

## Graduation within the scope of Attitude in English and Spanish consumer reviews of books and movies

Marta Carretero and Maite Taboada

This chapter reports research on evaluative language in English and Spanish consumer-generated reviews on books and movies. Within the Appraisal framework, a contrastive study is carried out on the spans of Graduation embedded in spans of Attitude in 64 reviews. A qualitative analysis, covering a syntactic description of these expressions of Graduation and proposals for doubtful cases, is followed by a quantitative analysis based on the parameters of language, subtypes of Graduation, product evaluated and positive or negative evaluation. The results show that the overall distribution of the main subtypes of Graduation spans in the English and the Spanish reviews is similar, but the consideration of each parameter in detail uncovers a number of differences between the reviews written in the two languages. In particular, the results point to possible pervasive differences in the expression of Affect in English and Spanish.

### 1. Aims and framework of the study

Evaluative language surrounds us, not only in the obvious places (editorials, reviews, assessments, ‘gossip talk’) but also in many other aspects of everyday life, including news and expository material. The research that we report on in this chapter has as a larger goal to better understand how evaluative language is used in certain types of texts, and to contrast its use in English and Spanish. The route to that understanding is, in our opinion, through the careful and detailed annotation of the phenomena under study.

The framework for the present chapter is the CONTRANOT project,<sup>1</sup> a project which aims at developing contrastive corpus analyses, and then systems of annotation, for a number of linguistic categories, some of which (apart from evaluation) are coherence relations, tense, aspect and modality, with the ultimate goal of creating and validating contrastive functional descriptions for English and

Spanish. The systems of annotation are to be designed for use by non-academic annotators, who will be provided with relatively simple sets of instructions.

Part of the work included in this project concerns the design of a coding scheme of Appraisal as studied within Systemic-Functional Linguistics (Martin and White 2005; White 2003) through the analysis and annotation of texts from the Simon Fraser University Review Corpus (Taboada 2008), a corpus of consumer-generated reviews on hotels, books and movies. The scheme is to be used for the future annotation of evaluation in an English-Spanish corpus, CONTRASTES (Lavid 2008; Lavid et al. 2007, 2010). Once annotated, the reviews will be part of this corpus. Since this scheme, like the other schemes to be designed within the project, is to be used by non-specialists, our approach to evaluation will have to be restrictive, giving preference to the evaluative charge of individual words and expressions against the overall evaluative effect of all the expressions in a given text. It could even be stated that, in reality, every word has its charge of evaluation: when we speak or write, even in those messages whose main role is to transmit information with a high degree of objectiveness, we design our utterances with the purpose of presenting a certain world view to the addressee.<sup>2</sup>

We have presented ongoing work in this effort relating to the evaluation of consumer reviews according to the Appraisal framework; more concretely, we have dealt with the selection of the spans of Attitude to be annotated (Taboada and Carretero 2012, to appear) and with how epistemic modality provokes overlaps between Attitude and Engagement (Carretero and Taboada, to appear). In this chapter, we focus on the evaluative spans of Graduation embedded under larger spans of Attitude. In Section 2, the corpus and its characteristics are presented. Section 3 contains an introduction of Appraisal and its subcategories followed by more detailed features of the spans under study. Section 4 provides the results of the analysis of these Graduation spans, with the corresponding discussions, and Section 5 shows preliminary conclusions and a roadmap for further research.

## 2. The corpus

The corpus analyzed for this chapter is part of the larger SFU Review Corpus, which consists of reviews of books, movies and other consumer products (Taboada 2008), a total of 1,600 texts. The English reviews were extracted from the web page Epinions.com. A first data collection (400 texts) took place in 2004, and a second round of the same number was collected in 2008. For Spanish, we used reviews collected in 2008 from two web sites: Ciao.es and Dooyoo.es. The reviews are all written by non-experts and posted online, with the purpose of being informative

to other potential viewers. The corpus is a comparable (not parallel) one, in that the genre is the same across languages: the medium, the writers and the audience are assumed to be similar, and the texts deal with the common experience of watching a film or reading a book, and commenting on it.

The English corpus has been analyzed elsewhere (Taboada 2011) as an instance of a particular genre, that of consumer reviews, with a detailed description of the stages that it contains. This genre differs, in formality and structural characteristics, from that of critical reviews written by professional book and movie critics of the type that one can find in a newspaper. Upon examination (but not full analysis) of the texts in Spanish, we can state that the generic structure is quite similar to that of the English reviews: we also find Description and Evaluation stages in most of the texts. Those stages can be sub-classified as description or evaluation of plot, characters, or other aspects of the movie. In addition, some reviews contain optional Background and Subject Matter stages, where additional details or a general summary of the book or movie's content are provided. In terms of register (Eggins and Martin 1997; Halliday 1989), they all share similar properties of field (discussion and evaluation of the product), tenor (informal even if the audience is unknown) and mode (written).

