Evaluative language in medical discourse: a contrastive study between English and Spanish university lectures

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Academic spoken discourse has been a dominant issue for discourse studies researchers for the last 25 years or so. Different spoken academic genres have been analysed (Swales, 1990, 2004; Berkenkotter and Huckin, 1995; Bhatia, 2001, 2002; Mauranen, 2001; Juzwik, 2004; Crawford-Camiciottoli, 2004, 2007; among others) thanks to the compilation and the easy access to electronic spoken corpora. This study focuses on the genre of lecture as "the central ritual of the culture of learning" (Benson, 1994) in higher education. Here, I analyse the use of evaluative language in medical discourse lectures. A contrastive study between Spanish and English medical lectures is carried out. To my knowledge, little attention has been paid to the analysis of evaluative language in medical discourse. The present study employs a quantitative and a qualitative approach to analyse four Spanish and English medical discourse lectures with an average of 35,000 words. The English lectures have been taken from the Michigan Corpus of Academic and Spoken English (MICASE) and the Spanish lectures have been recorded and transcribed in the Degree in Medicine course at a Spanish university for the purpose of this study. Corpus analysis tools have been used to analyse attitudinal language expressing explicit evaluation. The findings show similarities and also differences in the use of evaluative markers in academic medical discourse.

Keywords: medical discourse, evaluative language, audience-oriented relevance markers, spoken academic English, English/Spanish

1.   Introduction

1.1   Background

Evaluation is one of the most outstanding features of interpersonal discourse, that is, the use of language "to acknowledge, construct and negotiate social relations" (Hyland, 2004: 13). Intercultural and interpersonal discourse has been crucial to discourse analysis, since it joins language use to its social, cultural and educational contexts. Most of the research carried out up to now has centred on the use of evaluative language in academic writing in different academic texts such as research articles (Hunston, 1994; Hyland, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2004, 2010; Oakey, 2005; Okamura, 2005), essays (Barton, 1993), book reviews (Shaw, 2004; Römer, 2005, 2008), abstracts (Stotesbury, 2003; Belles-Fortuño and Querol-Julián, 2010) or text books (Poppi, 2004; Freddi, 2005), among

others. To my knowledge, little research has dealt with the use of evaluative language in spoken academic discourse and even less with spoken medical lecture discourse from a cross-cultural perspective. Among studies of spoken academic corpora, and more specifically the MICASE corpus, we find Mauranen's (2001, 2002, 2003), although these studies deal with the use of evaluative language from a broad perspective, taking into account forms of implicit evaluation.

In this study, I depart from Thompson and Hunston's definition of evaluation as an "expression of the speaker's or writer's attitude or stance towards, viewpoint on, or feelings about entities or propositions that he or she is talking about" (2000: 5). Although evaluation is often "implicit" and "in many texts it is multi-layered" (Hunston, 2000: 177), the current study focuses on those audience-oriented attitudinal forms of explicit evaluation without neglecting previous disagreements and the lack of consensus among researchers on which lexical items are evaluative (Thetela, 1997: 102).

Recent research on evaluation in discourse discusses the complexity of evaluative phenomena, Alba-Juez and Thompson (2016: 6) argue on the "multiple faces" of evaluation that can be expressed explicitly or implicitly through a variety of linguistic resources. They insist on the discursive process of evaluation as an important element for negotiating meaning between addresser and addressee and which involves "relational work" (p. 13). Following Thompson and Alba-Juez's research and expanding on the above presented definition of evaluative elements, these are seen in the current study as "aspects of the discursive context that affect the final evaluative meaning both at the production and reception stage" (2014: xi)

Any language is related to specific cultural and institutional contexts. When analysing academic speech, we are entering a didactic environment where instruction is an essential point of departure followed by observation and feedback, which involves socialisation into the academic community (Mauranen, 2002). In this study, evaluation is seen as a powerful rhetorical tool for this academic community to convey interaction within more pedagogical genres such as the lecture in a specific discipline: Health Sciences. Some studies have approached the use of interactive features in academic genres such as the medical conference monologue (Webber, 2005); yet such genres seem to involve a far more expert-to-expert type of communication and are basically audience-oriented with little spontaneous conversation. The academic lecture, in contrast, usually involves expert-to-novice communication and questions may arise at any time during the lecture.

