field of Library and Information Science (LIS) have provided evidence that highlight the role of affect in several aspects of the information seeking process, such as search *strategies (Nahl and Tenopir, 1996), motivation (Nahl, 2004), performance (Nahl, 1998b; Wang et al., 2000; Nahl, 2004;*

Nahl, 2005; Kim, 2008; Tenopir et al., 2008) and satisfaction (Bilal and Kirby, 2002; Nahl, 2004). TE8

(9) *A study (Spink, 1994)* on the selection of search term sources (taken from user question statements, user-interaction, term RF, and other) for expansion and reformulation revealed that the most effective source was terms taken from the user's written question statements. TE8

(10) *Análisis empíricos han demostrado* que el rendimiento de APTEEN está entre LEACH y TEEN en términos de energía disipada y tiempo de vida de la red. TS3

(11) En términos generales, el diseño de un controlador por planificación de ganancia para una planta no lineal *se suele describir* como un procedimiento de cuatro pasos *(Aström and Wittenmark, 1995; Shamma and Athans, 1990; Hyde and Glover, 1993),* con diferentes opciones técnicas en cada uno de ellos (ver anexo B). TS7

Depersonalisation is also used for positive politeness purposes. In the following examples the writer assumes the members of the community share background knowledge and accept previous claims. In the English example, the passive and the adverb *extensively* reinforce the strategy. In the Spanish example the evaluative adverb *(satisfactoriamente)* contributes to the emotional response to results and shows identification with a common goal, rather than the attitude of an individual (Myers 1989):

(12) While *Rocchio's term weighting formula (Rocchio 1971) has been extensively used* in this area, *similar vector-space (Baeza-Yates & Ribeiro-Neto 1999) and probabilistic based approaches have also been employed* in this aspect. TE10

(13) La planificación de ganancia es una de las técnicas más habituales para el control de procesos no lineales y *ha sido empleada satisfactoriamente desde hace años*

(Kallstrom et al., 1979; Stein et al., 1977) en aplicaciones que van desde la ingeniería aeroespacial al control de procesos. TS7

3.2 Reporting verbs

Reviewing previous research and presenting new claims requires the use of reporting verbs. In the corpus, reporting verbs are used in relation to the review of existing computer systems, applications and techniques. Past proposals for solving problems and initial findings are also reported. In both sets of theses, a great variety of reporting verbs is used (see Tables 1 and 2 in Appendix). In the English corpus, the textual verbs *state, suggest, propose, present, note, argue, discuss, report* and *highlight,* and the research verbs *find, show, develop, examine* and *investigate* are recurrently used in the theses. The most frequently used verbs in the Spanish theses also belong to the textual and research categories: *proponer,* e*mplear, realizar*, *demostrar*, *desarrollar, utilizar, analizar, mostrar, centrarse, plantear* and *abordar* (Soler-Monreal and Gil-Salom 2011).

About 50% of all the reporting verbs in both corpora provide information objectively, without interpretation and contribute to the impartial reporting style of academic writing. This convention can also be understood from a social perspective. Following Brown and Levinson's (1987) hierarchy of politeness strategies, the choice of denotative verbs would illustrate bald-on-record strategies that seek to report on previous research efficiently and do not constitute FTAs as there is little danger to others' faces. In the following examples, expository Subject-Active Verb-Direct Object and Subject-Passive Verb-Agent sentences are used that do not allow us to hear the cited author's or the writer's voices:

(14) In a similar vein, Fritz *et al.* [57] *developed* a "Haptic Graphing" technique using the PHANTOM device to allow blind and visually impaired users to explore the plot of two- and three-dimensional functions, and discrete data points in space. TE3

(15) Munzner and Burchard [78] *present* a visualisation of the structure of a section of the World Wide Web (WWW). TE4

(16) Los AG *fueron desarrollados* en la década de los setenta por John Holland y sus estudiantes de la Universidad de Michigan [Holland, 1992]. TS9

(17) Los trabajos de Mori y Tsen [73], Hartmann [37], Alcaraz et al. [3] y Van Peteghem y Vanoucke [104] *abordan* el problema completo. TS10

(18) Esta técnica *ha sido utilizada* por Hartmann [35]. TS10

However, other reporting verbs perform evaluative functions that reflect either the cited author's or the thesis writer's interpretation and position with respect to the reported information (Thompson and Ye 1991). Indeed, in the LRs two different academic presences can be felt: the writer's presence (the presence of the person speaking in the text) and the cited author's presence (whose voice is being reported). The choice of a particular reporting verb is associated to evaluation and action with particular interactional purposes. Both voices interact dialogically with the different audiences of the PhD thesis in a type of discourse which has traditionally been considered to be neutral and objective. Given the social distance between the participants in the thesis, our main hypothesis is that politeness strategies will be used to maintain adequate interpersonal relationships and shield individual acts in both subcorpora, although cultural differences may emerge.

3.2.1 Shielding cited author acts from FTAs

When analysing stance-constructing reporting verbs, Thompson and Ye (1991) identify the use of reporting verbs to attribute a position to the original author and construct a positive, negative or neutral stance towards the reported information. In terms of speech act theory, providing arguments proceeds at a representative level (Weigand 2010: 160). It is based on a *claim to truth* which relates to a certain state of affairs and aims at acceptance by *convincing* the interlocutor. This claim contains an evaluative component and is in principle open to discussion. The reaction can include doubts or clear rejection. This implies that arguments are necessary to back up the position and a choice must be made on the communicative means towards removing obstacles and coming to some common understanding.

Author's positioning is typically found in Move 1 *Establishing one part of the territory of one's own research* of the LR, where the review of previous studies and achievements allows the cited authors' voices to be heard.