For this chapter, we selected 64 reviews, 32 for each language, equally divided into those that review books and movies. We concentrated on books and movies because both are intellectual products, and their reviews tend to be longer and have more varied instances of evaluation than those of other products. Within the 16 book and movie reviews for each language, the texts are also divided equally into favourable reviews (positive reviews, labelled as “yes” in the review identifiers) and unfavourable reviews (negative, or “no” reviews). We labelled them as positive or negative according to the reviewer's own assessment, and to the characterization of the book or movie as “recommended” or “not recommended” (“thumbs up” or “thumbs down”). This meta-information is included with the review, and we used it to label the files.

Table 1 shows a summary of the number of words and sentences for each language, according to the approximate sentence count derived by UAM CorpusTool, the system used to annotate the data.<sup>3</sup>

Table 1. Corpus statistics

	English	Spanish
Words	22,855	33,513
Words, positive reviews	13,150	24,092
Words, negative reviews	9,705	9,421
Sentences	1,182	1,521

### 3. The Appraisal system

#### 3.1 Main categories

Appraisal belongs in the systemic-functional tradition started by Halliday (Halliday 1985; Halliday and Matthiessen 2004), and has been developed mostly in Australia by Jim Martin, Peter White and colleagues (Martin 2000; Martin and White 2005; White 2003).

Martin (2000) characterizes appraisal as the set of resources used to negotiate emotions, judgements, and valuations, alongside resources for amplifying and engaging with those evaluations. He considers that appraisal resources form a system of their own within the language (following the systemic functional tradition), and divides the Appraisal system into three distinct sub-systems, Attitude, Engagement and Graduation, each of which is divided in their turn into several subtypes.

**Attitude** refers to the ability to express emotional, moral and aesthetic opinions, respectively classified as Affect, Judgement and Appreciation. **Affect** covers the explicit expression of positive or negative feelings by the speaker/writer or someone else, as in (1).<sup>4</sup> **Judgement** concerns social esteem and ethical evaluations, and applies mostly to persons or institutions. In the reviews of books and movies analyzed here, it mostly applies to the ability of the creator or the actors. Finally, **Appreciation** involves evaluations of an aesthetic or functional kind, which refer mostly to works of art or literature and to non-human physical objects, rather than to humans. For instance, (2) shows one instance of Judgement (*does at times fall flat*) that clearly refers to the actor (Myers), whereas the result of his craft (*just aren't that funny*) would be considered Appreciation. Each of the Attitude categories, Affect, Judgement and Appreciation, is divided into subcategories, but these will not be taken into account for the sake of simplicity.

- (1) I've read most of the books written by Mary Higgins Clark and have **enjoyed** them. (Books no, 17)
- (2) Admittedly, Myers **does at times fall flat** more than a few times with lines that **just aren't that funny**. (Movies yes, 15)

From the description above it may be inferred that Affect evaluates the entity through the expression of feeling (the speaker/writer's, or that of someone else), whereas Judgement and Appreciation evaluate the entity by attributing a quality to it.

**Engagement** refers to the ways in which speakers or writers position themselves with respect to the information that they are presenting, and with respect to possible responses to those positions. Speakers may engage with or disengage

from their own words by quoting, reporting, acknowledging other possibilities, denying, countering, affirming, etc. (Martin and White 2005: 36). Examples of Engagement are epistemic modal expressions (*He **might** have finished his studies by now*), evidential expressions (***Apparently**, he has recovered from his illness*) or denials (*This hotel is **not** near the sea as you said*). We will not mention the subtypes of Engagement: in this chapter, reference to this category will be restricted to the cases in which it overlaps with Graduation.

Finally, the **Graduation** system is responsible for a speaker/writer's ability to intensify or weaken the strength of the opinions they express, and has Force and Focus as subsystems. Expressions of Graduation differ from those of Attitude in that they do not have intrinsic positive or negative value by themselves, but acquire them in context. Some expressions of Graduation are intensifiers applied to nouns (*real, true, genuine*) or to adjectives (*very, really*), and softeners (*kind of, sort of, or something*). Graduation is divided into two broad subtypes: Focus and Force.

**Focus** involves Graduation according to prototypicality, that is, "by reference to the degree to which they [the entities concerned] match some supposed core or exemplary instance of a semantic category" (Martin and White 2005: 137). Focus is divided into the subtypes **Sharpen** and **Soften**, which indicate proximity and distance, respectively, to a core or exemplary member of the category. Some examples of expressions realizing Sharpen are *real, true, genuine(ly), effective(ly)*, and instances of Soften are *kind of, sort of, of sorts, -ish (fourish), bordering on*.

