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A study of critical attitude across English and Spanish academic book reviews

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Abstract

Since the 1990s cross-cultural studies of academic genres are becoming increasingly relevant. One genre that has recently attracted cross-cultural attention is the academic book review. The aim of the present paper is to provide insight into what is expected in terms of overall critical attitude towards the books under review when writing in this academic genre for international journals by comparison to what is conventional in journals of smaller discourse communities. Based on two comparable corpora of 20 academic book reviews of literature in English and 20 in peninsular Spanish, the study compares how much and what kind of critical attitude (positive vs. negative) is typically displayed by expert L1 writers of such texts. Critical attitude is defined in terms of "critical acts," which are identified and measured in a way that takes the co-text and the context into account. The results show that the peninsular Spanish writers of literary academic book reviews are much less critical in general and show a much lower

tendency to evaluate the book negatively than their Anglo-American counterparts. Results are discussed in the light of information provided by informants.



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Keywords

EAP; Academic book reviews; Evaluation; Critical acts; Critical discourse analysis; Cross-cultural studies

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Lorena SuÃ¡rez received her PhD. in English Philology from the University of LeÃ³n, Spain. Her fields of study are contrastive rhetoric and discourse analysis. She has focused her research on the book review genre, from the perspective of genre analysis and

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