Non-native speakers and listeners can find it harder to process lectures in real time since they may not have the same control over the language and rhetorical tools as natives have. Contrastive linguistic studies such as the one carried out here represent a potential for pedagogical application for L2 students (English or Spanish) to cope with evaluative language patterns as well as providing insights for the field of EAP teaching and learning.

1.2   Choice of features to be analysed

If we aim to explain the interaction between speaker and hearer and how evaluation is used in the communicative event (in our case the lecture), we can distinguish three different relational categories among discourse elements that can easily be detected, namely: i) relation part of discourse-part of discourse, ii) relation speaker-hearer or vice versa, and iii) relation speaker-speech. These three relations can be conveyed in many different ways: kinesics, visuals or, the most common, the use of linguistic units by means of evaluative items. The main goal of these relations is to express meanings throughout the discourse utterances. Halliday (e.g. 1994) distinguishes three functional components of meaning ideational, interpersonal and textual (or 'discoursal' in this particular case).

If we look closely at the relational categories among the discourse elements explained above, we can see that they can somehow correspond to Halliday's proposed functional meanings. The three functional meanings mentioned find corresponding relational discourse categories that can be conveyed throughout the discourse utterances. In Figure 1 we can see how the three functional meanings are distributed according to the relational categories.

FIGURE 1 SHOULD BE INSERTED (NEAR) HERE

Hyland (2004) distinguishes between two ways of managing interaction: Stance and Engagement. 'Stance' is "the ways writers intrude into the discourse to stamp their personal authority onto the arguments or step back from their discourse and disguise their involvement" (Hyland, 2004: 15). On the other hand, 'Engagement' has to do with "the ways writers bring readers into discourse" (Hyland, 2004: 18); it is the way writers pull readers along with their argument or try to call their attention by guiding them, and this type of interaction with the audience is essential for the analysis of persuasion. This distinction is, however, not always crystal clear and there may be some overlaps.

This study focuses on those rhetorical tools that convey evaluation through signalling to the audience a salient point of the lecture, those evaluative expressions that would fall into Halliday's attitudinal interpersonal dimension and that have to do with the discourse relations speaker-hearer and/or speaker-speech, according to Figure 1 above. These are the expressions that, in written discourse, Hyland (2004) would include within the interactional concept of *Engagement* explained above this time applied to lecture discourse as the way speakers bring listeners into discourse. The study aims to detect and analyse usually metadiscursive phrases containing discourse deictics, that is, what Crawford-Camiciottoli (2004) has called 'audience-oriented relevance markers' – elements which "signal to learners what parts of the lecture they should interpret as important (Crawford-Camiciottoli, 2004: 82). These expressions include lexico-grammatical patterns similar to the ones suggested by Hunston and Sinclair (2000).

    a) Discourse deictic + is + adjective of relevance
       Ex:. *This is important*
    b) Discourse deictic + is + adjective of relevance + metalinguistic noun
       Ex:. *That is the main point*

Additionally, other forms of audience-oriented relevance markers that can refer not only to anaphoric but also to cataphoric elements have been taken into account for the analysis. Therefore markers such as *What is essential…* or *The point is…* with different adjective and noun variables were also considered.

Conscious knowledge of different syntactic elements has proven to potentially aid the lecture comprehension process. Discourse markers (hereafter DMs) are part of these linguistic features that enhance lecture comprehension. Authors such as Schiffrin (1987) examined DMs in the spoken discourse of ordinary conversation and identified DMs of different nature that constructed coherence through relations between adjacent units in discourse. She observed different levels of DMs interaction: a) The semantic reality, b) the logical (epistemic) level, and c) the speech act (pragmatic) level (1987: 24). Later Fraser (1999) also attributes DMs three properties: syntactic, semantic and pragmatic. Both Shiffrin (1987) and Fraser (1999, 2004) agree that DMs have a core meaning and are pragmatically ambiguous. In the present study coherence is understood as an asset for the construction of discourse relations (see Figure 1) which are usually expressed by linguistic units whose meaning is strongly context dependent. According to Fraser (1999) the discourse coherence approach to the study of markers goes far beyond the analysis of linguistic entities and takes into consideration the effect on the interpretation of discourse in specific contexts.