In its turn, **Force** helps speakers or writers modulate the impact of what they say. Force is divided into intensification and quantification. **Intensification** can apply to a quality (*slightly sad*) or to a process (*greatly disturbed me*), but no difference will be made in this respect concerning annotation. Some realizations of intensification are *a bit, somewhat, relatively, fairly, rather, very, extremely, utterly*; self-pronouns when their use is optional (3); the comparative and superlative forms or constructions with adjectives. Intensification may also apply to an entity, as in (4). Apart from linguistic realizations, intensification may be realized by orthographic conventions, such as capitals (5) or exclamation (6). **Quantification** may indicate number (*a few, lots of, many, streams of*), mass/presence (*tiny, small, large, huge*) or extent in space or time (*recent, ancient; nearby, distant*).

- (3) He did it *himself*.
- (4) This is the *very* book I was reading the other day.
- (5) These are **factoids**, **NOT** descriptive passages! (Books no, 1)
- (6) the film has remained **just that. Fun!** (Movies yes, 1)

### 3.2 Graduation within the scope of Attitude

Expressions of Graduation often occur within the scope of spans of Attitude, thus emphasizing or downtoning the evaluative meaning of the superordinate spans. For example, in (7), the intensifier *tan grandes* ('so big') emphasizes the meaning of positive Judgement expressed by *similitudes* ('similarities'); In (8), another expression of intensification (*somewhat*) downtones the expression of negative Judgement *mediocre*; and in (9), the quantifier *a little* downtones the Affect expressed by *excited*.

- (7) Me **hace gracia** encontrar **similitudes tan grandes** entre su discurso y el mío...  
(Libros yes, 4–11)  
'I find it funny to find so many similarities between her discourse and mine...'
- (8) Director Mike Newell, known for his **great** work in "Enchanted April" and "Donnie Brasco" does a **somewhat, mediocre** job... (Movies no, 1)
- (9) I got **a little excited** that things were looking up only to find out that it really was nothing. (Books no, 3)

The remainder of this chapter will concentrate on these expressions of Graduation embedded within the scope of an evaluative span of Attitude. In order to carry out a quantitative analysis of the 64 reviews selected, these reviews were annotated by means of the UAM Corpus Tool (2011), a free tool designed for annotation texts, which was created and is regularly updated by Mick O'Donnell at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. The main reasons for choosing this tool were the possibilities that it offers for carrying out quantitative analyses and for designing specific systems of options, in accordance with the systemic-functional orientation of this tool. Moreover, the systems can be adapted to the needs of particular projects and permit multiple-level annotations. For the present analysis, the authors deleted the Engagement option (the resulting system is specified in Figure 1). In this way,

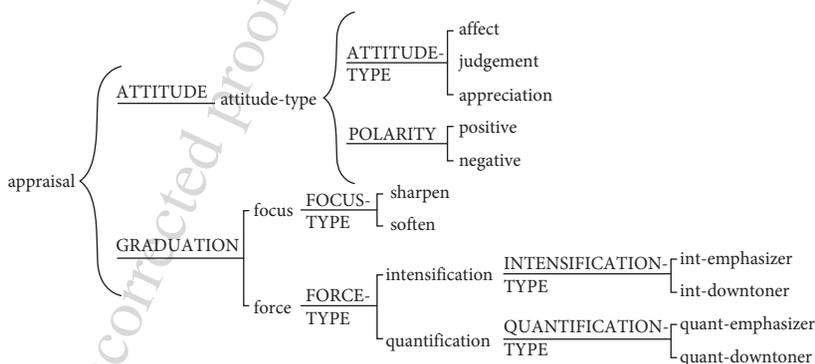


Figure 1. The Appraisal system adapted to the needs of this project

the system allows for labelling according to both Attitude and Graduation. In the case of this project, all the spans were annotated in terms of Attitude, while the annotation of Graduation was restricted to those spans that displayed sub-spans of Graduation embedded in Attitude.

### 3.2.1 *The syntax of Graduation spans embedded in Attitude spans*

The syntax of the spans of the expressions under study is varied. Many of them are pre-modifiers or post-modifiers at a Group level. Quantifiers are often determiners or modifiers in Nominal Groups (10–11), and intensifiers tend to be premodifiers in Adjectival Groups (12–13), Adverbial Groups (14–15) and less frequently Nominal Groups (16). In other cases, expressions of Graduation are Prepositional Phrases that postmodify Adjectival Groups, as is the case of the underlined expressions in (17–18):

- (10) But there are **a lot of cracks** in Katherine Watson's progressive thinking too  
(Movies no, 3)
- (11) No encontré **ninguna sorpresa** (Películas no, 2–12)  
'I didn't find any surprise'
- (12) I just felt her other novels were **much more exciting and interesting**  
(Movies no, 17)
- (13) a mí me resulta **completamente vacuo** (Películas no, 1–9)  
'for me it is completely vacuous'
- (14) **tan bien** hablaban (Libros no, 1–9)  
'they spoke so well'
- (15) While this is no question a noble cause, it was a **significant detraction** to the development of the story. (Books no, 11)
- (16) the book starts of **slowly**, and when I say **slowly**, I mean **very slowly**  
(Books no, 3)
- (17) **mediocre at best** (Movies no, 1)
- (18) **impresionante de principio a fin** (Libros no, 1–1)  
'impressive from beginning to end'

In other cases, expressions of Graduation are clausal constituents, mostly Adjuncts with diverse meanings, such as time (19), quantity (20) or manner (21).

