Reviewing Strategies in Evaluating Writing

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Abstract

A book review is a complex form of writing. Book reviews draw from diverse areas of knowledge to discuss the style, form and content of a published text. They involve different areas of vocabulary, discourse organisation strategies, and they fulfil different purposes. Reviews of literary texts can be placed among specialised forms of writing English for Special Purposes (ESP), especially in the case of peer to peer communication, i.e. scholars and critics reviewing books in a specialised magazine or journal, but they can be turned into a *popularised* text to be read by specialists, semi-specialists and the more general public with an interest in literature (e.g. book reviews in *The Times Literary Supplement*, *The New York Review of Books*, *World Literature Today* as much as in newspapers or, more recently, *Goodreads*, *Amazon*, etc.). In fact, the boundaries between specialised and popularised reviews overlap and a distinction between reviews of critical texts and, say, novels or poetry is not always clear in linguistic terms. Moreover, book reviews are also written by pupils and students at school or at university as part of their training in English and English for academic purposes. Therefore the area of study is vast and categorisations are rather complicated. A book review is basically a description which involves critical analysis and aims at evaluating the meaning and significance of a book. The reviewer focuses on the book's purpose, content, language and often questions the ability, the authority, the quality of the writer and the publishing process. Book reviews play a key role in marketing a book and having it translated. Reviewing involves some sort of reaction or emotion along with the evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the material that is analysed. It is both a personal, subjective response to a text and, at least in intent, a brief, objective assessment of its form, content, language and ideas. The reviewer is often a writer or critic, i.e. an expert reader who bases his/her judgment on knowledge, expertise and the ability to interpret the text better than the average book lover.

This article investigates various aspects of review writing: a linguistic analysis of the macrostructure suggests that it fits into specialised genres, albeit in a form of its own. Patterns of regularity along with the lack of

recurrent codified elements are observed in the structural features that characterise these kinds of texts, and attention is paid to the discursive and stylistic layout of book reviews. Results are evaluated in the light of the globalised literary market.

Keywords: literary reviews, ESP, evaluative language, discourse analysis

1. Reviewing how, reviewing what

In an age of hasty digital revolution in all areas of communication, the publishing market has been deeply affected by changes in the way writers produce their text, and in the way texts are edited, read, and discussed by readers and critics alike. Readers can choose a book for hundreds of different reasons and if in need of guidance they have many options such as publications with an established reputation like *The New Yorker*, *The New York Review of Books*, and *The New York Times Book Review*, in the US, or *The Times Literary Supplement*, *The Literary Review*, and *The London Review of Books* in the UK. Moreover, reviews appear in the form of short articles in most newspapers (both traditional and online). More recently, *Facebook* pages, *Twitter* book clubs, literary websites, online publications and *Amazon* websites welcome contributions from any buyer willing to review a book[1].

Readers with sufficient linguistic competence can now read and review a novel or any form of literature but most of all they can *share* their opinion with the rest of the public. Non-expert reviewers from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds in any part of the globe with an interest in English, feel the urge to spread their view on the web. As a result, the degree of complexity of the format and the language used is the most diverse. All this

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[1] 'Literature reviews', i.e. collecting and researching books and articles about a topic, are part of preparatory work for dissertations and the subject of tutorials in American and British university curricula. They are not to be confused with 'literary reviews' or more commonly reviews 'about literature' unless the term is referred to collecting criticism about literature i.e. novels, poetry, drama, etc. Reviews of literature and critical texts are catalogued in special databases such as the *Book Review Index*, *Sparknotes*, *Kirkus* or in scholarly databases such as the *Arts and Humanities Citation Index*, for example. Online writing courses provide tutorials on how to write a college/university book review. For example: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/704/01/, last accessed March 2013.

mirrors the multifarious status and skill of the reviewer, whose role appears to be changing.

The professional reviewer, who used to have a *literary* identity as scholar, critic and writer, who had to meet a certain editor's rigorous standards, seems to have been replaced by the *Amazon amateur reviewer*, the paying customer, at times imaginative, industrious and highly motivated, more often banal, naive, and somewhat sectarian. Strong positions in reviewing are often replaced by simple *thumb-up or thumb-down* forms of judgment which work well for websites like *Trip Advisor* but are rather controversial in the Arts – since literature is still conceived as a form of Art rather than just a commodity.