The study takes into consideration relevance markers defined as lexicogrammatical devices that overtly mark the relative importance or relevance of points in a lecture (adapted from Deroey and Taverniers, 2012: 222). They are interactive features of lecture discourse and marker distinctions "between more and less important discourse." (Deroey and Taverniers, 2012: 222). According to Deroey and Taverniers (2011) relevance markers act as discourse organizers emphasising important lecture points, whichever the name they have been given in literature: 'evaluators' (DeCarrico and Nattinger, 1988), *emphasizers* (Siepmann, 2005), 'attitudinal stance bundles' (Biber, 2006) or 'audience-oriented markers' (Crawford-Camiciottoli, 2004, 2007), to name a few. The latter is the name adopted for the current study.

As regards the analysis of audience-oriented relevance markers in the Spanish corpus, these can fit into what has been defined by Spanish researchers (Llorente, 1996; Portolés, 1998) as *operadores discursivos* ('discursive operators'), that is, markers which link communicative acts taken by discourse participants. In Llorente's (1996: 14) words

> (…) the defining trait of what I call a 'discursive operator' is its capacity to help in the realisation of pragmatic and discursive acts (…), of acts that regulate the development of discourse, relate discursive acts and, in sum, are aimed at facilitating the processing of information.[my translation][1]

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[1] Original text: "(…) el rasgo definidor pertinente de lo que llamo 'operador discursivo' es su capacidad de servir a la realización de actos pragmático-discursivos (…), de actos que regulan el desarrollo del discurso, relacionan entre sí otros actos discursivos y, en resumen, se destinan a facilitar el procesamiento de la información."

In previous studies on the analysis of markers in Spanish lecture corpora (Bellés-Fortuño, 2004, 2008, 2016a), I realised that trying to find Spanish marker counterparts starting out from English markers is not always the most scientific and successful procedure, but some other studies did follow this process (Fraser and Malamud-Makowski, 1996). Similar forms of markers may be found translated from English into Spanish, although these forms might not be the most common in the Spanish language and so other forms of markers can be of greater interest according to their frequency of use. Despite departing from expressions with lexico-grammatical patterns similar to the English ones, as suggested by Hunston and Sinclair (2000) and described above, a closer look at the Spanish lecture corpus would certainly give us original Spanish language patterns of audience-oriented relevance markers which may not correspond to translations from English.

The objective of this study is to analyse evaluative language features, such as audience-oriented relevance markers, from a cross-cultural perspective within a contrastive linguistics framework by comparing and contrasting medical discourse lectures from a small corpus of lectures. The aim is to detect and identify similarities and/or differences in the use of explicit evaluative forms of attitudinal language in Spanish and English academic university lectures.

2.   The study

The study departs from the following research questions: a) Do explicit evaluative forms of attitudinal language differ in type, form and frequency between Spanish and English lectures in the field of Health Sciences?, b) Is language more evaluative in any of the corpora analysed? If so, how does this affect the relations between speaker-hearer at an attitudinal interpersonal level?

2.1   Methodology

Corpus linguistics techniques and discourse analysis methodologies were used for the analysis of both lecture corpora. The whole corpus (consisting of English and Spanish lectures) was searched electronically using concordancing software (AntConc 3.4.3; Anthony, 2014) to find relevant patterns of frequency of audience-oriented relevance markers starting out from the English medicine lectures and using corpus query language. The initial data were then exposed to a hand-editing process to eliminate fake expressions that did not fall into the category of audience-oriented relevance markers and to try to find other relevance audience-oriented markers contextualised in the original transcripts that the electronic search might have skipped. The analysis is thus a combination of both empirical and hermeneutic approaches.

2.2   The data

The corpus under study consists of four lecture transcripts: two of them are in English and belong to the English Corpus (EC), and the other two Spanish lectures make up the Spanish Corpus (SC). The English lecture transcripts have been taken from the MICASE (Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English)

(Simpson et al. 2002), which is available online thanks to the English Language Institute at the University of Michigan (United States)[2]. The Spanish corpus (SC) consists of two lectures recorded within the medicine degree course at a Spanish university and later transcribed for the purpose of this study. During the audio-recording of the Spanish lectures, I was present to observe the actual lecture event and take notes on contextual data.