- (19) **en ningún momento** busca la espectacularidad ni el efectismo exagerado  
(Películas yes, 4–6)  
'in no moment does it search spectacularity nor exaggerated sensationalism'
- (20) me ha gustado **bastante** (Películas yes, 5–13)  
'I have quite liked it'
- (21) I **highly** recommend *The Da Vinci Code*. (Books yes, 23)

In other cases, the syntactic relation between the spans of Graduation and the superordinate spans of Attitude is more complex. In (22–23), the Graduation span is a discontinuous modifier of an evaluative adjective, which in its turn modifies a noun. The noun itself has no evaluative meaning, but its inclusion in the span is necessary for the quantitative analysis (its exclusion would have provoked the counting of two spans instead of one). In (24–25), the Graduation span and the Attitude span are (part of) different clausal constituents, separated by a copula: the non-evaluative spans *of these theories are* and *que me aportó fueron* (“that it brought me were”) were also included in order to have the span counted as one instead of two.

- (22) When I stopped reading my husband laughed and said ‘That is **the most boring book I have ever heard**’. (Books no, 3)
- (23) Julia Roberts without a doubt, is a **good actress depending on what film she does**. (Movies no, 1)
- (24) **Very few (if any) of these theories are original** (Books yes, 23)
- (25) **lo único que me aportó fueron pesadillas varias** (Libros no, 1–14)  
‘the only thing that it brought me were nightmares of different sorts’

The Graduation span may also be syntactically superordinate to the Attitude span, even if this hierarchy does not hold for the meaning of these expressions. This tends to occur when Graduation is expressed by Nominal Groups whose head means quantity or degree. In (26), the expressions in bold are Nominal Groups headed by *pages*, but the words *boring* and *excitement* have more communicative weight. Similarly, in (27), *absurdez* (‘absurdity’) is semantically the key word of the span, even if the syntactic head of the Nominal Group is *grado* (‘degree’).

- (26) I told my husband there is **about 30 pages of boring** and then **about 3 pages of excitement**. (Books no, 3)
- (27) ya nos demostró sus **dotes intento** de progre, moderna, feminista (en el **grado de absurdez** del feminismo) (Libros no, 19)  
‘she already showed us her gifts as an attempt of trendy, modern, feminist (in the degree of absurdity of feminism)’

### 3.2.2 *The analysis of special cases*

In the analysis of the spans, we met with a number of difficulties, which we report in this subsection together with the solutions adopted. The first problem was that some spans of Attitude had two or more spans of Graduation embedded. In these cases, we only registered one span in the analysis. We might have opted for designing a system that offered the possibility to register more than one Graduation span, by adding another entry called ‘Graduation 2’ at the same level and with the same

subsystems as the ‘Graduation’ entry, but the increase in complexity would have made the system less manageable. Therefore, in these cases we decided to select the most important span from the communicative point of view. The criteria were the following:

1. Clausal constituents were given priority over modifiers. For example, (28) has two spans of Graduation: an Adjunct of time, which belongs to the category of Force: Quantification: Quant-emphasizer, and a modifier of the Adjectival Group, which belongs to the category of Focus: Sharpen. The annotated span was the first.

(28) Muchas veces es totalmente previsible (Libros no, 2,5)  
 ‘Many times it is totally foreseeable’

2. Postmodifiers were given priority over premodifiers. For instance, (29) and (30) have two Graduation spans, a premodifier (Force: Intensification: Int-emphasizer) and a postmodifier (Focus: Soften). The span registered was the second:

(29) very predictable in parts (Movies yes, 5)

(30) such a disappointing film in many levels (Movies no, 1)

The second problem was posed by the cases in which a Graduation span is subordinate to another Graduation span. In these occurrences, the superordinate span was given priority. For example, in (31), the span was globally considered as Force: Quantification: Quant-emphasizer, that is, *too much* was given priority over its modifier *a bit*.