Neutral stance is frequently attributed to authors. As already mentioned in 3.1, passives and impersonal constructions avoid personal responsibility and reinforce the non-implication in the claim. The following examples illustrate negative politeness strategies:

(19) *Brown et al. [26] found* users could recognize different Tactons with an accuracy rate of 71%. *Brewster & King [20] found* simple Tactons could be successfully used to encode information for a vibrotactile progress bar for blind and visually impaired computer users. TE3

(20) *It has also been found* that users are reluctant to provide an abundance of annotations unless there is some benefit to the user [Halvey and Keane, 2007]. *Van Zwol et al. [2008] approach* this problem by transferring video annotation into an online gaming scenario. TE7

(21) En términos generales, el diseño de un controlador por planificación de ganancia para una planta no lineal *se suele describir* como un procedimiento de cuatro pasos (Aström and Wittenmark, 1995; Shamma and Athans, 1990; Hyde and Glover, 1993), con diferentes opciones técnicas en cada uno de ellos (ver anexo B). TS7

(22) Los AG han sido ampliamente utilizados para resolver problemas de programación de proyectos. *Lancaster & Ozbayrak [63] hacen una revisión sobre el tema*. TS10

Negative politeness, i.e. **s**howing respect to the other, is also achieved by means of hedging. Epistemic verbs (e.g. English *propose, suggest* and Spanish *proponer, sugerir, pretender, intentar*) illustrate deliberative acts which express the possibility of a state of affairs (Weigand 2010: 168) and serve to soften the imposition of an FTA and show the author's deference before the scientific community. Arguments are expressed cautiously, remaining open to alternative interpretations and inviting readers to participate in the dialogue.

In the examples personal subjects weaken the universality of the author's claims:

(23) *Stockman suggests* this can be attributed both to the expense of acquiring the hardware components necessary for Braille output and the lack of fluency in reading Braille amongst many blind and visually impaired users. TE3

(24) *He also suggests* that fisheye views should be more useful than other approaches in navigating around or examining unknown parts of a large file. TE4

(25) Este tipo de selección *fue sugerida inicialmente por Baker [Baker, 1985].* TS9

(26) *Nonobe e Ibaraki [74] proponen* una búsqueda tabú utilizando una lista de actividades, y un mecanismo de reducción del vecindario. TS10

A typical resource of the Spanish theses is to use non-personal subjects and *se pasivo-reflejo* constructions to avoid personal attribution and protect the reviewed author's positive face:

(27) *En HTECRP se pretenden emplear* las mejores rutas para el tráfico de alta prioridad y para prevenir la congestión, por lo que *los autores sugieren* la utilización del protocolo para labores de carga en tiempo real. TS3

(28) En [ALKARAKOO] *se propone una clasificación,* a nivel de estructura de red y de operación del protocolo, que presenta una visión global de las diferentes técnicas de encaminamiento que *se contemplan en la actualidad*, y que podemos observar en la figura 2.2. TS3

Another way of protecting the cited author's positive face in both sets of theses is to attribute acts to generic nouns (*the authors/los autores*):

(29) In all the above models of data exploration processes, *the authors propose* an initial overview of the data is required, before gradually focusing on the areas that are identified as of interest. TE3

(30) *Los autores de este trabajo propusieron* una solución heurística que tenía como objetivo maximizar la ganancia económica global, manteniendo un nivel de servicio aceptable de cara al usuario final. TS2

On other occasions, reporting verbs make the reviewed author visible since they reflect her/his positive or negative attitude. Positive attitude reflects the author's agreement with other authors' ideas, while negative attitude is associated to critical comments on the work of others. In both cases, intentions to influence the reader's behaviour underlie, which relates acts of agreement and criticism to potential FTAs requiring careful management. One strategy aims at showing approval and engaging with the reader and

the scientific community as a whole. This attitude of social engagement is manifest in both corpora.

The reporting verbs in the examples illustrate positive politeness strategies directed at showing solidarity and acceptance of other rival researchers and the scientific community as a whole. The non-integral citation in brackets or parenthesis constitutes the source where the information comes from. Emphasis is given to the acceptance of the information contained in the proposition:

(31) *Multiple other studies show the effectiveness* of ontology-based expansion [Bhogal et al., 2007]. TE7

(32) *Multiple research* (e.g. Tombros and Sanderson [1998]; White et al. [2003]) *indicates* that such snippets are most informative when they show the search terms in their corresponding context. TE7

(33) Las redes neuronales *han demostrado* ser también una buena herramienta para la aproximación de funciones [Jin, 2005]. TS9

The cited author is reported to be on good terms with colleagues in the field by showing that they share claims, ideas and experiences. The strategy shows how well the results agree and support each other, reaffirming the communality of scientific knowledge (Myers 1989: 12):

(34) *Edwards et al. stressed* the importance of the user being in control when browsing data through non-visual interfaces, in order to avoid information overload [46]. *Stevens [144] also emphasises* the importance of control of information flow in accessibility interfaces, proposing that this should be incorporated into the design principles for such interfaces in order to ensure blind and visually impaired users can engage in active data exploration (rather than passive listening). *Hunt & Hermann [70] have extended this to emphasise* the importance of interaction, to reflect

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properties of real-world interaction between humans and the objects in their environments. TE3

(35) *Many writers have noted* the importance of having others see what we are doing as an *extremely significant* aspect to playing MMORPGs. TE5