The lecture attributes have been taken from the MICASE to make both corpora homogeneous. Therefore, the primary discourse mode, which refers to the predominant type of discourse, corresponds to the monologic type, from highly monologic in the case of the EC and monologic in the SC. As to the number of students, MICASE distinguishes between small lectures (LES), a class of 40 or fewer students, and large lectures (LEL), a lecture class with more than 40 students. In an attempt to homogenise the corpus, the lectures under study are mostly LEL, except for the Spanish LE4, which is an LES. The four lectures share the same disciplinary field, i.e. that of Health Sciences. The four lectures in the corpus were delivered to undergraduate students. The total corpus, including the EC and the SC, has a total number of 34,281 words, with an average of 8,570 words per lecture, thus satisfying the characteristics of a small corpus study (see Table 1 for further details).

Table 1. LE corpus description.

	LE Type	# words x LE
English Lectures (EC)		
LE1 *Biology of cancer lecture* (LEL) LE2 *Drugs of abuse lecture* (LEL)	Highly monologic	10,964 9,623 *(20,587w)*
Spanish Lectures (SC)		
LE3 *Genética Humana 'Human genetics'* (LEL) LE4 *Bioestadística para médicos 'biostatistics for doctors'* (LES)	Monologic	8,066 5,628 *(13,694w)*
TOTAL # Words EC+SC		**34.281 words**

The whole corpus, although not extremely large in number of lectures has proven to be a valid sample for the analysis of audience-oriented relevance markers and some evaluative tokens.

2.3   Context and procedure

The process of isolating audience-oriented relevance markers from the corpus has not been easy. Starting with the English lectures and the results obtained from the concordancer, the lexico-grammatical patterns were detected. These results were later hand-edited to remove instances and patterns that did not correspond to the previously established lexico-grammatical patterns and in order to avoid any confusing evaluative item indicating the lecturer's evaluation of a specific object, phenomenon or entity instead of being instances of evaluation signalling salient points of the lecture to the audience. This distinction, although quite easy to identify in writing, is not always unambiguous in spoken discourse. Consequently, I had to narrow the search in the corpus to the restricted lexico-grammatical patterns previously established.

Following earlier studies on the MICASE and taking into account the importance of the word *thing* in this corpus (Swales, 2001, 2004) as the commonest noun, all instances of the word *thing* in combination with evaluative adjectives were carefully observed. It has been argued that the word *thing* is used in a discursive sense in the MICASE corpus, where "it serves as a downtown home version of *point*" (Swales, 2004: 35). Therefore, in the EC, instances like *the important thing is*, *the point here is*, etc., where *thing* or *point* are metalinguistic nouns, were carefully observed. In this way, evaluative adjectives as linguistic items within the audience-oriented relevance markers patterns were also studied.

Regarding the Spanish lectures, a preliminary search with the concordancer revealed some recurrent and relevant lexico-grammatical patterns similar to the English ones that allowed similar audience-oriented relevance markers to be identified and isolated. However, as this is a contrastive linguistic study, syntactic and grammatical differences between the two languages resulted in diversity as to the number of marker patterns identified and their variety. Grammatical aspects such as gender differences and number (singular or plural) in nouns and adjectives were considered as the analysis was being performed.

3.   **Results**

This section presents the findings according to sequence of analysis, the relevance marker patterns are studied and compared in both corpora (EC and SC), followed by the study of evaluative adjectives.

3.1   Relevance markers in the EC

The most outstanding marker patterns found in the EC, including the number of instances and total counts per million words, can be seen in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Results of audience-oriented relevance marker patterns in the EC.