(31) but seemed that there was a bit too much whining about how the rich and the government tend to dismiss the homeless as riff-raff. (Books no, 13)

Thirdly, litotes was considered to be a subtype of downtoning, since an affirmative evaluation is conveyed by negating its opposite (32). In this case, the extension of the Attitude and the Graduation span coincide:

(32) The make-up wasn't too good either. (Movies no, 13)

A fourth problem was posed by words and expressions of Attitude that lay within the scope of another criterion of Attitude, such as *a yuletide classic* (Movies yes, 11), *surprisingly well* (Movies yes, 11), *hilariously funny* (Movies yes, 21) or *sorprendido gratamente* (‘gratefully surprised’) (Libros yes, 4–17). This phenomenon is discussed in Martin and White (2005: 143), who consider that in collocations such as *reasonably happy* and *dreadfully cold*, the adverbs express Graduation and not Attitude, on the grounds that they undergo delexicalization. In their view, collocations such as these are “so fixed and formulaic that the intensifying

premodifying epithet no longer carries its full semantic load". We believe that this observation can be extended to less common collocations in which an expression with a lexical meaning of Attitude modifies another. In these cases, the modifying expression was annotated as a span of Graduation: Force: Intensification: Int-emphasizer.

The fifth and last issue to be reported here is the boundaries between Graduation and Engagement. A particularly frequent and complex item is *really*. According to Paradis (2003) it has three values: truth attesting of proposition (33), subjective emphasis of situation (34) and reinforcement of a scalar property (35) (the examples are hers). We considered this adverb as epistemic in the first case, which rarely occurred in the reviews, and as evaluative in the other two, since *really* highlights the intensity of either a situation expressed by a clause or a property expressed by an adjective or adverb. Polarity brought additional complexity to the analysis of this adverb: *really* is an emphasizer in affirmative sentences (36) and a downtoner in negative sentences (37):

- (33) Sue and Bill really bought the farmhouse they had been dreaming of.
- (34) I really appreciate your support.
- (35) They are really nice.
- (36) Dan Brown's knowledge of the early church, art and history really shines through in this tale (Books yes, 25)
- (37) her character was just totally generic, I didn't really care for her (Movies no, 1)

Adverbs of certainty have Graduation effects when they modify an expression of Attitude, but we consider that they belong to Engagement, not to Attitude, since the overall meaning of certainty is maintained. This is the case of *definitely* in (38) and *ciertamente* ('certainly') in (39). Adverbs of sincerity also have an intensifying function, but once again Engagement is predominant (40):

- (38) Other than that, the book is definitely a **must** read (Books yes, 25)
- (39) Las escenas sexuales son ciertamente **inverosímiles**, **sin ninguna** base que la sustenten (Libros no, 1-4)  
'The sexual scenes are certainly unbelievable, without any basis that might support them'
- (40) Sinceramente, me parece **patético** (Libros no, 1-14)  
'Sincerely, to me it seems pathetic'

## 4. Results and discussion

### 4.1 Global findings

The overall results of the quantitative analysis of the Attitude spans with Graduation embedded in them are specified in Table 2. Above all, these results display striking similarities between the English and the Spanish reviews: the differences between the percentages in each row never reach 3%, the biggest difference lying in the Int-emphasizers, which display a 2.12% higher frequency in the English reviews. The similarities and differences among subcategories explained in the remainder of this subsection are, therefore, common to English and Spanish.

Concerning the proportion of graduated spans among the total spans of Attitude, it is remarkably higher for Appreciation than for Affect and Judgement: almost half the spans of Appreciation are graduated. That is to say, reviewers tend to emphasize or downtone evaluative expressions referring to the books or movies reviewed or other non-human entities related with them to a higher extent than when the evaluative expressions concern their feelings or human entities such as the author, the actors or other people involved in the product. With regard to the subtypes of Graduation, Force is overwhelmingly predominant over Focus, and

**Table 2.** Attitude spans with Graduation in the English and Spanish reviews

Attitude	English		Spanish	
	No.	%	No.	%
Total number of spans	820	100.00	1151	100.00
Total no. of spans with graduation	327	39.88	471	40.92
Affect				
total	142	100.00	206	100.00
graduated	53	37.32	77	37.38
Judgement				
total	253	100.00	277	100.00
graduated	90	35.57	97	35.02
Appreciation				
total	425	100.00	668	100.00
graduated	184	43.29	297	44.46
Focus	44	5.37	73	6.34
Focus: Sharpen	28	3.41	42	3.65
Focus: Soften	16	1.95	31	2.69
Force	283	34.51	398	34.58
Intensification	180	21.95	232	20.16
Int-Emphasizer	142	17.32	175	15.20
Int-Downtoner	38	4.63	57	4.95
Quantification	103	12.56	166	14.42
Quant-Emphasizer	83	10.12	136	11.82
Quant-Downtoner	20	2.44	30	2.61

within Focus, Sharpen is more common than Soften, especially in English. Within Force, emphasizees predominate over downtoners in both Intensification and Quantification. These tendencies strongly suggest that reviewers use Graduation so as to intensify the evaluative expressions rather than to hedge them.