Reviewing is supposed to be a skill which demands *taste*, i.e. expertise, training, some knowledge of History and Culture, familiarity with the Arts and most of all of an excellent knowledge of English itself[2]. In traditional settings, reviews are supposed or, perhaps, were supposed to preserve their informative and evaluative role. They provide readers with authoritative appraisal and introduce writers and their work to a select public or, at least, to a public which loves to be considered as such.

Good reviews and positive reviews, in particular, play a key role in placing a text on the market. Word of mouth, the position on shelves, events to promote a book are crucial, but reviews may be particularly important to earn the trust of international publishers and place a book in a bookshop window.

Moreover, in the case of translated texts, reviews can be highly influential. Publishers consider reviewing as part of their marketing strategies and especially useful in launching new authors or refreshing the work of well-known ones at home and abroad. Foreign publishers may ground their decision to translate a book on the basis of reviews as much as on sales figures.

Table 1 visualises the importance of a professional reviewer as an actor in the publishing process, the arrows indicate the actant influencing, determining or giving some form of feedback to those involved in the relation.

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[2] I am discussing reviewing in a Western cultural context or a Westernised one, where English and its literary canon are dominant or, at least, play a relevant role in education.

TABLE 1

| Author < >Publisher > | > Editor > [**Reviewer**] > Reader [*reviewer*] |
| Author < >Publisher > | > Editor > [**Reviewer(s)**] |

↑↓   ↙

> Foreign publisher

>>   Translator > Editor > [**Reviewer(s)**] > Reader [*reviewer*]

As I mentioned above, the reviewer is part of the marketing process and may determine whether the text will be translated or not. Influential expertise can create a debate that will increase the popularity of the text reviewed. Achieving the status of a widely translated text and especially being translated into English as a means of reaching world audiences, may benefit from reviewing: reviews are the author's business cards on the global market.

In recent years, national and, partly, linguistic barriers have been swept aside by the globalisation of socio-cultural and communicative practices – or this is what is repeated and presented as a mainstream point of view among academics and the media alike. Be it an advantage or a threat for niche authors and minority languages, Globalisation has turned English into the most favoured medium for international communication. English is the key tool to construct discourse within specialised and general domains (Candlin and Gotti 2007), and literature is no exception.

English is an extraordinary flexible language in constant flux: far from fixing a common, shared standard means of communication, the global use of English has boosted flexibility and proved the vitality of old and new varieties and contexts of usage. A text translated into English is the result of layers of cultural and linguistic features. Whatever the English used, it is inevitably culturally marked, consequently it needs to be adapted to the cultural background of the *interactants*: knowing the identity of the *writer* is crucial for identifying the discourse organisation and the discourse practices involved in any form of communication. Writers deciding to use English are hoping to avoid marginalisation or are looking for recognition on the international market. The *public* may read a book in the original language, via an English translation or directly translated into his/her own language by choosing among a

set of options that were not available before the creation of a global book market. *Reviewers* want to be accepted by their community of peer academics or journalists as well as by readers: being fluent in English makes him/her a sought-after mediator.

For the writer, public and reviewer, writing or reading in English and playing a role in an English-speaking community are obvious advantages, but if belonging to a global discourse community means sharing established standardised linguistic norms, it is to be underlined that the domain of literary discourse, and the Arts in general, is particularly complex and resists codification.