Marker patterns	Examples	EC #
• What (pron.)+relative clause	✓ *What I want to emphasise to you...*	13
• Deic + is/was+ adv.+ meta noun	✓ *That's really a problem*	11
• It+is+adv+ meta noun	✓ *It is actually a remission*	8
• Det+adj+meta noun+ is/that clause	✓ *The final thing is...*	8
• Det+adj+meta noun+ relative clause	✓ *The main thing that I wanted to say...*	8
• It+is+adj+ meta noun	✓ *It's an interesting story*	6
• Deic + is/was + meta noun	✓ *This was the hypothesis*	6
TOTAL instances **TOTAL x 1,000w**		**60** **2.9‰**

The results from the analysis and observation of the relevance discourse markers in the English lectures have shown different varieties of syntactic forms that go far beyond the initial guiding patterns originally presented. In total, seven main syntactic patterns have been identified. The two outstanding marker patterns have 13 and 11 instances respectively. The most frequent relevance marker pattern corresponds to the use of relative clauses introduced by the pronoun *what*. A closer look at these frequently used markers revealed some collocational patterns with the particles *and* or *so*. This presents the idea of an organizational structure of spoken discourse at the attitudinal and interpersonal level in order to facilitate comprehension by the audience. The collocational patterns of discourse markers have already been identified in previous studies (Swales and Malczewski, 2001; Bellés-Fortuño, 2008) as repetitive co-occurrences that tend to form clusters with more identifiable markers. In the following examples taken from the EC, there is a slight discourse break or pause before the particle followed by the initiation of a discourse unit introduced by an evaluative audience-oriented marker.

    (1) <u>so</u> *what you have here*, are pike per second (LE2/EC)

    (2) <u>so</u> *what you can conclude is…* (LE1/EC)

(3) <u>And so</u> *what you record is…* (LE2/EC)

(4) <u>And</u> *what you get here is…* (LE2/EC)

The audience-oriented relevance marker with the pattern: *deictic+verb to be (present or past form)+adverb+a meta noun* also has a significant number of occurrences (11 instances). This seems to be a preferred form with the use of a modifying adverb followed by a meta-noun, although very closely followed by the same syntactic structure with the use of adjectives plus meta-nouns, which are also relevant evaluative markers in the EC. Some examples of these recurrent uses of marker patterns are shown below:

(5) .the only case where *that's really a problem* is… (LE1/EC)

(6) .it wasn't resistant. *That's very unusual.* with most cancer drugs (LE1/EC)

(7) .and *this is always the assumption* that's in the back… (LE2/EC)

It is worth pointing out here that not only adverbs and adjectives are relevant audience-oriented markers. Observations from the corpus revealed that verb clauses are also important, giving evidence of other patterns which, although not falling into any of the previously identified lexico-grammatical patterns, are also used as evaluative tokens with the sole intention of drawing the audience's attention and guiding them through the lecture discourse. Some of these expressions are introduced as discourse units, usually by particles such as *so*, *then* or *now*.

(8) <u>then</u> *this just outlines* the synthesis (LE2/EC)

(9) *this <u>just</u> shows* the same kind of data (LE2/EC)

(10) *This <u>now</u> brings* us to the third step (LE1/EC)

(11) <u>So</u> *this clearly shows* that the plasma (LE1/EC)

Previous research on relevance markers also discussed about the predominance of verb patterns as relevance markers in lectures especially imperative patterns containing mental verbs such as *remember* attributing this aspect to a "reminiscent of conversational speech"(Deroey and Taverniers, 2012: 229).

3.2 Relevance markers in the SC

The most outstanding marker patterns found in the SC, together with the number of instances and total counts per million words can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of audience-oriented relevance marker patterns in the SC.

Markers patterns	Examples	SC #
• Relative pronoun + relative clause	✓ *Lo que me interesa es que entendáis/* "what I'm interested in is that you understand…"	8
• Deic + is + (adv) +adj	✓ *Eso es muy complejo/* "that's	7

	very complex" ✓ *Y esto es fundamental/* "And this is fundamental"	
• Det+adj+ is	✓ *Lo importante es que entendierais/* "The important thing is for you to understand"	**5**
• what (lo que) + is + (adv.) + adj+ is	✓ *Lo que es relativamente importante es/* "what's relatively important is"	**4**
TOTAL instances **TOTAL x 1,000w**		**24** **1.7‰**

A closer look into the SC revealed that in Spanish medical lectures there are fewer identifiable fixed patterns of audience-oriented relevance markers. The analysis highlighted four relevant marker patterns that are syntactically similar to the English marker patterns.