This predominance of emphasizees over downtoners is understandable, since reviews are anonymous and their main aim is to give useful opinions to potential consumers of the product. This aim means that sincerity is more highly valued than face-saving, so that the overall positive or negative evaluation is highlighted. There are accumulations of evaluative expressions, as in (41), with the Graduation spans *true gem* (Focus: sharpen) and *that I haven't seen in a long time* (Force: Quantification: Quant-Emphasizer). In certain cases, especially in negative reviews, reviewers even vent their feelings, as in (42), which contains the Intensification: Int-emphasizers *so bad* and *at all*:

- (41) The **true gem** of the film, acting wise, was Ken Watanabe. He had a **screen presence that I haven't seen in a long time**. His **charisma (magnetic, charming, forceful, and mysterious)** is what pushed me to **recommend** this movie  
(Movies yes, 5)
- (42) Warning: Spoilers in this, but the story **sucks so bad** I'm doing you a favor!! I finished reading Jack & Jill about two months ago, the reason I'm writing this review is that the **sour** taste in my mouth that I received reading this book is still there.  
I **wouldn't recommend this book at all**, it is **garbage**. (Books no, 24)

#### 4.2 Specific findings

In order to check the degree of uniformity to which the tendencies signalled in 4.1 applied to reviews of different types, an additional search was made, in which the reviews of each language were divided according to both the product evaluated and the positive or negative evaluation. The results of this search are displayed in Tables 3 and 4. These tables uncover a number of cross-linguistic differences, which will be commented in the remainder of this subsection.

Concerning Focus, its frequency is relatively higher in the Spanish reviews of books than in the rest of the subcategories. A reason for this distribution is the frequent reference to parts of the books in these reviews, as in *esa parte del libro no me gusta* ('that part of the book, I don't like') as well as the indication that the comment holds for the whole of the book *impresionante de principio a fin* ('impressive from beginning to end'), while parts of movies are less frequently subject to evaluative expressions. It must also be noted that in both languages, the cases of Focus: Soften are more common in the reviews of books than in those of movies.

**Table 3.** Spans of Graduation embedded in spans of Attitude in the English reviews classified according to product evaluated and polarity of the review

Graduation	Books-No		Books-Yes		Movies-No		Movies-Yes	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
No. of spans	55	100.00	63	100.00	98	100.00	111	100.00
FOCUS	12	21.82	5	7.94	12	12.24	15	13.51
FORCE	43	78.18	58	92.06	86	87.76	96	86.49
FOCUS								
Focus: Sharpen	6	50.00	3	60.00	8	66.67	11	73.33
Focus: Soften	6	50.00	2	40.00	4	33.33	4	26.67
FORCE								
Intensification	25	58.14	45	77.59	51	59.30	59	61.46
Quantification	18	41.86	13	22.41	35	40.70	37	38.54
INTENSIFICATION								
Int-Emphasizer	19	76.00	33	73.33	44	86.27	46	77.97
Int-Downtoner	6	24.00	12	26.67	7	13.73	13	22.03
QUANTIFICATION								
Qu-Emphasizer	15	83.33	9	69.23	30	85.71	29	78.38
Qu-Downtoner	3	16.67	4	30.77	5	14.29	8	21.62

**Table 4.** Spans of Graduation embedded in spans of Attitude in the Spanish reviews classified according to product evaluated and polarity of the review

Graduation	Books-No		Books-Yes		Movies-No		Movies-Yes	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
No. of spans	84	100.00	85	100.00	101	100.00	201	100.00
FOCUS	24	28.57	20	23.53	11	10.89	18	8.96
FORCE	60	71.43	65	76.47	90	89.11	183	91.04
FOCUS								
Focus: Sharpen	12	50.00	7	35.00	9	81.82	14	77.78
Focus: Soften	12	50.00	13	65.00	2	18.18	4	22.22
FORCE								
Intensification	32	53.33	25	38.46	57	63.33	118	64.48
Quantification	28	46.67	40	61.54	33	36.67	65	35.52
INTENSIFICATION								
Int-Emphasizer	24	75.00	17	68.00	41	71.93	93	78.81
Int-Downtoner	8	25.00	8	32.00	16	28.07	25	21.19
QUANTIFICATION								
Qu-Emphasizer	22	78.57	30	75.00	31	93.94	53	81.54
Qu-Downtoner	6	21.43	10	25.00	2	6.06	12	18.46

With regard to the subtypes of Force, Intensification predominates over Quantification in all the subcategories except for the Spanish positive book reviews. There is a striking difference between these and the English positive book reviews, in which Quantification spans are remarkably low. In the Spanish book reviews, the quantifiers *mucho* ('much, a lot') and *más* ('more') are common, as in *mucho significado* ('a lot of meaning'), *ayuda a comprenderla un poco más* ('it helps to understand it a little more'); other evaluative spans contain quantifiers that point to the amount of people likely to share the reviewer's (or others') viewpoints, as with *para otros lectores es nuevo* ('for other readers it is new') or *no dejará indiferente a nadie* ('it will not leave anyone indifferent'). In its turn, the low frequency of quantifiers in the English book reviews is partly due to the absence of some quantifiers which appear in the other categories, such as *never* or *too many*.