Any variety or form of English places a text in a specific context, and this is manifest in literature where a non-standardised use of language can be a key feature of style. After all,

Language should be seen in terms of gradation or 'cline', which makes it possible to find elements of literariness in languages which would usually be defined as ordinary/non-literary. (Jeffries and MacIntyre 2010: 64)

The ordinary/non-literary is rooted in the literature of the past and present alike and cannot be related to Globalisation. Gotti points out that,

As globalising trends commonly rely on covert strategies meant to reduce participants' specificities, they hybridise local identities in favour of Anglocentric textual models. The complex interaction that opposes and often merges globalising/localising trends contains evidence of hybrid forms of discourse which are as unstable and provisional as the sociocultural identities they encode [...] and which result in the simplification of discourse strategies, the recontextualisation of actor-space-time relations, the enactment of processes of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation, and the rise of cultural hybridity. (Gotti 2012: 24-5)

A shifting authorial identity, hybridity in style and textual variation can be taken for granted in literature and criticism but they have also been extensively investigated in linguistics and in particular in academic discourse where reviewing in all its forms plays an important role. Giannoni (2012) points out some aspects of academic identity and the need to attain success through English by examining the contribution of scholars who

address aspects of authorial identity in academic discourse. He believes that

Authors display their academic expertise like performers on a stage, and are expected to do so in linguistically predictable ways. Markers of stance, for example, show interesting evidence of how scholars project their self-image at different stages in their publishing career [...]. Awareness of collective disciplinary values also underpins the construction of such personal qualities as gratitude, humility, honesty, generosity and commitment (Giannoni 2012: 61)

Book reviewers of literary texts seem to share the same anxiety and they use linguistic and stylistic devices which are common in literature to stage their writing skills and intellectual qualities. Reviews are useful for building up a career network and reviews of literary work tease the creativity of academics and validate their names among the public. Journalists and amateur reviewers seek acceptance and try to gain prestige, build a public identity, and achieve a *smart status*. For this reason, it is important to clearly identify the actors and circumstances involved in this kind of communication and place them within a broad network of relations in order to understand how it is organised and will possibly develop in the future.

    If we encapsulate book reviews in specialised communication, the well-known levels identified, for example, by Cloître and Shinn (1985) appear to be slightly different but not alien from what can be experienced in reading most published reviews, shown in Table 2.

    The reading public of book reviews consists of authors, scholars, journalists and the layman. Occasionally they can turn into reviewers as part of their professional activities. When reviewing, their degree of expertise is crucial for many reasons: it can be flaunted or hinted at to support opinion and guarantee authority, or hidden for understatement, but whatever the status, the reviewer acts as mediator between the author of the novel, play, poetry collection and the public, by placing him/herself *on the side of* the author or, alternatively, of the public.

    Marketing strategies may hide behind good or positive judgment and more or less overtly direct the preferences of the buyer, therefore language is crucial in determining relations. Linguistic devices such as hedging strategies, metaphors or irony reveal the reviewer's point

of view and may determine the success and popularity of the book, stimulate the interest of the reader-customer, flatter the publisher and the author of the book and shape his/her career as well.

TABLE 2

Intraspecialistic level:	Communication from specialist to specialist	Author/ novelist/ poet addressing authors/ novelists/ poets	Not frequent
		Scholar addressing scholars	Frequent (normally published)
		Expert reader addressing [expert] readers	Frequent (normally published)
Interspecialistic level:	Communication from specialist to specialist across disciplinary fields	Specialist in literature (critic/ scholar/novelist) addressing specialist in other disciplines or vice-versa	Possible (normally published)
Pedagogical level:	Communication from specialist to student and vice-versa	Lecturer addressing students, students writing book reviews submitted to lecturer	Frequent (not normally published)
Popular level:	Communication from specialist to layman	Scholar/critic/ journalist addressing the general public (amateur writers)	Typical (normally published)

2. The text

In order to understand the structure of a book review, I will describe part of the results of an ongoing analysis conducted on a review corpus based on the TLS Archives. In this article, though, I focus on a recent work: *1Q84* by Murakami Haruki, a three part Japanese novel written between 2009 and 2010, translated into English in 2011, soon after to become well known and widely reviewed as a global success. Having been published in the US, UK, India, Germany, France, Spain, Sweden, The Netherlands and Italy, among others, the number of reviews is high: 68 texts were examined, 80% of

which were written in English[3]. For the sake of brevity, I shall quote and comment on a restricted set of texts which were published online in *The Economist*, *The Independent*, *The Guardian*, three widely read newspapers with a sound interest in culture, *The Times Literary Supplement*, *The London Review of Books* and *The New York Review of Books* as representative of the specialised press, and *The Japanese Times*, an independent English-language newspaper aimed at spreading information about Japanese culture, life, politics and economy, using the language of international communication.