This being a contrastive study between two different languages within the same spoken genre and discipline, syntactic and lexico-grammatical Spanish rules had to be taken into consideration. Thus, in the case of relative clauses, the Spanish expression *lo que* is a combination of the neutral article *lo* followed by the relative pronoun *que*. The neutral article *lo* in Spanish does not have any identical counterpart in isolation in English, although the combination *lo que* closely corresponds to the uses of the English translating counterpart 'what' in the marker pattern 'Relative pronoun + relative clause'.

The neutral article *lo* in Spanish can, in other cases, change the grammatical category of the adjacent adjective to a noun, a grammatical process called *sustantivización* in Spanish, that is, 'nominalisation'. Observe the examples below that fit into the marker pattern *Det+adj+ is*[3]:

(12) *Lo importante es que* las mutaciones tienen que ser…/ "The important thing is that mutations have to be…" (LE3/SC)
(13) *Lo más importante* aquí es que los tejidos… / "The most important thing here is that tissues…" (LE3/SC)

In examples 12 and 13 above, the adjective *important* used in its zero and superlative degrees undergoes a nominalisation process due to the fact that it is preceded by the neutral article *lo*. In the English lectures this marker pattern is also frequent with the variation that an abstract noun seems to be necessary and would appear in the expression. Such nouns include: *thing*, *point*, *issue*, etc., as already discussed in the previous section (note the underlined *thing* in the translation of the previous examples).

Although fewer audience-oriented relevance markers that could fit into fixed lexico-grammatical patterns were found in the SC, it is worth pointing out

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[3] All Spanish examples extracted from the SC have been provided with an English translation for better understanding.

that some other expressions and utterances were found with an evaluative function that explicitly indicate to the audience what they should consider relevant. Most of these expressions tend to be rhetorical questions, these being rather more recurrent in the Spanish lectures compared to the English lectures. A total of 73 instances of the 2nd person plural of the present tense of the verb *entender* – 'understand' – appear in the SC in the form of a rhetorical question, usually preceded by a short pause and followed by another question or rephraser such as *es decir*, 'I mean'. Some examples of the use of rhetorical questions as relevance markers in the SC are presented below:

(14) Bien, mirad, *¿qué es* lo que estoy intentando hacer yo con todo este modelo?/ "Right, look, what am I trying to do with this model?" (LE4/SC)

(15) Los factores ambientales son muy importantes, *¿entendéis?/ Environmental factors are very important, do you understand?* (LE3/SC)

(16) (...) ya no repara ningún error [pausa] *¿entendéis, no?* Y no otros./ "it no longer repairs errors [pause] you understand, don't you? And no other ones." (LE3/SC)

These forms of rhetorical questions in the Spanish medicine lectures are not aimed at eliciting an answer – they are a means of expressing the lecturers' illocutionary force to produce an effect in the audience and highlight that the information they are giving is relevant.

3.3 Evaluative adjectives in the EC

Adjectives are an essential part of the audience-oriented relevance markers studied here. The most frequently used evaluative adjectives within the marker patterns analysed in the EC can be seen in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Most frequently used adjectives within the audience-oriented relevance marker *patterns in the EC.*

Evaluative adjectives	# EC
1. *important*	5
2. *main*	3
3. *interesting*	3
4. *key*	2
5. *critical*	1
6. *significant*	1
TOTAL instances	*15*
TOTAL x 1,000w	**0.7‰**

Earlier research on evaluative language in the MICASE corpus identified a series of relevant adjectives that proved to be significant (Swales and Burke 2003), namely: *important, central, main, major, relevant, crucial, essential, fundamental* and *key*. This previous information has been of great help in order to facilitate the identification of some audience-oriented relevance markers in the English medicine lectures. Six highly frequent evaluative adjectives have

been identified as part of the marker patterns. *Important* has the highest number of instances followed by *main*, *interesting* and *key*; other adjectives in the corpus taking part of the lexico-grammatical patterns are *critical* or *significant*, with isolated instances. Some evaluative adjectives coincide with the ones established by Swales and Burke (2003), while others are exclusive to the English lectures under study. All these relevant adjectives as part of the marker patterns become evaluative and they clearly cause audience engagement to the discourse by triggering a reaction. Some examples from the corpus can be read below.