Concerning emphasize and downtoners in both Intensification and Quantification, downtoners display slightly higher percentages in positive than in negative reviews in all the subcategories except for the Spanish movies: this distribution is in accordance to the global analysis of the data made in Section 4.1, according to which reviewers do not really feel the need to be indirect when the evaluation is negative. This tendency is more marked in Quantification than in Intensification.

With regard to the subtypes of Intensification, the English reviews display a higher frequency of downtoners in books than in movies: the spans of the book reviews often display expressions such as *a bit* or *a little* as modifiers of adjectives, negation with *really* or litotes (as in *didn't rate this book kindly*). In Spanish, the percentage of downtoners in positive reviews of books is higher than in the other categories, although the total number is small. Concerning the subtypes of Quantification, the English positive reviews of books show a higher percentage of downtoners than the other categories, although this frequency is not significant due to the low total number of cases. As for Spanish, the tendency to use downtoners more frequently in positive reviews is combined with their higher frequency in books than in movies.

As an overall comment on the results of these tables, it may be stated the Spanish reviews display a higher degree of dependence on the kind of product evaluated (book or movie) than on the polarity of the review (positive and negative). In the Spanish review of movies, the predominance of Force over Focus, Sharpen over Soften and Intensification over Quantification are stronger. That is to say, Graduation spans tend to be more stereotyped in the reviews of the Spanish movies than in the reviews of Spanish books with regard to the categories of the Appraisal framework.

The spans of Graduation were also analyzed in terms of the kind of Attitude expressed by the superordinate span. The results are displayed in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Graduation spans classified by the type of evaluation of the superordinate span of Attitude

Attitude		English		Spanish	
		No.	%	No.	%
Affect	Graduated	53	100.00	77	100.00
	FOCUS	10	18.87	13	16.88
	Sharpen	7	13.21	6	7.79
	Soften	3	5.66	7	9.09
	FORCE	43	81.13	64	83.12
	Intensification	28	52.83	25	32.47
	Int-Emphasizer	20	37.74	21	27.27
	Int-Downtoner	8	15.09	4	5.19
	Quantification	15	28.30	39	50.65
	Qu-Emphasizer	14	26.41	32	41.56
	Qu-Downtoner	1	1.89	7	9.09
Judgement	Graduated	90	100.00	97	100.00
	FOCUS	12	13.33	14	14.43
	Sharpen	6	6.67	10	10.31
	Soften	6	6.67	4	4.12
	FORCE	78	86.67	83	85.57
	Intensification	48	53.33	51	52.58
	Int-Emphasizer	40	44.44	43	44.33
	Int-Downtoner	8	8.88	8	8.25
	Quantification	30	33.33	32	32.99
	Qu-Emphasizer	25	27.78	23	23.71
	Qu-Downtoner	5	5.55	9	9.28
Appreciation	Graduated	184	100.00	297	100.00
	FOCUS	22	11.96	46	15.49
	Sharpen	15	8.15	26	8.75
	Soften	7	3.80	20	6.73
	FORCE	162	88.04	251	84.51
	INTENSIFICATION	104	56.52	156	52.52
	Int-Emphasizer	82	44.56	111	37.37
	Int-Downtoner	22	11.96	45	15.15
	QUANTIFICATION	58	31.52	95	31.99
	Qu-Emphasizer	44	23.91	81	27.27
	Qu-Downtoner	14	7.62	14	4.71

In general, the distribution is similar, the main exception being that spans of Affect are more often graduated by means of Intensification in the English reviews and by means of Quantification in the Spanish reviews. This difference is due to the fact that, in the English reviews, expressions of Affect are more often Adjectival

Groups, which tend to be modified by intensifiers (*a little excited*, *pretty disappointed*), and the other kinds of expressions (mostly Nominal Groups or Verbal Groups) are also often intensified (*great anticipation*, *mild interest*, *didn't really care*). In the Spanish reviews, expressions of Affect are more often Verbal Groups graduated by quantifiers, as in *no me ha gustado mucho* ('I didn't like it much'), *esperaba mucho* ('I expected much', i.e. 'I had great expectations'), *disfrutar de todos los detalles* ('enjoy all the details'). Nominal Groups are also frequently modified by Quantifiers, as in *da un poco de pena* ('gives a little sorrow'), *unas cuantas risas* ('a few laughs') or *muchísimo sueño* ('an awful lot of sleep'). The non-idiomaticity of the literal translations of some of the expressions to the other language suggests that this difference in the graduation of spans of Affect between the English and the Spanish reviews might be a pervasive difference in the expression of Affect in the two languages, but this statement needs to be supported by further research involving different genres.