The reviewers considered seem to share a general appreciation of the book and some take it as representative of real global success by a cult novelist whose paradoxical, ambivalent, baffling style seems to cross cultural and, most of all, linguistic barriers – English is described as a crucial component of the success of the book. I quote an interesting observation by Roland Kelts in *The New Yorker* (16 October, 2012):

In Japan, he is a best-selling commercial writer, with all the implications of the label: he's an entertainer who can afford, both financially and otherwise, to protect his privacy. In the rest of the world, and especially in the U.S., he is a literary alchemist who fuses East to West, and who greets his readers when he can, with a generosity he would never proffer at home in Japan […]

My seventy-year-old Japanese mother sat me down at home in Boston and opened two books, one by the literary lion Yasunari Kawabata, the other by Murakami. "This," she said, pointing to Kawabata's stoic lines of traditional kanji characters, logographs inherited from the Chinese, "is Japanese literature. This," showing Murakami's mish-mash of katakana and hiragana, syllabary writing systems used for words with no kanji, or borrowed (usually) Western terms, "is something else." Murakami said that he found his voice by writing the first pages of his first novel in English – then translating them into Japanese. (He is also a professional translator of American fiction.)[4]

It seems clear that Murakami Haruki represents modern Japan: an odd mixture of extreme modernity and hard-to-grasp traditions, of Westernised culture and a taste for symbols, gestures, values which

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[3] Some of the reviews can be retrieved from: http://www.complete-review.com/reviews/murakamih/1Q84.htm, last accessed March 2013.

[4] http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/books/2012/10/the-harukists-disappointed.html, last accessed March 2013. Roland Kelts is a half Japanese and half American essayist and writer.

are at odd with the Western world itself. It is precisely for this reason that, according to reviewers, he suits post-modern globalised literary taste to perfection. Below is a list of some of the structural aspects that emerge from the reviews of the novel.

The corpus of reviews examined can be arranged according to a pattern of discourse units or moves (Motta-Roth 1998; Biber, Connor, Upton 2007; Suárez and Moreno 2006) which can be exemplified as follows:

TABLE 3

BOILERPLATE (A)	*Information about the book, publisher, translator according to the publisher house style*

Move 1. INTRODUCING THE BOOK AND THE AUTHOR

Subfunction 1.1	Defining the general topic of the book
Subfunction 1.1.1	Developing an aspect of the general topic of the book
Subfunction 1.2	Informing about publication date/release/translation
Subfunction 1.3	Informing about the author
Subfunction 1.4	Making generalisations (placing the book in an ongoing debate)
Subfunction 1.5	Inserting book in the field/literary debate involving the author or the book
Subfunction 1.6	Informing about the writing technique/methodology used by the writer
Subfunction 1.7	Informing about the use of sources/setting the book in its genre

Move 2. OUTLINING THE BOOK

Subfunction 2.1	Providing an overview of the organisation of the book/detached description
Subfunction 2.2	Stating the topic of specific chapters
	Stating the topic of parts of the book with no reference to specific chapters
Subfunction 2.3	Providing examples

Move 3. HIGHLIGHTING PARTS OF THE BOOK

Subfunction 3.1	Providing close evaluation (style/language)

Move 4. PROVIDING GENERAL/FINAL EVALUATION OF THE BOOK

Option 4.1	Definitely recommending the book
Option 4.2	Recommending the book despite shortcomings
Option 4.3	Not recommending the book despite strengths
Option 4.4	Providing neutral summary-conclusion of the book
Option 4.5	Definitely not recommending the book
BOILERPLATE (B)	*Biographical information about the reviewer*

Book reviews start with an introduction, which can be exemplified as Move 1: introducing the book and the author by establishing the field in which the reviewer and the readers share information. Back reference is sometimes used along with quotations, which not only bring authority and support opinion but refer to something known among expert readers and people who follow cultural and literary debates in specialised magazines and newspapers, or have an interest, in our case, in Japanese culture. This is part of a strategy that creates cohesion in the text but also extends to the relationship between reviewer and reader.