(17)(…) in terms of hallucinogenic effects it has changed quite dramatically over time. so it's an *interesting* story. (LE2/EC)

(18)(…) the *main* thing to keep in mind is that there's a lot of them (L2/EC)

(19) the *k- k- key* question here is, which effect is related to its hallucinatory effects? (LE2/EC)

(20)(…) it's really the two-A subtype of, of the fourteen, that's *critical*. okay? and the pharmacology is (LE2/EC)

(21)(…) there really is a cause and effect relationship. this is an *important* issue, and something hopefully… (LE1/EC)

(22)(…) is a weak immune response that's correlated with a high rate of metastasis. but the *key* word here is correlation (LE1/EC)

3.4   Evaluative adjectives in the SC

The most frequently used evaluative adjectives as part of the audience-oriented relevant marker patterns analysed in the SC can be seen in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Most frequently used adjectives within the audience-oriented relevance marker *patterns in the SC.*

Evaluative adjectives	# SC
1. *Importante/* "important"	
2. *Fundamental/* "fundamental"	14
3. *Interesante/* "interesting"	3
4. *Complejo/* "complex"	2
5. *Curioso/* "curious",	2
"intriguing"	1
TOTAL	22
TOTAL x 1,000w	1.6‰

In the case of relevant adjectives in the SC, the search had to include number and gender differences, and thus masculine and feminine forms of adjectives were analysed in their singular and plural forms. At first glance, it was observed that the medicine lectures in Spanish presented a smaller variety of adjectives than the English lectures. Some of the most recurrent adjectives coincided in both corpora, such as *importante* 'important' and *interesante* 'interesting', where *importante* 'important' is at the top of the list in both corpora. A closer

look at the SC revealed that, in spite of a smaller number of types, relevant adjectives were more frequently used in the Spanish lectures as part of audience-oriented marker patterns. Another significant characteristic of evaluative adjectives in the SC is the use of their superlative form. The English medicine lectures rarely used pure superlative forms when expressing evaluation, whereas, in contrast, the Spanish lectures tend to use the superlative form of adjectives in their two grammatical structures, the ending *-ísimo/a/s (the adj+-est*, in English*)* and the form *más+adj (the most + adj*, in English). The EC prefers the use of intensifiers in expressions such as *very important* or *extremely important* rather than the superlative syntactic form *the most+adj*. Examples of the most frequently used adjectives in the Spanish lectures are given below. Notice examples 26 and 27 with the adjective in superlative form.

(23) (…) luego veremos por qué. Es muy *interesante* lo que dices. Luego veremos por qué…/ "later on we'll see why. What you are saying is very interesting. Later on we'll see why…" (LE4/SC)

(24) Lo que es relativamente *importante* en la naturaleza de la variable/ "What's relatively important in the nature of the variable" (LE4/SC)

(25) Lo que es una cuestión *fundamental* es que eh… siempre repetidamente…/ *the fundamental question is that eh… it always repeatedly…* (LE4/SC)

(26) Esto es *importantísimo*, porque no hay prácticamente ningún cáncer…/ "This is the most important thing, because there's no cancer that…" (LE3/SC)

(27) Lo *más importante* aquí es que los tejidos donde…/ "The most important thing here is that tissues where…" (LE3/SC)

(28) Esto es *curioso* pero sale repetidamente sale repetidamente que las mujeres tenéis peor calidad de vida… / "This is curious but it has been shown over and over again that women have less quality of life…" (LE3/SC)

In general, Spanish medicine lectures seem to prefer the use of adjectives to express explicit evaluation in their attributive or predicative forms, whereas more complex syntactic patterns were found in the EC in the forms used to express audience-oriented relevance markers. There is no exact match in the use of relevant adjectives between the SC and the EC, which supports the idea that identical translating correspondences between two language systems do not always occur and should not be taken as the basis for foreign language teaching.