(36) GARA también sentó las bases para la discusión en torno a la efectividad de las estrategias de asignación de recursos en el Grid. A partir de la publicación de este trabajo, *muchos investigadores apoyaron* la tesis de que la reserva anticipada de recursos era la única forma de alcanzar unos niveles de fiabilidad y de calidad de servicio razonables en el contexto de la computación Grid. En cambio, *otros investigadores seguían apoyando* el aprovisionamiento bajo demanda, a pesar de los problemas que presentaba en situaciones de sobrecarga. Esta discusión se ve reflejada en *varios trabajos que apoyan* la superioridad de la reserva anticipada sobre la reserva bajo demanda [24] y [25]. TS2

(37) Debido a que los clubs no son más energéticamente eficientes que los árboles de expansión para conectar nodos en una red de gran extensión, *DMSTRP es una solución elegante para redes amplias, según los autores*. TS3

In contrast, negative positions are typically avoided in both sets of LRs. In fact, although instances of criticism are found in the English corpus, Spanish writers do not report on negative evaluation. Only one example of criticism has been found in the Spanish corpus, and its strength is softened by means of a *se pasivo-reflejo* construction, which aims at obscuring the reviewing author's personal responsibility for the negative evaluation:

(38) Debido a que *se critica* el uso de receptores GPS, asumimos que HECTOR no los incorpora [...] TS3

Criticism threatens positive face (the desire to be approved of by others according to Brown and Levinson's definition; self-respect, in Weigand's words) and needs to be redressed. In the English corpus, personal attribution conveys the limitation of the criticism, as it represents it as the cited author's opinion and implicitly acknowledges that others may hold alternative opinions (Hyland and Diani 2009: 11):

(39) *Kelly [2004] criticises* the study approaches that focus on display time as relevance indicator, as she assumes that information-seeking behaviour is not influenced by contextual factors such as topic, task and collection. Therefore, she performed a study to investigate the relationship between information-seeking task and the display time. TE7

(40) *Dourish and Bellotti also criticise* these types of "formal and static" role based access control mechanisms championing the more "subtle and dynamic" approach of the document editing system ShrEdit. TE5

(41) Despite their intuitive and straightforward character, *researchers have begun questioning* the level of support these techniques offer (Bates, 1990). *Buckley, Salton and Allan (1994) argue that the design of existing RF systems does not provide* adequate information to support the effective operation of the underlying query re-formulation heuristics and algorithms, discouraging users from applying relevance assessments to the viewed items. TE8

The alternative strategy seeks to avoid direct personal responsibility for the critical comment by not mentioning the source of the negative judgement. In the example in English, the use of the agentless passive avoids personal commitment although the adverb *still* strengthens the negative assessment:

(42) Several applications have been proposed for feature extraction (Belkin 2000, Chien-Kang, Lee-Feng & Yen-Jen 2003) and query expansion (Cui, Wen, Nie & Ma 2003).

However, *their quality has been questioned*, while their benefit for estimating user interests is *still* unclear. TE10

Another way of softening the interpersonal damage of negative evaluation is to use hedges which reduce the antagonism between the cited author and the author being reported. In the following example the force of the refutation in the first sentence is mitigated with the epistemic lexical verb *suggest* in the second sentence:

(43) Schmidt[116] also *admits* that the concept of awareness in CSCW is *at best vague*. He *suggests* that the confusion results from such notions such as 'passive awareness' and false dichotomies such as 'explicit' versus 'implicit', 'deliberate' versus 'automatic', 'conscious' versus 'unconscious', 'focused' versus 'unfocused', or 'obtrusive' versus 'unobtrusive'. TE5

A clearly mitigating strategy involves pairing a criticism with a positive judgement so as to compensate for the disagreement by recognizing valuable contributions:

(44) While this approach *is shown to be useful, it suffers from the lack* of annotations which is common for multimedia is shared online [Halvey and Keane, 2007]. TE7

(45) Although *the accuracy of implicit approaches has been questioned (Nichols 1997), recent studies have shown that they can be an effective substitute* for explicit relevance feedback (White et al. 2002b). TE10

3.2.2 Shielding writer acts from FTAs

The writer's stance towards the reviewed author's material and her/his own research is also constructed in the reported proposition. Indeed, citing another author involves the evaluation of that author, thus opening an 'evaluative space' for writer comment

(Thompson and Ye 1991: 369). Through the use of citations, writers position themselves in terms of their relationship with reviewed authors by emphasising or disguising their responsibility for their own propositions and claims. Examples of writer's stance are found in both corpora. Evaluative reporting verbs show non-factive, factive or counter-factive stance (Thompson and Ye 1991) and are mainly used in Move 1 *Establishing one part of the territory of one's own research* and Move 2 *Creating the research niche in response to Move 1*. The writer's attitude towards her/his own work is typically found in Move 3 *Occupying the research niche*, where s/he uses positive evaluative resources other than reporting verbs. Since this study focused on stance-constructing reporting verbs, we will illustrate writer's stance in Move 1 and Move 2.

3.2.2.1 Move1 Establishing one part of the territory of the writer's own research. In general, the main strategies in Move 1 that allow us to hear the writer's voice , i.e. that make writers visible, include expressing individual opinion, showing solidarity with the scientific community and engagement with the reader and praising the cited author.