If the review is published in a newspaper, the author tends to use a more *journalistic style* (Cotter 2010), i.e. informal language, metaphors, a starting paragraph *in medias res* to define the general topic of the book and give more practical information such as date of publication, interviews and events related to the book. These aspects may be anticipated in a boilerplate, according to each house style.

The reviewed author is often presented indirectly rather than through a straightforward illustration of his/her biography to intrigue readers with anecdotes and give them a taste of his/her style. Move 1 anticipates a more detailed description of the content and stirs the interest of the reader by creating intimacy between the actants involved in the text. Anecdotes are used in different ways in specialist language and news languages. The following excerpts illustrate Move 1.

a) Establishing field

HARUKI MURAKAMI filches from George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* for the title of his new novel, *1Q84*, making a play on *kyu*, the Japanese word for nine, by transposing the letter "Q" for the number "9". Significantly, the action also takes place over the last nine months of 1984. But it would be a mistake to conclude from this that Japan's magical postmodernist has spent nearly 1,000 pages writing about a dystopian world where couples make love in an ash glade, hardly daring to speak because of the all-listening microphones in the trees. Mr Murakami's main influence here is not so much Orwell as Philip Pullman; his *1Q84* less a stairway to another world than a heave-ho into a whole new universe. (Unsigned 2011)

b) Use of quotations as *incipit*

"You know," a teenage girl says to Toru Okada, the narrator of Haruki

Murakami's novel *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*, whom she's found at the bottom of a dried-up well doing some thinking about his missing wife and cat, "you're pretty weird." Later she refines the idea: "I mean, you're such a supernormal guy, but you do such *un*normal things." It's a fair description of Murakami's first-person narrators, who are often referred to by the writer's fans under the generic name "Boku" – a word meaning 'I', as Jay Rubin explains in his guide for Anglophone readers, *Haruki Murakami and the Music of Words* (2002), "but an unpretentious one used primarily by young men in informal circumstances." (It's part of Murakami's unstuffiness to use it instead of the more formal personal pronouns commonly used in literary Japanese.) (Tayler 2011)

c) In medias res start

"Things are not what they seem", a taxi driver warns Aomame, as she chooses to hop out of his cab.

You probably wouldn't buy the latest Murakami for a slice of gritty realism, so it's reassuring that Aomame's decision pitches her headlong into a different reality, conveyed in Jay Rubin's lucid translation with plenty of zest. Somehow, 1984 has closed to Aomame, and the sequence of bizarre events that unfolds suggests that she has been drawn into a new universe which looks much the same, but has two moons. The landscape is similar enough for her to name it 1Q84, the Q standing for question, while she puzzles out how her own destiny is tangled up in the moral and procedural framework of this new reality. (Urquhart 2011)

Move 2 aims at providing an overview of the organisation of the book, a sort of detached description of the main topic and the key characters in the story. Sometimes a brief outline of single chapters is given along with sample quotes from the text, be it dialogues or descriptions.

a) The chapters of this 1,060-page novel are divided evenly between Aomame's bizarre experiences and those of Tengo, a university entrance-exam math prep instructor who has difficulty relating to children. Tengo is of the same ilk as many of Murakami's heroes: he is relatively passive, often ignored, not terribly successful and manages to find leisure time for sexual intrigue. (Chozick 2009)

b) Chapters alternate between Aomame, Tengo and – in Book Three – Toshiharu Ushikawa, a seedy and extraordinarily ugly private detective ("as inconspicuous as a centipede in a cup of yoghurt"). Tengo is a twenty-

nine year-old writer and part-time mathematics teacher, a big man with cauliflower ears and "the eyes of an early-waking farmer". Although we are repeatedly informed of Tengo's great personal gifts (he is talented with numbers and words, and a hit with women), his humility, modest lifestyle and tone of innocent bewilderment quickly identify him as merely the latest in Murakami's long line of everyman heroes. (Jeffrey 2011)

