

## A CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF HEDGING IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH ARCHITECTURE PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

PALOMA POVEDA CABANES  
*Universidad Politécnica de Madrid*

**ABSTRACT.** *This paper offers an approach to the contrastive study of the linguistic realization and communicative goals of the type of discourse modulation devices known as hedges in the genre of English and Spanish architecture project descriptions. The analysis of the texts in the corpus seems to indicate that there is a wide range of lexicogrammatical features which signal diverse hedging strategies. Several cognitive aspects referring to the context and conventions of the discourse community of architects will be taken into account in order to suggest that these strategies fulfil three main rhetorical functions or communicative goals. First, they can express the authors' wish to show deference and politeness towards their audience; secondly, they seem to be an indication of the authors' need to protect themselves against the possible negative consequences of being proved wrong; and lastly, they are evidence of the authors' consideration of the required degree of precision in their texts.*

**KEY WORDS.** *Discourse analysis, hedging, genre, architecture project description, communicative goals)*

**RESUMEN.** *El presente trabajo ofrece una aproximación al estudio contrastivo inglés-español de la realización lingüística y los objetivos comunicativos de los atenuantes retóricos en el género de la memoria de arquitectura. El análisis de los textos incluidos en el corpus parece indicar que existe una amplia gama de rasgos léxico-gramaticales que desempeñan una serie de estrategias de atenuación retórica. Se tendrán en cuenta diversos aspectos cognitivos referidos al contexto y a las convenciones de la comunidad discursiva de los arquitectos para sugerir que estas estrategias desempeñan tres funciones retóricas o cumplen tres objetivos comunicativos. En primer lugar, pueden expresar el deseo del autor de mostrar deferencia y cortesía hacia su audiencia; manifiestan su necesidad de protegerse frente a las posibles consecuencias negativas de haberse equivocado en sus apreciaciones o decisiones; y finalmente, evidencian su consideración sobre el grado de precisión que es necesario alcanzar con sus textos.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE.** *Análisis del discurso, atenuación retórica, género, memoria de arquitectura, objetivos comunicativos)*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The terms *hedge* and *hedging*, in their literal sense, refer to the idea of ‘barrier’, ‘limit’, ‘defence’, or to the means used to protect or defend oneself. The concept of *hedge* in linguistics was coined by G. Lakoff (1972: 195), whose well-known definition of the term was: “*Words whose job is to make things fuzzy or less fuzzy*”. This definition became the starting point for several studies on this phenomenon, which has proved to have multiple facets and therefore has been approached in many different ways by each author. The meaning and scope of the term *hedge* has expanded considerably from that time, and the approaches and conclusions of each one of the studies on the subject have also differed to a great extent, depending on the type of texts in which they were based (biomedical articles, legal texts, scientific research articles, etc.). In this paper, several aspects taken from previous research will be taken into account in order to apply them to a specific genre –the architecture project description. I will try to offer an overall view of the phenomenon of rhetorical attenuation in English and Spanish in this particular communicative situation.

Lakoff’s first works drew attention to the importance and the possibilities offered by the study of some fuzzy and vague expressions with the help of formal logic. His analysis focused on certain linguistically indeterminate items which are used to describe certain natural phenomena that fall in the periphery of the conceptual categories on which our perception of reality is based. Although he did not offer an exhaustive analysis of the phenomenon, and focused exclusively on its semantic aspects, Lakoff’s theories served to facilitate understanding of the semantic base on which the concept rests, opening the way to later analyses of the subject. His approach also suggested the importance of context and meaning in the study of linguistic phenomena, and for this reason most of these subsequent studies have evolved towards pragmatic aspects. From a formal point of view, as Crompton (1997) pointed out, the nominalization which Lakoff’s definition made of the word *hedge* suggested he was considering a discrete set of linguistic items. However, later studies have proved that the phenomenon of rhetoric attenuation can be formalized through multiple mechanisms which sometimes even include grammatical and syntactic aspects.