   Non-factive stance shows no clear signal as to the writer's individual opinion towards the reliability of the cited author's findings. Reporting verbs under this label are found in situations where the writer's non-commitment makes it unnecessary to redress the bald-on-record act. English *make, indicate, distinguish, introduce, cite, denote, examine, note* and *pose*, and Spanish *presentar, emplear, aplicar, desarrollar, realizar, usar*, *utilizar, ofrecer* and *diseñar,* typically exemplify this neutral attitude:

   (46) *Carpineto (Carpineto et al. 1998) has examined* the concept of relative entropy in the context of automatic query expansion. *He developed* a weighting formula based on the Kullback-Liebler distance (Kullback & Leibler 1951) to derive candidate terms for query expansion. TE10

(47) Studies have revealed a complex relationship between the questionnaire type, question content and users' responses. *Tourangeau et al. [2000] pose* that users are more willing to report sensitive information in self-completion surveys than in interviews. TE7

(48) Another personalisation technique is document recommendation. *Anderson [2006],* editor-in-chief of the Wired Magazine, *claims* that "we are leaving the Information Age and entering the Recommendation Age." TE7

(49) *Muchos trabajos* que aparecen sobre modelado borroso de sistemas *presentan* una tendencia a desarrollar un modelo en dos pasos bien diferenciados: primero un modelo rápido y tosco, para pasar a continuación a un ajuste fino. Mientras que el agrupamiento *se emplea* para la determinación del modelo inicial, para el paso final del ajuste fino de parámetros, el rango es muy amplio: *se aplican* las técnicas habituales *desarrolladas* para redes neuronales si tenemos una estructura ANFIS (Adaptive Network-based-Fuzzy-Inference System*), (Jang, 1993), se puede realizar* un ajuste fino con gradiente aplicado al modelo borroso *(Kim et al. 1997)* o *usar* el aprendizaje *competitivo (Dickerson and Kosko, 1996).* TS7

However, non-factive reporting verbs (e.g. *make*) tend to co-occur with evaluative lexis such as *extremely interesting* and *significant*, thereby portraying the writer's attitude towards the author's material as positive in the English corpus:

(50) *One observation made by Taylor that is extremely interesting* was how some players came to identify their avatar as 'more them' than their corporeal body. TE5

(51) *Findlater & McGrenere [58] made a significant step towards understanding* how best to facilitate this type of customisation and adaptation. TE5

This strategy is also found in Spanish. In these examples, although the reporting verb is neutral (e.g. *causar, realizar, presentar*) the use of evaluative adjectives and nouns (*impacto, importantes, contribuciones, interesantes, completo*, *satisfactorios*) in the surrounding context is directed at showing the reviewed author's positive face:

(52) Desde el punto de vista del modelado cinemático de vehículos con ruedas, *las publicaciones que han causado mayor impacto* hasta ahora son [Muir et al. 87] [Campion et al. 96] [Alexander et al. 789], referidas an un gran número de publicaciones y libros. TS4

(53) *Otro grupo de investigadores*, liderado por el Dr. Peter H. Bauer en la University of Miami (EEUU) y el Dr. Kamal Premaratne en la University of Notre Dame (EEUU), *ha realizado importantes contribuciones* al problema de los SCBR ([Bau98], [Bau99a], [Bau99b], [Lor00], [Bau01a], [Bau01b], [Bau01c], [Sic01]). TS5

(54) *El grupo de investigación* encabezado por el Dr. Gregory C. Walsh de la University of Maryland y la Dra. Linda G. Bushnell de la University of Washington, también *ha presentado interesantes trabajos* en el área de los SCBR ([Bel00], [Bel01], [Bus01], [Wal01a], [Wal01b], [Wal02a], [Wal02b], [Ye 00]). TS5

(55) *Stephanopoulos and San [1984] presentan un completo estudio* de la estimación en línea de biorreactores, empleando para ello un filtro Kalman extendido. *Presentan resultados satisfactorios* de estimación de estados y parámetros, bajo condiciones de estado estable y considerando la medición proporcionada por el análisis de gases fuera de línea de una fermentación. TS8

Reporting verbs of factive stance overtly show the writer's acceptance of the cited author's positive face. Most of these verbs refer to research and mental processes (e.g. English *enforce, demonstrate, show, prove, agree, support* and *back up*, and Spanish

demostrar, dar una solución, aportar, posibilitar, proporcionar, confirmar, permitir, and *destacar*):

(56) *Esbjörnsson et al. [55], in particular, demonstrate* how URLs and user profiles can be exchanged using serendipitous ad hoc networking between motorcyclists. TE5

(57) *El marco matemático establecido en estos trabajos permite* al diseñador de sistemas de control analizar la influencia de los retrasos temporales en las prestaciones. TS5

(58) *A partir de los resultados obtenidos demuestran* cómo en un SCBR, a diferencia de en un sistema de control discreto convencional, reducir el periodo de muestreo no siempre mejora las prestaciones ya que al hacerlo aumenta el volumen de información utilizando el enlace compartido, haciendo aumentar el retraso. TS5

In English, writer's agreement with cited authors and personal commitment are evident with the use of first person pronouns:

(59) First of all, *we agree with Dix et al. [1993]* that users' interactions with retrieval interfaces can be seen as low-level events. TE7

Positive politeness techniques display solidarity of the writer with the scientific community and involvement with the reader. Solidarity is found when writers claim common ground, i.e. they provide basic generally accepted information on the research topic being reported (Gil-Salom and Soler-Monreal 2009). In the following examples impersonalisation and passives help the writer to assume shared common ground knowledge and build social closeness with other researchers (Hyland 1998: 64):

(60) *It has been proven* [58, 66] to be NP-hard to find a maximum cardinality weakly stable matching for an instance of SMTI. TE9

(61) El presente capítulo presenta una revisión del modelo dinámico general, siendo *el modelo basado en balance de masas que más se emplea* para el modelado de bioprocesos. TS8

In the next example in English, the reporting verb *show,* personal attribution and inclusive *we* are efficient positive politeness strategies that create consensus with the reader in order to achieve a commonly accepted view of the world. With this praise, the writer is acknowledging the credit already accorded to the cited author by the community:

(62) However, *as the work of Goffman has shown,* while *we* may not perceive ourselves as engaging explicitly in characterisation *we* do implicitly change our character befitting any given occasion or situation. TE5

Involvement of the reader is also sought by exemplifying, as shown in this example from the Spanish corpus:

(63) *El enfoque innovador de este trabajo posibilita* evaluar casos muy reales donde se tienen en cuenta detalles de los sitios que hasta el momento no podían ser estudiados. *Por ejemplo*, este trabajo permite diferenciar los sitios por sus intereses y prioridades. TS2

Writer's stance can also convey the praise of the cited author/s' achievements. The writer draws attention to the positive value of previous experiments and identifies herself/himself with the author's views. Factive stance can be achieved with non-factive reporting verbs followed by the superlative:

(64) Indeed, *the most successful video retrieval systems* that have been evaluated within TRECVid (e.g. [Snoek et al., 2008; Hauptmann et al., 2005]) *employ* these two approaches to improve their retrieval results. TE7

(65) La extensión de la teoría de Lyapunov [Jankovic et al. 2000] al análisis de estabilidad de sistemas borrosos *es uno de los métodos más empleados*. TS1

In addition, factive stance is obviously conveyed with factive reporting verbs and reinforced with other voice resources inside the sentence. In the first example from an English LR, the use of the certainty adverb *clearly* contributes to expressing the claim to truth with assertive definiteness (Weigand 2010: 168) and emphasising the convincing and positive stance towards the cited authors conveyed by the reporting verb *show*. In the next examples, the evaluative adverb *significantly* and the noun *effectiveness* overtly express the writer's personal attitude towards the review of previous studies, which predisposes readers towards the acceptance of the research and the knowledge claims reported:

(66) *He reports on an experiment which clearly shows* that fisheye views show the necessary structural information and the subject does not feel lost in the information space. TE4

(67) Other personalisation techniques based on ODP include [Chirita et al., 2005; Sieg et al., 2007; Chaffee and Gauch, 2000; Tanudjaja and Mui, 2002*], who show that* incorporating this taxonomy *can significantly outperform* unpersonalised search techniques. TE7

In the following examples from the Spanish corpus, verbs such as *mejorar, optimizar* imply positive evaluation. Other factive reporting verbs (e.g. *demostrar, aportar*) often collocate with nominal and adjectival compliments (*eficiencia, interesantes*), thus

reinforcing appraisal of the cited authors. The writer's stance is clear and confident. Even if, as happens in the last example, a research noun (*estrategia*) is used, which maintains the necessary objectivity, some writer visibility is obtained:

(68) El protocolo DMSTRP [HUANG06] *mejora a* BCDCP mediante la construcción de MSTs (Minimum Spanish Trees) en vez de los clubs que conectan los nodos en los clústeres. TS3

(69) Kolisch [55] *demuestra* que para el caso de dos recursos no renovables, el problema de asignación de modos es NP-completo y que el MRCPSP NP-duro. TS10

(70) De forma más reciente, el grupo de investigación liderado por el Dr. Mo-Yuen Chow, en la North Carolina State University *ha aportado algunas contribuciones interesantes* al problema de los SCBR ([Alm01], [Cho01a], [Cho01b], [Tip01], [Alm02a], [Alm02b], [Tip02], [Alm03]). TS5

(71) *Esta estrategia ha demostrado su eficiencia para resolver* algunos tipos de problemas. T2

3.2.2.2 Move 2 Creating a research niche (in response to Move 1). The writer's voice is also heard in Move 2, i.e. where s/he establishes the niche which s/he intends to occupy with the research presented in the thesis. All the English theses use a variety of different strategies to establish the niche in research: counter-claiming, gap-indicating, asserting confirmative claims about knowledge or research practices surveyed, asserting the relevancy of the surveyed claims to one's own research and abstracting or synthesizing the strengths and weaknesses of previous achievements (Kwan 2006). In the Spanish corpus, only two theses use all these strategies. Generally, the Spanish writers use two strategies in the move. Move 2 is typically realised by counter-claiming and indicating a gap or need in previous research solutions or proposals (six Spanish theses use both strategies). Counter-claiming is also combined with abstracting or synthesising the

strengths and weaknesses of previous achievements (in three theses). The validity of previous approaches and their relevancy to the writer's research is also asserted (in one and four Spanish LRs, respectively). All these rhetorical purposes are associated with personal judgements and serve the writer's means of praising and criticizing so as to make her/his claims visible.

Praise takes place when the thesis work is presented as a link continuing the tradition of previous research and the writer asserts relevant claims about knowledge or research practices surveyed. Criticism occurs when a gap, problem or need is indicated or previous claims are questioned. In order to express her/his personal praising and critical evaluative judgements towards the work of others, the writer exploits a number of options including stance-constructing reporting verbs.

The analysis of the corpus shows that the writer's stance is constructed differently in English and Spanish. The tendency of English writers is to recur to personal implication and deliberative speech acts (Weigand 2010) with verbs meaning tentativeness. The Spanish writer's preferences show personal distancing and avoidance of confrontation.