Other less important differences are the relatively higher frequency of Focus: Soften in the spans of Affect and Appreciation of the Spanish reviews. These results agree with the observation pointed out before that many spans of the Spanish reviews refer to parts of the product evaluated. Some examples of this kinds of spans of Affect are *el final decepciona* ('the end disappoints'), *esa parte del libro no me gusta* ('that part of the book I don't like') or *casi duermo en fases* ('I almost sleep in phases'). Examples of softened spans of Appreciation are *el final no te aporta nada* ('The end does not bring anything new'), *sólo la primera parte me pareció sólida* ('only the first part seemed consistent to me').

The distributional differences between the English and the Spanish reviews in the graduation of Appreciation spans deserve specific comments. Quantification is roughly the same in the reviews of the two languages, while Focus is about 3.5% more frequent in the Spanish reviews, and conversely Intensification is 4% more common in the English reviews. In particular, the distributional differences between downtoners in the two languages show opposite tendencies from those found in the spans of Affect and Judgement. The number of quantifying downtoners is comparably lower in the Spanish reviews: in the English reviews, temporal quantifiers such as *at times* are frequent. In contrast, downtoning by means of Intensification is more frequent in Spanish than in English: this difference is largely due to the 13 occurrences of the adverb *bastante* ('quite, rather'), which occurs 13 times as a modifier of an adjective, as in *bastante sencillo* ('quite simple') or *bastante irrelevante* ('rather irrelevant'); however, its English equivalents, *quite*, *rather* and *somewhat*, occur 4 times altogether.

## 5. Conclusions and suggestions for further research

The analysis of Graduation spans embedded in Attitude spans in the English and Spanish consumer reviews of books and movies analyzed above show that the global distribution of these spans is strikingly similar in the two languages: spans of Appreciation are more often graduated than those of Affect and Judgement; concerning the subtypes of Graduation, Force is more common than Focus, and the subcategories that reinforce the evaluation (sharpeners of Focus and empha-sizers of Intensification and Quantification) are more common than those that weaken the evaluation (softeners of Focus and downtoners of Intensification and Quantification). This high frequency of strengtheners suggests that reviewers want to express their evaluations clearly and that they are not especially concerned about face-saving. This directness is corroborated by the overall larger number of downtoners in positive than in negative reviews.

Some crosslinguistic differences among the Graduation spans have emerged from more specific quantitative analyses. Overall, the Graduation spans that occur in the Spanish reviews are more dependent on the kind of product evaluated: the reviews of movies display higher predominances of Force over Focus, Sharpen over Soften and Intensification over Quantification. At a more specific level, the Spanish book reviews display a relatively high number of spans of Focus due to the frequency of evaluative expressions referring to parts of the book. Moreover, the Spanish positive book reviews have a high number of quantifiers, which account for the high percentage of spans of Quantification. In English, on the other hand, the positive book reviews display fewer quantifiers than the other categories. Some differences have also been reported with regard to the subtypes of Intensification and Quantification.

The extension of this kind of research to consumer reviews of different products might well uncover important differences in the Attitude and Graduation spans due to the product evaluated. Further studies could also consider the expression of Affect in English and in Spanish, so as to provide further evidence of the possibility hinted at in this chapter that Affect in Spanish is more often expressed by Verbal or Nominal Groups graduated by quantifiers, whereas English tends to resort to Intensification to a higher extent. Another possible line of research might well be the comparison between the kind of Graduation spans studied here (i.e. those embedded in Attitude spans) and independent Graduation spans.

## Notes

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2. The system has been designed considering a discussion on the Appraisal Analysis e-mail list initiated by Marta Carretero, which took place in January 2010. We thank Monika Bednarek, Geoff Thompson, Alexanne Don and Donna Miller for their contributions. Any shortcomings and inconsistencies of the resulting system are our responsibility alone.
3. This system, which will be described in more detail in 3.2, is available from: <http://www.wagsoft.com/CorpusTool/>. Its lack of accuracy in sentence counting results from the use of the full stop as the basic sign for the count: in certain cases, review writers fail to mark sentence boundaries with full stops.
4. In this chapter, the examples quoted from the reviews will be identified by source, a “yes” for positive reviews or “no” for negative reviews, and an identification number. We reproduce all examples verbatim, including typos and grammatical errors. Quite often, the Spanish examples lack accent marks. The only changes we introduce are bold for Attitude spans and underlining for Graduation spans embedded in them, so as to clearly mark boundaries of Appraisal categories.

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