Basing on Lakoff’s work, and after studying the different functions of indeterminate expressions in spoken medical discourse, Prince et al. (1982) suggested the division of these linguistic items into two main categories: *approximators* –which express fuzziness or vagueness within the propositional content itself and which therefore constitute a semantic phenomenon– and *shields* –which express fuzziness in the relationship between the propositional content and the speaker and which therefore deal with the problem from a pragmatic point of view–. Within the category of shields they identified two subclasses: *plausibility shields* –expressing the speaker’s degree of certainty about the veracity of his message– and *attribution shields* –which attribute the idea expressed to someone different from the speaker–. As Crompton (1997) observes, this functional analysis was strongly determined by the nature of the corpus which was the object of the study. However, these

authors offered a clear and economical classification which also anticipated later descriptions of hedges as devices that occasionally express epistemic modality, this being understood as a resource used by the authors to express their opinions and judgements on the validity of the ideas presented.

The approach proposed by these authors has been, however, criticized by later studies as those of Skelton (1988), who observed that this distinction amongst different types of hedges is only sustainable in abstract terms and it is difficult to maintain in the analyses of the real use of language. Skelton proposes the abandonment of the term *hedge* in favour of a distinction between *proposition* and *comment*, and places the use of the communicative strategies of hedging within the framework of what he calls *commentative language*, characterized by the modulation of propositions.

This approach has also been questioned by other studies, exclusively centred upon the consideration of hedges as devices which express the author's degree of commitment to the truthfulness of his/her statements. As Crompton points out, from this point of view, the scope of Skelton's distinction is too broad and can lead to ambiguity, since there are many other types of *comments* which an author can make to express different attitudes from those mentioned earlier. In this context, hedging language is no more than a subset of what Skelton described as *commentative language*.

In spite of its apparent inappropriateness, Skelton's classification suggested a distinction which proved useful in later studies: the *evaluative potential* of language versus the concepts of *propositionality* or *factuality*. Basing on these concepts, Crompton made a distinction between propositions which have the status of *facts* –containing information already shared by the discourse community– and those which have the status of *claims* –presented for evaluation by the target audience of the message–. Since they imply a higher risk level, the latter must be issued with certain strategies in mind, amongst which those of tentativeness, modesty and politeness are included.

Following this line of thought, Myers (1989) argues that any claim made in the academic field is a 'threat' –a *face threatening act*– for the rest of the researchers in the same field because it infringes on their 'freedom to act'. Hedging strategies help to tone down, mitigate or modulate the statements so that the audience can feel that they are still able to judge for themselves and that the author is pending their acceptance.

Salager-Meyer (1995) also believes that the main functions of hedging are to protect the authors against reactions which their propositions might provoke and to reflect their modesty and deference towards the target audience. However, she agrees with Banks (1994) that this exclusive association of hedges with evasiveness and politeness must not obscure other important functions of this communicative strategy, referring to the use of certain indeterminate expressions which express vagueness or lack of precision without necessarily showing confusion or uncertainty.

Vagueness can fulfil two communicative functions. First, it can provide a more accurate representation of reality. It can describe the state of knowledge more precisely or present certain facts in areas which are characterized by constant reformulation and reinterpretation, such as those situated within the scientific field. Hyland (1995) points

out the existence of this type of hedges which express vagueness and lack of precision, describing them as *content-oriented*. However, he also lists other functions of hedging such as the author's wish to anticipate the negative consequences of being proved wrong and the function of expressing deference and politeness towards the audience. In short, for Hyland, the hedging phenomenon looks in three directions: towards the proposition, towards the writer and towards the reader.

On the other hand, vagueness can simply be more appropriate for the communicative situation which takes place at a specific time. Banks includes amongst the functions of hedges that of deliberately providing inconclusive or incomplete data, simply because greater precision is not considered necessary or because the communicative situation is in a pre-informative stage. In other words, because there is more information available which will come afterwards or which can be made available for the reader if necessary.

Combining all these different approaches to the problem, a more recent theory such as that of Varttala (2001) starts from semantic considerations to state that the use of hedges can either increase or decrease the fuzziness of our conceptualizations of reality. These semantic features of hedging may, in turn, render the strategy useful in pragmatic terms, since they can make hedging fulfil several interpersonal functions depending on the type of communicative situation. The most common of these functions is linguistic politeness, although it is not the only one.

Mendiluce and Hernández (2005) also believe that nowadays the study of discourse modulation only makes sense within a pragmatic perspective, far from the initial semantic approach. They focus exclusively on the phenomenon of rhetorical appropriateness, stating that academic negotiation is sustained by a rhetorical process which fluctuates between respect for others and the affirmation of one's self. In this process, hedges play a fundamental role which is directly related to the interpersonal function of language.