In English, factive stance towards others' claims is achieved through evaluative lexis, rather than reporting verbs. However, in Spanish, examples implying factive reporting verbs and evaluative markers show the connection between previous valid studies and the research presented in the thesis, emphasising the communality of scientific knowledge and the writer's acceptance of established claims:

(72) Otro grupo de investigación que recientemente *ha aportado importantes publicaciones a la línea de investigación que es objeto de estudio en este trabajo* es el representado por el Dr. Michael S. Branicky de la Case Western Reserve University. TS5

(73) La línea de investigación dedicada al control multifrecuencia y con muestreo no convencional incluye gran cantidad de trabajos publicados entre los que *cabe citar como ejemplos de especial interés para el trabajo desarrollado* las siguientes referencias: [Skl55], [Kra57], [Kal59], [Jur67], [Mey75], [Gla83], [Ara86], [Tho86], [Alb90], [God90], [Mey90], [Ara93], [Sal92], [Sal93], [Lon94], [Alb96], [Cam99], [Alb99a], [Alb99c], [Tan99], [Tor99], [Yup99], [Sal00b]. TS5

Negative evaluation of the cited author's work is expressed when the writer takes a counter-factive stance. When the writer's purpose is to establish the niche for her/his own alternative claim, counter-factive stance portrays the cited author's judgements as false, incorrect or incomplete. Refutative assertions are inherently face-threatening, which leads writers to redress criticism with different politeness techniques.

A way of avoiding personal attacks by both English and Spanish writers is to use research nouns as the subjects of reporting verbs. This strategy tends to conceal rather than reveal the role of the writer (Charles 2006b: 499). In the examples, the selection of negations and research verbs make deficiencies manifest:

(74) *None of the original studies provide* the standard deviations for their work proportions, and the figures are also produced for the department as a whole rather than individual programs, making it impossible to definitively determine if this is the case. TE2

(75) Sanderson and Joho [2004] evaluate various other approaches which can compete with the pooling approach. *None of the introduced assessment approaches*, *however, result in* complete lists containing all relevant documents of the collection. TE7

(76) *Their research tries* to model only certain phases of the search process like clicking the results and to some extent the process of looking and identifying the results to click, *while it does not consider* searcher characteristics (e.g. patience, fatigue). TE10

(77) However, *such techniques* can only be carried out based on a specific system configuration and, therefore, *fail to benchmark* the performance of different parameter settings. TE10

(78) La propuesta presentada por Hera *no aborda* cómo se implementan estos servicios Web *ni propone* un método para derivar servicios Web a partir de los modelos Hera. TS6

(79) Una crítica general a todas las propuestas es que *ninguna de ellas propone* una guía para derivar automáticamente los servicios Web a partir de los modelos conceptuales que proponen. Además, *tampoco proponen* servicios Web que den soporte a la navegación definida en sus métodos. TS6

Another means in both corpora enabling the writer to construct a stance of academic modesty is the use of first person pronouns in the plural. Although it is clear from the context that the writer alone is responsible for the proposition, the tendency is to mask the writer's stance. This makes potentially face-threatening statements more acceptable to the discipline community. This attitude of constructed deference is particularly appropriate for a thesis writer, who is both a candidate and a future professional member of the field. It is used in relation to statements which may involve a challenge to accepted norms, procedures or knowledge (Charles 2006b):

(80) *To our best knowledge, only few of the above systems address issues* with information overload and profile learning. TE10

(81) *Consideramos que EECR es un buen enfoque* en lo que a modos de funcionamiento y fases se refiere, al igual que destacamos similares conceptos en *SOP* o *LEACH*, *pero consideramos necesaria* la incorporación de mecanismos distribuidos para realizar de manera eficiente la elección de los *CHs* y la formación de los clústeres. TS3

On other occasions, writers hedge their criticisms with negative forms or partial negations, or obscure their presence by referring to themselves in the 3rd person singular. The strategy shows that the individual researcher is accorded little importance and contributes to objectivity. It reduces personal commitment to reported propositions and indicates a certain polemicity which invites argumentation and discussion:

(82) This raises the question how is characterization in these game worlds different from how we get to know people in everyday face-to-face life? *While some have suggested that since this is not everyday life then this characterization is completely different. Although this is not something the author agrees with*. TE5

(83) Por ello*, el autor considera que* en lo referente a *QoS este protocolo no aporta nada.* TS3

The use of first person pronouns in the singular in the English corpus shows the writer's personal implication but limits the scope of the criticism. The writer contests points of view and stresses her/his responsibility for the proposition. In the examples, the use of the human subject *I* refers exclusively to the writer and co-occurs with the mental verb *feel*, thus revealing the writer's stance most visibly:

(84) These textbooks all focus on one particular aspect of the results: that fixing bugs is a small proportion of what maintenance programmers do, while changes to functionality (Adaptive and Perfective maintenance) are more important. However*, I feel that this ignores* the original tone of the Swanson categorisations, which make it clear that Corrective and Adaptive maintenance should be considered together as unavoidable sources of maintenance whilst Perfective maintenance represents voluntary reasons to make changes. TE2

(85) Given the confusion over the naming and attribution of work categories, *I feel it is incumbent on me to make clear* what I consider the various categories to be. TE2

The following example illustrates an interesting case, where the writer explicitly expresses agreement with a scathing criticism from a group of authors:

(86) *Both Zelkowitz and Wallace and Tichy et al. are scathing about* the quality of empirical work produced describing it as scant and minimal and mostly lacking comparative analysis with either current research or the state of practice. *My own impression* of the research in Software Maintenance *agrees with this view*. TE2

Counter-factive reporting verbs in the English corpus such as *fail, ignore* or *lack* explicitly signal the absence of an act that might have been expected from the cited author and are found in critical judgements with a corrective or descriptive intention. In the following examples, the English writer indicates a lack of research in related studies and then presents a justification for her/his argument in a tentative way to construct claims that are more limited or less reliable thereby reducing personal commitment and conveying respect for alternative views (Hyland 1998):

(87) Given the lack of references to the paper, and the general *lack* of structured teaching of maintenance discovered by Taylor et al. or Layzell and Macauly, *this suggests that* this formal approach *has not found* much favour with companies in the subsequent years.TE2