Move 3 may merge into Move 2 to discuss the book in greater detail, especially in relation to language and style. Observe the following excerpts:

a) Murakami's fiction has grown increasingly relevant to our understanding of the world today, and this time his craft is more refined than ever. Decades of Murakami's experimentation with voice and style have culminated in sophisticated but simple prose that avoids pretension (except when he mocks Japan's literary culture). In addition, the characters' intonation, gestures and facial expressions are described with a new degree of precision… (Chozick 2009)

b) The surrealistic logic that threads its way through his stories and their pervasive sense of the uncanny furthers the kinship. Aside from the strictly realist *Norwegian Wood* (1987, translated 2000), Murakami's mature fiction generally displays two steadfast qualities. The first is a very open and clear prose style – one of the friendliest of any major novelist. The second is a hypnagogic, frequently bewildering plot. Murakami has likened novel-writing to a waking dream and, in a sense, what his stories resemble is a man (his leading characters are typically male, and narrate in the first person) trying to report his dark dreams back as unpretentiously as he can. The novels' most arresting quality is this combination of intelligent earnestness with a sensibility that touches on genuinely unnerving subject matter – the latter amplified by the former. (Jeffrey 2011)

Move 4 provides an overall view of the text and the discussion raised by the text itself with closing remarks inviting the reader to buy the book. Sometimes there are no final remarks at all; judgment is suspended as the text speaks for itself. Quotes are used as a means to provide a final statement.

a) Like two American writers, Jonathan Franzen and Jeffrey Eugenides, both known for their fizzy inventiveness but whose recent work is more plot-driven, Mr Murakami seems to have made a conscious move towards romantic narrative. Mr Franzen's latest book asks whether the married

protagonists will stay together; Mr Eugenides's which of the two main heroes will his heroine end up with (if any). It is Mr Murakami's turn, now, to cut in on the boy-girl gavotte. This has certainly proved a popular move. When the first two volumes of "*1Q84*" were published in Japanese in 2009, more than 1m copies were sold in just a few weeks; the third volume followed to similar acclaim a few months later. Keeping up originality can be hard work. But Mr Murakami's new direction, like that of Mr Franzen and Mr Eugenides, is bringing him thousands of fresh readers. And that is a good thing. (Unsigned 2011)

b) I finished *1Q84* feeling that its spiritual project was heroic and beautiful, that its central conflict involved a pitched battle between realism and unrealism (while being scrupulously fair to both sides), and that, in our own somewhat unreal times, younger readers, unlike me, would have no trouble at all believing in the existence of Little People and replicants. What they may have trouble with is the novel's absolute faith in the transformative power of love. (Baxter 2011)

c) Loneliness has been Murakami's stock in trade, from the melancholia of his bestselling *Norwegian Wood* to the more mournful protagonist of *Sputnik Sweetheart*. *1Q84* is driven by outsiders in a culture that prizes conformity. Identity and belonging, the porous membrane separating stories and reality, and a whole host of Murakami icons from talking cats to one-way portals all contribute to this rich and often perplexing mix. But ultimately, *1Q84* is a simple love story that ends on a metaphysical cliffhanger.

A year after publication, Murakami dashed off a third volume that purportedly brings resolution, but UK readers will have to wait until the end of the month to digest this delicious paranormal stew in its entirety. (Urquhart 2011)

As can be observed in the examples above, each judgment is unique. The moves may be more or less the same, but the way in which each single writer guides the reader into the novel is individual: writing in the humanities tends to resist the formality, objectivity and impersonality of scientific writing and formal academic textual organisation. Literature reviewing in the context of academic journals would probably meet the requirements of 'scientific' writing better, although well-known structures, such as abstracts or clearly identifiable moves, may not be clearly defined and perceived as appropriate, especially in literature where an expressive and rich style is often a key feature of good writing as opposed to a neutral

and impersonal one. Book reviewing, on the other hand, adopts a hybrid and less structured pattern of textual organisation, allowing for creative forms of writing.