When this purely functional starting point is used, one could say that there are practically no limits to the number of linguistic expressions which can be considered as hedges, as Markkannen and Schröder (1997) have pointed out. There are no linguistic items to which this function is inherently assigned. The hedging quality is achieved through the communicative context. These authors also state that hedging is not an inherent characteristic of a text but rather a product of the communication between the writer and the reader. In other words, the linguistic expressions used in hedging only acquire their meaning through the reaction they produce in the readers.

From the previous exposition –which has been chronologically organized in a deliberate way, in order to offer an overview of the evolution of the concept– we may conclude that hedging is a multi-faceted phenomenon which can be approached from different points of view and which combines semantic, pragmatic and cognitive factors. On the one hand, it is often signalled by certain linguistic items which serve to carry out specific discourse strategies. These strategies, in turn, fulfil several functions of rhetorical adequacy, depending on the type of communicative situation. Finally, from a cognitive point of view, the use of these strategies is often a result of the utterer's personal intentions.

However, their interpretation ultimately depends on the addressee's intuition or his/her ability to perceive the whole context of the communicative situation. The use of hedging therefore appeals to the knowledge of all the participants in such a situation, both from the linguistic and from the pragmatic point of view.

This paper aims to integrate all these semantic, pragmatic and cognitive factors and analyze why the discourse modulation device known as hedging is used and how it is signalled in the genre of the architectural project description. Starting from a general description of significant lexico-grammatical features which signal certain hedging strategies, several cognitive aspects referring to the context and the conventions of this discourse community will be taken into account to describe the rhetorical functions fulfilled by these strategies.

## 2. METHODOLOGY AND CORPUS

This approach to the subject matter of hedging strives to offer an overview of the main communicative strategies used by the authors of architecture project descriptions to express politeness, solidarity or deference towards their audience and to make their messages rhetorically appropriate. To this end, they base upon their perception of reality within the framework of the discourse community to which they belong. The results presented in section 3 only have an illustrative and orientative purpose, and lack statistical value. Obviously, some authors tend to modulate their discourse to a greater extent than others. Some texts offer more indications about the rhetorical strategies used by the author while others maintain a more distant and hermetic position, something which no doubt has to do with the idiosyncrasy or personality of each architectural office. On the other hand, the aim has not been to measure the level of occurrence of this phenomenon in English compared with that of Spanish, but to look for equivalences between both languages.

The first step was to locate and select a group of texts which conformed to the characteristics of the genre of architecture project descriptions. Afterwards, I identified and contextually interpreted the linguistic items which seemed to serve the authors' need to show their deference towards the group, the precision level of their utterances or the assertive force of their statements. Although there are certain easily identifiable expressions, which are typically used for these purposes (passive voice, certain lexical items, certain epistemic expressions), this type of study cannot rely on text-interrogation tools. The chosen approach must necessarily be pragmatic, in which the most important thing for the analysis is the context. For this reason, the method adopted was an exhaustive reading of each text, trying to locate the points where the author's intention was revealed, regardless of the linguistic form used, since the phenomenon of hedging is considered as an open category. After collecting the examples, they were classified according to their linguistic realization, the communicative strategy used and the objective pursued by each one.

The study is based on a corpus consisting of 14 architecture project descriptions in Spanish and 14 in English –with a total of 13.998 words (6.689+7.389 respectively)–, all written in their original language, that is to say, there are not instances of translations. The Spanish texts are taken from a Spanish architecture magazine, *EL CROQUIS*, and from the *Spain Yearbook 2005*, published by another Spanish architecture publication, *AV*. In both cases, the texts were written by the architectural offices, i.e., by the actual authors of the projects. Rarely, these texts have been expressly written for the occasion of their publication, but the usual thing is that the architects adapt, or use directly, the written description previously elaborated in order to be handed to a client or a builder –along with the rest of the documentation required– or when taking part in a building competition. Therefore, in this case, the lack of variety in the sources –the publications from which the texts have been extracted– would be balanced by the diversity of ‘voices’ –the different authors– found in the corpus.