(88) In [99] Mortensen points to the distinction players make between in game characters (IC) and out of game characters (OOC). However, this distinction *may be somewhat misguided*, it has been shown in the previous section that, experience and understanding are intertwined. TE5

The choice of Spanish writers is to use partial negations with a softening role:

(89) Emplear siempre el camino de menor coste para subir los datos hacia el *sink* conlleva un mayor gasto de los nodos involucrados, como se vio en *Energy Aware Routing*, por lo que *este enfoque de interclúster no llega a ser adecuado*. TS3

In this other example from the Spanish corpus, the FTA is softened by using adjectives with their negative prefixes instead of using negative adjectives. The parenthesis encapsulates the writer's opinion; however, her/his presence is effaced when referring to Chapter 9 of the thesis as the source of the negative evaluation:

(90) En [Marchant 95] se establece el posicionamiento a partir de un sistema de visión respecto a una línea, para lo cual se realiza una aproximación *(innecesaria como demuestra el Capítulo 9)* que da lugar a relaciones *inexactas*. TS4

When abstracting or synthesizing the strengths and weaknesses of previous achievements, the typical technique in both corpora is to combine factive and counterfactive stance. The balance of positive and negative evaluation softens the force of the criticism of another researcher's work. In this way, refutation is mitigated. In the English LRs, positive evaluation sets up a solidarity framework (of the writer with the reviewed author) in which negative remarks focus on making omissions explicit or assessing that particular acts were not performed, although successful achievements are acknowledged:

(91) *This is not a criticism of the approach but it shows* how hard it is to provide a flexible yet formal method of teaching, and shows the high value of system experts, mentors, in the learning process. *They point out* that there is a high upfront cost with producing the materials but *do not discuss* the problems of maintaining the materials to keep them current. TE2

(92) *The authors do not give* a complexity argument for their solutions. However, they *do give* empirical results of some experiments comparing their model against a distributed version of the EGS algorithm.TE9

The tendency of Spanish writers is to eliminate references to personal roles. This helps to construct objectivity and impersonality, based on experimental evidence and to delegate responsibility to the entity that appears in subject position. It also conveys an attitude of deference towards the author behind the reported research:

(93) WSDM *permite* el uso de servicios Web externos [77, 76] *pero no soporta* el diseño ni la implementación de los servicios Web propios. Esta propuesta *no presenta* un método para derivar los servicios Web a partir de sus modelos conceptuales. TS6

(94) También se plantea la posibilidad de emplear diferentes frecuencias de muestreo en controlador y planta, lo cual lleva a la consideración de una estructura de control multifrecuencia que*, si bien en estos trabajos se presenta de forma poco desarrollada, demuestra su potencial* para la resolución de problemas como el propuesto en el desarrollo del proyecto. TS5

(95) *Este trabajo difiere de la propuesta de la tesis* en que WebML [75, 30] *propone* una extensión que permite modelar servicios Wen y que genera automáticamente su implementación, *pero no propone* ningún método que permita derivar el diseño de los servicios Web a partir de los modelos conceptuales WebML. TS6

(96) *Ambas aproximaciones poseen deficiencias* en cuanto a eficiencia en el mantenimiento de su topología y la dispersión de sus mecanismos de actualización, que *si bien incorporan ideas buenas,* como la topología jerárquica en dos niveles*, no terminan de encontrar una solución óptima ni interesante*, *aunque implantan estrategias interesantes* a seguir para alcanzar una solución de compromiso *aceptable*. TS3

In the next example, the distancing technique is reinforced by impersonal constructions:

(97) Los dos últimos tipos de operaciones (Notification y Solicit&Response) *permiten publicar* los servicios Web para ser invocadas por otras aplicaciones. Por lo tanto *se puede afirmar* que WebML *permite* el diseño de servicios Web, *pero no ofrece* ninguna guía para la obtención de los mismos a partir de sus modelos. TS6

Another softening device in the Spanish corpus uses conditionals. It involves the reader in the construction of the argument through the use of hypothetical forms and a modal claim to truth which needs to be proved (Weigand 2010: 160). The device is appropriate to the doctoral candidate's status:

(98) *Esta idea estaría en el buen camino si no fuera* por la alta sobrecarga que *conllevarían* los mensajes de sincronización. TS3

4. Conclusion

Evaluation is an essential aspect of academic discourse. Academics meaningfully describe the state of the art of their disciplines by comparing and judging the relative merits of alternative theories and findings (Gesauto 2009: 325). Researchers present their new contributions to science by interpreting them in the light of previous findings and currently accepted theoretical frameworks. Such interpretations lead to the expression of views on scholarly work.

The function of the LR of a PhD thesis is not only to report the claims made in existing literature but also examine critically the research methods used to better understand whether the writer's claims are justified. The doctoral candidate needs to evaluate background information in her/his field, by reviewing what has been done

before, the strengths and weaknesses of previous studies, and what they might mean to the current research. The selection of a particular lexis, tone and style serves the thesis writer's strategic purposes to guide the reader in the understanding of the information and construct convincing arguments with the expression of appropriate stance.

When writers provide their overviews of published literature that are relevant to their subject areas, which summarise, interpret and discuss the current state of the research, a kind of dialogic game takes place. The writer's choice of citations and reporting verbs implies recognition of alternative voices and positions in the text, thus offering potentially threatening challenges to the reviewed authors' claims and to the discipline community's accepted knowledge. The mitigation of these threats can be achieved with the help of redressive techniques for successful and effective interaction with the various participants.