3. Evaluative language

Language in a Systemic Functional approach is as a set of resources that enables speakers to create meanings as part of a network. Building texts means to fulfil a social function. Creating texts, and in particular texts that can be identified as belonging to a specific genre, fulfils a social function. Martin (1984) describes a genre as a staged, purposeful, social activity that we engage in as speakers of a language, and he also affirms that the purpose of a genre is fulfilled in stages, i.e. step by step as the social activity unfolds. The actors involved in this social activity activate strategies to take part in it. Appraisal theory, as theorised by Martin (2000), Martin and Rose (2003), Martin and White (2005) and Hood (2004), focuses on the meaning used to negotiate the positioning of the actors in a social/ linguistic activity and proves to be useful in our case to analyse the role of the reviewer from a different perspective.

Appraisal theory identifies three subsystems: Engagement, which refers to the construction of a textual voice in relation to other voices in a text; Attitude, referring to the expression of feelings and emotions and which can be realised explicitly or implicitly; Graduation, which describes the degree of intensity of evaluative meanings expressed by language. The three aspects are further divided into subcategories. Of particular relevance here are Attitude, subdivided into Affect, Appreciation, along with Judgment and Graduation subdivided into Force and Focus (Martin and White 2005: 38).

Attitude refers to the way in which texts/speakers attach a value to the participants or processes involved in communication by raising an emotional response or by referring to culturally-determined values. In our case the reviewer states whether the book is good, bad or average by connecting the content of the book with the reader's emotions, social norms and beliefs, shared aesthetics and culturally determined norms. Table 4 exemplifies the idea.

TABLE 4

Attitude is divided into three subsystems:

AFFECT	the description of the content (plot, characters) by reference to emotion (positive or negative)
JUDGMENT	the evaluation of the author with respect to shared social norms
APPRECIATION	the evaluation of the text as a product by reference to aesthetic principles and other systems of social value

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The general outlines of the grammar and semantics of affect are concerned with emotional response and disposition which are typically realised through mental feedback in phrases like *it pleases me*, *I hate to admit*, *I loved the way in which*, etc. or through attributive interpersonal forms of affect *to be sad, happy*, *to be proud of sth.*, *to be frightened of*, *stunned by sth*. etc. Finally, affect may also be realised more directly as nouns or noun phrases, e.g. *his/her fear, sadness*, *happiness* or any state of mind conveyed by the text to the reviewer (Martin and White 2005: 45-52).

Judgment includes meanings which serve to evaluate the author positively and negatively by reference to a set of social norms. Therefore the reviewer's judgment is involved when he/she assesses how the author relates to the text, what he said during interviews, how the texts can be placed in the current literary debate and in his/her own overall career. In other words, it is classified as laudable, deplorable, normal or abnormal or provocative. This kind of judgment can be represented by the use of adverbials such as *fairly*, *virtuously*, *honestly*, *cleverly*, *eccentrically written*, for example, or can be inferred from the use of complex noun phrases:

Murakami uses the surreal confidently, from portals at the bottom of wells in his subtly textured 1994 epic *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* to the six-foot cellar-dwelling superhero frogs found in his 2000 collection *After the Quake*. His landscapes are charged with fantastic figures that hold portentous significance, and like some of his most substantial work, *1Q84* offers a loose political allegory [...]. (Urquhart 2011)

His early works were intensely personal fantasies involving unhappy, virtually disembodied men and suffused with references to Western music and literature. *1Q84* is much longer, but also far more conventional. Like

two American writers, Jonathan Franzen and Jeffrey Eugenides, both known for their fizzy inventiveness but whose recent work is more plot-driven, Mr Murakami seems to have made a conscious move towards romantic narrative […] (Unsigned 2011)

In the above instances, judgment is expressed through a sequence of clear lexical choices but this form of assessment may be evoked indirectly or implied, rather than explicitly stated.

Appreciation, as I mentioned above, is the evaluation of the text by reference to aesthetic principles and other systems of social and, most of all, cultural value. It may relate to the composition of the text, its plot and structure described as *harmonious*, *symmetrical*, *balanced*, *convoluted*, etc.

All the above aspects defining Attitude can be modulated and tempered. With graduation, the reviewer grades or balances the force and focus attached to an utterance.