The English texts were also taken from the architecture magazine *EL CROQUIS* or from monographs by the same publisher, also provided directly by the corresponding architecture offices and originally written in English. Three of the five offices chosen are based in the United Kingdom –Zaha Hadid, David Chipperfield and John Pawson– and one in the United States –Steven Holl–. Finally, it seemed interesting to choose an internationally renowned Switzerland-based office –Herzog and de Meuron–, because it was considered interesting to include a sample of second-language users in order to offer a general perspective of the means by which architects writing in English convey an attitude to their design statements.

Although the aim of this article is not to demonstrate that the architecture project descriptions can be considered as a linguistic genre, some previous analyses by the author point in that direction, and there are studies by other authors which could support this affirmation. Caballero (2002, 2003, 2006), in her analysis on metaphor in the architects’ discourse from a genre-based perspective, uses a corpus of texts of similar –although not identical– characteristics to those used in this study, referring to them as belonging to the ‘building review genre’.

If we take the initial purpose into account, former analyses by the author of this paper –on architecture project description texts extracted from Spanish, British and American architecture magazines– seem to confirm the fact that these specialized publications offer two text types when dealing with the description of the projects featured. On the one hand, we have the project descriptions –sometimes called ‘design statements’– written by the architects themselves and originally meant to be part of the documents required when these professionals apply for the relevant permission to develop a project or when they take part in a building competition. These texts contain, basically, a ‘statement of intentions’ and a more or less detailed description of the project. Although their original purpose has been different, they are sometimes published in specialized books or magazines at a later stage, or they are even included in the web pages elaborated by the architects to divulge their professional practice.

Secondly, the editors of architecture publications sometimes offer explanatory texts which are written expressly for the occasion by their editorial staff, or are commissioned to contributing critics, in order to accompany the graphic presentation of a project. These texts keep the descriptive character of the first group, but they can either be written from a neutral point of view or –as it happens in the majority of cases– they can have a more evaluative and critical approach. The main difference between both types of text lies precisely in this last point, and it must be said here that Caballero's (2002, 2003, 2006) studies are based on the second group of texts, which she refers to as 'building reviews'. Building reviews, as described above, share a series of formal characteristics and stylistic features with the architecture project descriptions proper –although their main communicative purpose differs–, also exhibiting certain features of the journalistic and art criticism genres. This study is based on a corpus of texts belonging to the first group, which is deemed as more representative of the professional discourse of architects, and as more appropriate for the analysis of the central theme of this study, which is the presence of the author in the texts. It was therefore considered of the utmost importance not to choose articles written by third parties, since these would obviously have a different approach which would render the texts invalid for the present study.

### 3. RESULTS OF THE HEDGING ANALYSIS

Given that the main goal of the study of this corpus is to analyze why hedging is used and how it is signalled in the genre of the architecture project description, I will start from a general catalogue of the lexico-grammatical items that signal hedging, and continue with a description of the different hedging strategies they serve. Finally, I will identify the main rhetorical or communicative functions fulfilled by these strategies. Each of these points is illustrated with a compilation of examples taken from the texts included in the corpus.

#### 3.1. *Lexico-grammatical items that signal hedging*

##### 3.1.1. Verbal items

*Modal verbs:* These are the lexical items most typically associated with the phenomenon of hedging in English, especially by authors who identify hedging exclusively with the epistemic mode, or the idea of probability or possibility. As far as the analysed texts are concerned, there is a discreet but noticeable use of modal verbs in English, whereas the Spanish texts resort to other linguistic devices to express modality, such as adverbial expressions and most noticeably the potential mood or the subjunctive. The latter is almost non-existent in English, but it is a powerful tool to express tentativeness or uncertainty in Spanish. Here are some examples of modals expressing probability or possibility in English and their correspondence in Spanish:

- (1) The contacts and switches between the sections of the new museum can be seen as specific places within the greater organism as a whole. [CR-20]
- (2) We came to the conclusion that the library required a different type of building: it would be a solitaire, a landmark within the surrounding urban architecture that would communicate the new spirit of the university and relate to the environs in many different ways. [CR-19]
- (3) Para las 71 viviendas en altura hemos optado por plantear dos bloques, ligeramente enlazados en los extremos a través de viviendas-puente, que liberan, en la medida de lo posible, los testeros, para permitir una apertura hacia el paisaje circundante. [CR-03]
- (4) Se trata de crear una plataforma de tres metros de altura (...) que aloja un volumen excavado, en el que se ubican, en dos plantas, oficinas, vestuarios y almacenes, y en sólo una planta el gimnasio, que tendría así doble altura y quedaría iluminado superiormente. [CR-02]
- (5) La intervención reelabora el patrimonio existente y subraya con su horizontalidad la condición topográfica de este territorio: una capa apenas despegada del suelo que favorezca la relación entre los nuevos y los viejos elementos. [CR-04]

*Lexical verbs:* This lexical category yielded by far the most instances. The texts are full of lexical verbs –and their corresponding derived nouns– which serve the function of rhetorical attenuation in the sense that they are used to convey different degrees of tentativeness, as the following examples show:

- (6) For this competition and subsequently, OZH proposed a way of working with both the content of the exhibit and the exhibit structure as a complete idea. [CR-12]
- (7) In our proposal for the competition, we suggested placing two rectangular buildings on the area to the west of the university campus to house the library and the main lecture building. [CR-19]
- (8) The design attempts to reflect this idea. [CR-12]
- (9) The concept aims for a convergence of four geophysical aspects. [CR-09]
- (10) The architecture intends to visibly demonstrate and foster our awareness of the coexistence and equality of cultures. [CR-20]
- (11) Looking to provide a sense of continuity, the house sits on a solid stone and concrete base, and its upper mass, like the neighbouring houses, is punctured by small windows. [CR-13]
- (12) Exposed tension rods of the partial bridge section contribute to the linear and planar architecture. [CR-08]
- (13) The twist in the light modulators allows the mixing of warm south light with cool north light for diffused light in the galleries. [CR-10]



- (14) The folding structure offers a spatial interplay and confrontation with the subject matter which strives to evoke the participant to think. [CR-12]
- (15) The conception of a building with a coupling of interior and exterior space (...) responds to the need for social durability from the collective point of view. [CR-21]
- (16) Se ha optado por materializar los límites confiriéndoles un carácter abierto y fluido, con el fin de contribuir a una experiencia que potencie la relación frente al ensimismamiento. [Av-04]
- (17) El proyecto pretende resolver su difícil inserción en una trama irregular adoptando la configuración quebrada como tema compositivo, lo que permite simultáneamente (...) poner en relación el conjunto con la topografía de la ciudad. [CR-01]
- (18) El planeamiento propone ubicar el edificio en el límite del caserío de Trebujena. [CR-05]
- (19) ...el edificio consigue ajustar su volumetría a la forma del solar y dibujar la prolongación de la calle Lavapiés hacia la calle Valencia. [AV-02]
- (20) Al igual que en los bloques, se ha intentado que estas cajas de dormitorios traduzcan hacia el exterior el uso de la vivienda. [CR-03]
- (21) ...se ha procurado que el centro quede trazado dentro de una red formada a base de espacios ocupados y espacios vacíos. [CR-06]
- (22) ...se han construido contenedores de tierra en los que es posible plantar especies de tamaño considerable y desarrollo horizontal (...), y en cuyos muros se apoyan bancos de madera, propiciando así áreas de estancia a la sombra. [AV-03]
- (23) Los materiales elegidos ayudan a reforzar los objetivos expuestos. [CR-06]

*Passive voice:* This is another typical resource used to express depersonalization and narrative detachment in English. In the case of Spanish, however, authors do not resort to passive voice so often. Instead, they use what is called ‘*pasiva refleja*’, or impersonal constructions with ‘*se*’, as in the following examples:

- (24) It was because of this underlying premise that artists were selected whose works dealt with these issues and were invited to create specific installations for the zone. [CR-12]
- (25) Similarly the base steel structure is layered with translucent materials... [CR-12]
- (26) First the area of the site to the South of the Crown Land is excavated, its highest point levelled to the lowest point of the site. [CR-11]
- (27) El edificio (...) se construye por medio de la concatenación de piezas autónomas (...) que van cosiendo un distorsionado tablero de ajedrez. [AV-01]
- (28) ...el cerramiento vertical se transforma en una cubierta baja y de escasa inclinación, mientras hacia el interior se bisela ligeramente a partir de la

quinta planta y algo más pronunciadamente tras superar el último forjado. [AV-07]