This study has examined citation practice and stance reporting verbs with a focus on the politeness strategies used in the LR chapters of PhD theses written in English and in Spanish in the disciplinary area of computer science. The analysis has been based on Thompson and Ye's (1991) categorisation of evaluative reporting verbs and on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory. The data obtained corroborate our initial hypothesis that politeness strategies are used in both English and Spanish LRs to maintain adequate dialogic relations and shield individual acts, although cultural differences emerge. Interaction between the reviewed author, the writer and the reader is maintained throughout LR sections with a range of devices aiming at creating reliability and acceptability conditions for claims and avoiding FTAs.

As for the structural organisation of the LRs, thesis writers in both languages follow the same organisational patterns and the academic conventions attributed to the genre. However, cultural differences can be felt. English writers tend to use integral

citations and direct quotations, thus emphasising the cited author's presence. In contrast, non-integral citations are highly used by Spanish writers. Spanish citations containing passive and impersonal constructions reduce the cited author's role thereby contributing to her/his invisibility. English LRs show personal responsibility for propositions and claims more overtly than Spanish LRs, where individual intervention remains hidden.

Evaluative reporting verbs mainly reflect positive cited author's stance and factive writer's stance in both corpora. Both English and Spanish thesis writers use positive politeness techniques that emphasise solidarity, i.e. connection and communality of cited authors with other authors, of thesis writers with cited authors and of thesis writers with the discipline community. But differences can be found when negative comments are made. English writers highlight weaknesses so as to justify the validity of their contribution and use fewer redressive strategies than Spanish writers, who tend to avoid personal confrontation and mitigate the strength of their arguments. An explanation for this trend can be found in O' Driscoll's (1996) notion of good face. It seems to be a characteristic of the Spanish culture that overt and direct criticism and personal confrontation are systematically avoided.

The results of this study show that although writers from different nationalities and with different first languages employ the same generic conventions, cultural traits specific of a speech community are identifiable and prevent uniform behavior, contributing to the diversity and richness of communication. In our view, the acquisition of generic competence on the part of novice academic writers emerges as a key objective for PhD supervisors. However, novice writers should also be sensible to the mechanisms by which attitudinal stance is activated linguistically and the effects of politeness on the writer-reader relationship. Understanding how positive and negative attitudes are conveyed should help researchers to write their academic reviews and to

consider the interpersonal and dialogic potential of evaluative resources in academic texts.

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Appendix

Table 1. List of reporting verbs in process categories in English theses (following Thompson and Ye 1991). The numbers in parenthesis indicate the number of times they are used in the corpus. The absence of a number means that the reporting verb has been used only once.

Textual processes	state (69), suggest (60), propose (45), present (34), note (22), argue (20), report (13), discuss (13), highlight (12), define (10), indicate (8), stress (5), describe (5), introduce (6), cite (5), mention (4), point out (3), extend, come up with, reiterate, detail, refer to, illustrate, outline, speak about, conclude, list, say, express, address, exemplify, comment, formulate, determine, term, underline, account for, write, add, pose, claim, make a point, draw attention, point out, emphasize, make an argument, give an argument, recommend, criticize, warn, question, address, explain, admit, oversimplify
Mental processes	assume (5), view (4), believe (3),consider(2), treat (2), denote, concentrate (2), determine (2), portray, think, regard, know, see, bring attention to, compare, acknowledge, predict, provide, neglect, support, recognize, attempt, ignore, distinguish, focus on, back up, be in agreement
Research processes a. Findings	find (42), show (41), observe (6), discover (6), prove (5), provide evidence (4), provide (3), emerge, arise, offer, turn out, encounter, detect, obtain, exhibit, give results, reveal, ensure, enforce, demonstrate, become evident, fail, lack
b. Procedures	develop (10), examine (9), investigate (7), measure (7), perform (4), create (3), design (2), analyse, exploit, take an approach, model, generate, use, employ, utilize, experiment, search, capture, gather, assess, simulate, expand, classify, deal with, involve, sample, survey, follow, evaluate, look at, identify, adopt

Table 2. List of reporting verbs in process categories in Spanish theses (following Thompson and Ye 1991). The numbers in parenthesis indicate the number of times they are used in the corpus. The absence of a number means that the reporting verb has been used only once.

Textual processes	proponer (64), presentar (36) , describir (14), plantear (12), introducir (9), extender (4), enunciar (4), comentar (3), reportar (3), destacar (2), representar (2), achacar, afirmar, ampliar, avisar, citar, concretar, confirmar, criticar, defender, definir, dejar constancia, denominar, detallar, dictaminar, explicitar, firmar, hacer hincapié, justificar, publicar, señalar, sugerir
Mental processes	asumir (5), considerar (4), abordar (3), apoyar (3), centrarse (3), comparar (3), dar soporte (2), pretender (2), achacar, basarse en, concluir, deducir, desasociar, distinguir, dedicarse a, estar enfocado a, inspirar, ofrecer soporte, optar, orientarse a, partir de, perseguir, quedar claro, recaer, reconocer, saber, suponer, tener en cuenta, tomar en cuenta, tratar, trazarse como objetivo

Research processes	
a. Findings	permitir (10), ofrecer (3), demostrar (3), mejorar (2), mostrar (3), obtener (2), proveer (2), aportar, conseguir, constituir, dar una solución, determinar, diferir, establecer, encontrar, optimizar, posibilitar, proporcionar, poseer puntos débiles, resolver
b. Procedures	utilizar (27), desarrollar (26), emplear (25), realizar (11), abordar (8), aplicar (8), estudiar (6), analizar (5), explorar (4), incluir (2), usar (2), adaptar, adoptar, calcular, clasificar, comprobar, crear, cubrir, diseñar, implementar, investigar, requerir, revisar, seguir la línea, seleccionar