It's true that he isn't a writer to go to for three-dimensional depictions of reality. His characters tend to be variations on a limited number of figures: a passive yet stubbornly resourceful male protagonist; a wife with an unguessed-at hinterland; a kooky, flirtatious, sexually unavailable girl; a mysterious, confident, sexually available older woman; a creepy, slick professional man and so on. He seems to have a Chandler-like rule for constructing storylines: when in doubt, instead of bringing in a man with a gun, have someone recount a disturbing dream or vanish or unexpectedly do something sexual. And though his writing works well in English, it sometimes comes out a bit inertly, with assorted tics depending on which of his translators is at work […]. (Tayler 2011)

Force indicates the intensity, while focus the sharpening or blurring of judgment. Force includes intensifiers, down-tones, boosters, emphasisers, emphatics, etc. but the most obvious mode of expression is through the adverbs of intensification such as *slightly*, *a bit*, *somewhat*, *rather*, *really*, *very*, *completely*, etc. Albeit more problematically, the idea of graduation also applies to measure quantity, extent, and proximity in time and space which in a book review refers to page numbers and chapters, publication dates, distribution and translation of the text.

Focus as part of graduation relates to those meanings which are typically analysed as 'hedging' and 'vague language' (Markannen

and Schröden 1997; Kaltenböck, Mihatsch, Schneider 2010). Lexical items indicating hedging are, for example, modal adverbs such as *certainly*, *definitely*, *clearly*, *probably*, *possibly*, *perhaps*; modal adjectives, e.g. *certain*, *definite*, *clear*, *probable*, *possible*; modal nouns, e.g. *assumption*, *possibility*, *probability*, but also 'that clauses', e.g. *it could be the case that*, *it might be suggested that*, and to-clause + adjective, such as *it may be possible to*, *it is important to*, *it is useful to*, etc. Observe these excerpts:

As usual it's possible to read the outlandish stuff as emanating from less extravagant personal problems – to interpret the cult material as an outgrowth of Aomame's religious upbringing, for instance. A subplot concerning Tengo's father throws up some Oedipal business but also some fine, creepy scenes. Mostly, though, the protagonists' inner conflicts come across as being reverse-engineered from the fantastic situations instead of giving rise to them. Another favourite device – analogies between the story's dark forces and the ungovernable writerly imagination – cuts awkwardly across the plot's cartoonish aspects […] (Tayler 2011)

The author himself seems somewhat undecided about who these creatures are – that is, what his imagination has created. Artists don't need fully to understand their own art, but as the reader proceeds through Murakami's novel, the suspicion grows that the author is riding a horse so powerful that it is occasionally not under his command and control. The horse is world-class and beautiful and fast, and the ride is thrilling. But the core meaning of what's happening on the darker side of the spectrum has intermittently slipped away […] (Baxter 2011)

These are all devices widely used both in more formal reviews and in semi-specialists ones as a way to modulate judgment as a form of understatement and indirect criticism. They are also extensively used to strengthen the argument by weakening the claim, or belittle approval. Hedging allows reviewers to avoid making direct or decisive statements and avoid commitment.

This broad description of evaluative language in reviews suggests that reviewers need to be competent language users. Not only does the review need to be balanced in its construction and in the scaling of moves, but it must be careful in the way in which judgment is formulated and expressed to meet the requirements of review writing and be effective in promoting the text, or inviting readers not to buy it.

3. Conclusion

Being an established reviewer and writing in a well-known and reputable setting require adherence to a style that readers want, need and expect; a framework in which the reviewer has to fit in order to promote or criticise the text. The understanding of this language framework and style does not appear to be strictly codified or globalised, at least, not yet. Reviews have a rather organised and established structure to follow: a sequence of paragraphs whose content is arranged according to patterns that are common and commonly accepted and segmentable. Nevertheless, the English used in reviews is manipulated according to the personal aims and the individual style of the reviewer. It meets the context of publication as far as register is concerned and may be in tune with the style of the literary text reviewed by the extensive use of quotation. The social and cultural background of the reviewer as a journalist, professional critic or writer affects linguistic choice and the way in which evaluation is displayed. If a globalised style indicates uniformity and accessibility of the lexicon, this is not the case with reviews.

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