- (29) ...en una zona que se trata con ajardinamiento para definir un recinto dedicado al descanso con vistas hacia el mar. [CR-01]

### 3.1.2. Non-verbal items

*Nouns:* Most of the nouns used to signal hedging are derived from the above-mentioned lexical verbs and, like them, are characterized by a component of tentative or indefinite meaning that makes them useful for rhetorical adequacy purposes. Some examples are:

- (30) The building form is a response to the unique aspects of the site. [CR-09]  
 (31) ... an earlier proposal had looked to remodel and extend this structure rather than demolish and begin again. [CR-17]  
 (32) A second architectural strategy involves the large roof, which expresses the collective gesture of people gathering together. [CR-20]  
 (33) Nuestra respuesta al solar del Kursaal es sencilla: no debe construirse un edificio que destruya la presencia del Urumea. [CR-07]  
 (34) La propuesta que presentamos responde a estas cuestiones con un edificio largo y compacto de tres plantas. [CR-01]  
 (35) Esta comprensión totalizadora de Almería y su entorno natural ha supuesto tres años de procesos administrativos, ahora resueltos, en el intento de dar a la edificación pública el papel que le corresponde. [CR-01]

*Adverbs:* These texts often include some adverbs which introduce a certain degree of indefiniteness or lack of precision to the information, either to provide a more accurate representation of reality or simply because vagueness is more appropriate for this specific communicative situation, in which a higher degree of precision is not considered necessary. Here are some examples:

- (36) The first layer, which is partly immersed in the ground on the eastern cliff edge, houses fifteen double-height studio apartments with glazed fronts. [CR-11]  
 (37) With relatively few exceptions, the area has a consistent architectural character... [CR-17]  
 (38) Para las 71 viviendas en altura hemos optado por plantear dos bloques, ligeramente enlazados en los extremos a través de viviendas-puente, que liberan, en la medida de lo posible, los testeros, para permitir una apertura hacia el paisaje circundante. [CR-03]  
 (39) La intervención (...) subraya con su horizontalidad la condición topográfica de este territorio: una capa apenas despegada del suelo que favorezca la relación entre los nuevos y los viejos elementos. [CR-04]

*Adjectives:* On occasions, these lexical items also characterize the information presented as uncertain, tentative or not quite precise in a very similar way to the adverbs. Some examples follow:

- (40) Being able to leave out certain areas of the floor space on each level or in each part of the building gave us considerable freedom in designing the spatial sequences within the building. [CR-19]
- (41) A series of courtyards (...) establish multiple relations between the street level and the other levels of the building... [CR-21]
- (42) La primera 'roca varada' (...) es un volumen prismático (...) dinamizado por una ligera inclinación hacia el mar. [CR-07]
- (43) Las carpinterías de los huecos (...) son conjuntos compactos, que contienen varias ventanas, alguna puerta, y todos los elementos de oscurecimiento y estanqueidad [CR-03].

*Prepositional groups:* The hedging strategies of vagueness and tentativeness discussed above can sometimes be fulfilled by prepositional groups functioning as circumstantials or adverbial clauses, as in the following examples:

- (44) Over the years the area has witnessed the departure of much of its residential and business communities. [CR-14]
- (45) In an attempt to reinvigorate this area (...) the city identified the relocation and re-housing of the Davenport Museum of Art (...) as the catalyst in a programme of urban regeneration. [CR-14]
- (46) ...se ha pretendido transformar el patio de manzana en un gran campo de juego sin fronteras, liberando en gran medida la planta baja y forzando la transparencia entre el interior de este patio y el exterior de los bloques. [CR-03]
- (47) Para las 71 viviendas en altura hemos optado por plantear dos bloques, ligeramente enlazados en los extremos a través de viviendas-puente, que liberan, en la medida de lo posible, los testeros, para permitir una apertura hacia el paisaje circundante. [CR-03]

### 3.2. Hedging strategies

The array of lexico-grammatical items and features discussed above performs several hedging strategies which serve the authors' effort to achieve rhetorical adequacy. To this end, they will resort to their cognitive models, that is, they will express themselves with caution and with certain limitations and certain strategies in mind. These strategies rely on the authors' knowledge about the context of the communicative situation and the conventions and expectations of the discourse community to which the message is addressed.