4. Conclusion

This study departed from the following research questions: a) Do explicit evaluative forms of attitudinal language differ in type, form and frequency between Spanish and English lectures in the field of Health Sciences?, b) Is language more evaluative in any of the corpora analysed? Regarding the use of audience-oriented relevance markers in academic lectures in the field of Health Sciences in English and Spanish, the results showed that although some similarities were found in the identification of marker patterns and the use of

relevant adjectives, there were differences in terms of the variety of those patterns and the use of such adjectives. These differences, resulting mainly from the different linguistic systems, indicate that equivalent translation of counterparts from one language to another is not always an effective and reliable pedagogical asset for foreign language teaching. Moreover, contextual analysis revealed the use of some collocational patterns in both corpora that could be included in language teaching syllabi and taught to language students. The creation of valid closed classifications of lexico-grammatical and syntactic patterns counterparts between two languages is by no means a trivial task.

Some previous studies on evaluation have focused on disciplinary variation, stating that in the hard sciences explicit evaluation is less common as a consequence of a more impersonal style (Hyland, 2004). Generalisations of this sort cannot be drawn from the study presented here, since all the lectures corresponded to one single discipline: Health Sciences. The results found in the study show evidence that the use of evaluation in the form of audience-oriented relevance markers is crucial for the functional relationships between speaker-hearer and vice-versa throughout the discourse elements. Adjectives are carefully selected and slightly preferred by the SC to express evaluation, the speaker aims at what I have coined "lexical acuity" (Bellés-Fortuño, 2016b: 71), that is, the ability to create interpersonal relations with the listener through expository clarity.

The variety of audience-oriented relevance patterns found in both corpora and the use of other forms of evaluative expressions, such as rhetorical questions or other pragmatic devices (pauses, changes in the pitch of the voice, etc.), reaffirm the spontaneity of academic speech, which is closer to conversation than to academic prose on some occasions (Swales, 2004). This variety may also be subjected to other factors such as idiolectal variations of the speaker (lecturers in this case) or their own individual lecturing styles. The contextualisation of marker patterns has shown features of evaluation in the form of clusters or collocations in medical discourse, evaluative units have been identified thanks to some collocational evaluative marker patterns with conjunctions such as *and* ('y'), pause-fillers such as *well* ('bueno'), rephrasers such as *I mean* ('es decir') or even pauses used as significant linguistic elements. The English and Spanish medicine lectures used here have shown characteristics of conversational discourse where the audience-oriented relevance markers analysed correspond to those metadiscourse elements of spoken interaction between speaker and listener.

The findings of this study, while conditioned by the limited data analysed, introduce evidence of the use of evaluation expressed by audience-oriented relevance markers in the academic spoken discourse of Health Sciences. Small corpus studies such as this one allow the combination of a quantitative and an easier qualitative interpretation of data for a deeper analysis of the texts in this genre, rather than other larger corpus studies, where findings are sometimes based entirely on quantitative data.

The results obtained contribute to contrastive linguistics and the "new wave of contrastive linguistics", which has been called 'contrastive discourse analysis' (Taboada, Doval and González, 2013: 2). Lectures, as the most extended spoken genre among Higher Education institutions, have a strong pedagogical objective. When lecturing, lecturers try to build a convincing

argument and in doing so they use, among other discursive features, audience-oriented relevance markers such as the ones presented and analysed in this study in order to express their attitudes and opinions towards what they are presenting. By comparing audience-oriented relevance markers in two language systems (English and Spanish) we obtain both similarities and differences. The similarities can help in the comprehension of the two languages, that is, they are considered "positive transfer" (König and Gast, 2009: 1). The differences between lecture discourses in both languages, on the other hand, can help to predict and prevent potential learning difficulties, while at the same time being useful to develop pedagogical teaching material and techniques for foreign language teaching. Attitudinal and emotional linguistic expressions cannot be ignored in the language learning process (Alba-Juez, 2015). Contrastive studies paying attention to relations speaker-hearer and their context can greatly help foreign language teaching and learning processes. This study can therefore benefit undergraduate and postgraduate students, as well as novice lecturers and/or researchers, without forgetting medicine professionals who want to learn about the conventions of medical discourse. Likewise, large Higher Education discourse communities can benefit from this contrastive study, which explores the improvement and success of academic communication English and Spanish.

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