The analysis of the texts seems to suggest the author's use of the following hedging strategies: *depersonalization, detachment, modesty, humility, deference, solidarity,*

*provisionality, tentativeness, justification, indetermination and accuracy level.* A specific discussion and exemplification of each of these strategies follows:

### 3.2.1. Depersonalization and detachment

The strategies of proposal depersonalization and narrative detachment serve to eliminate the author's presence in the development of the project, and are mainly signalled by the passive voice *–pasiva refleja* in Spanish– and the transfer of responsibility for the facts presented to an impersonal subject. On occasions, they are strategies of politeness towards the rest of the profession or all the participants in the project, which is meant to be presented as the result of teamwork, not individual's effort. Some examples are:

- (48) First the area of the site to the South of the Crown Land is excavated, its highest point levelled to the lowest point of the site. [CR-11]
- (49) The stairs (...) not only ensure immediate access to all of the floors for people in a hurry but also offer room for others to stop and chat for a moment. [CR-19]
- (50) ...y con la trasera del edificio alojando un aparcamiento sobre el que se genera una gran pista deportiva al aire libre, que queda conectada al nivel de calle y al nivel de cubiertas mediante una escalinata exterior. [CR-01]
- (51) Las oficinas adaptan su forma a la ladera, ajustándose como un muro de contención al terreno y fragmentándose en pequeñas salas. [AV-05]

However, sometimes the use of certain depersonalization strategies seems to fulfil the rhetorical goal of presenting information in a way that makes the project seem to have a life of its own. The final results seem to be nothing but the consequence of a natural evolution which could not have taken place in any other way. The project seems to have developed by itself, without the author's active participation. This type of strategy is ultimately a hidden statement suggesting that the chosen solution is the most suitable and only possible result.

- (52) With these ideas, the elevated flat triangular body emerged almost spontaneously. [CR-21].
- (53) Es esta operación, en la planta del edificio, la que provoca que el trámer metálico salte del patio a la fachada, cambiando por tanto la posición de los dormitorios respecto del patio. [CR-03]

### 3.2.2. Modesty, humility and deference towards the audience

On some occasions, the author expresses him/herself with a certain degree of modesty and humility considered to be good form according to the conventions established for the characteristics of this genre. One of the rhetorical strategies used for

this end is the presentation of the project as just one possible solution chosen from amongst several. In this way, the author shows deference and respect towards the rest of the proposals, i.e., towards the rest of the profession. This is achieved through the expression of the idea of the project as an 'option':

- (54) The decision was taken to work with the existing courtyard configuration... [CR-16]
- (55) This approach has evolved an integrated design for a complex subject matter. [CR-16]
- (56) Se ha optado por materializar los límites confiriéndoles un carácter abierto y fluido, con el fin de contribuir a una experiencia que potencie la relación frente al ensimismamiento. [AV-04]
- (57) El proyecto pretende resolver su difícil inserción en una trama irregular adoptando la configuración quebrada como tema compositivo... [CR-01]

On other occasions, the author uses rhetorical strategies which also work in this line of politeness and deference towards the audience, trying to build up an appropriate relationship with the reader and avoid categorical expressions. Thus, the author tries to present the project as an 'aim', an aspiration rather than a goal that has been achieved. This strategy suggests that the author is expressing a personal opinion which is pending the judgement of the reader and awaiting his/her possible acceptance, thus giving the audience an active role in the communicative situation. These are some examples:

- (58) The concept aims for a convergence of four geophysical aspects. [CR-09]
- (59) For this reason, we decided instead of planning the building as an independent object within an open space, we would propose a building that will generate and structure this open space. [CR-21]
- (60) In urban terms, the design looked to support the old city grid by filling one half of a previously empty city block. [CR-14]
- (61) ...el proyecto pretende crear una visión contemporánea del tema del pabellón en un jardín (...), de forma que la nueva construcción aparezca como una nueva amalgama de elementos naturales y artificiales. [CR-02]
- (62) La intención es construir un complejo destinado al ocio y a la cultura (...) que aglutine a un amplio sector de público con una oferta variable y extensa. [CR-04]
- (63) ...se ha procurado que el centro quede trazado dentro de una red formada a base de espacios ocupados y espacios vacíos (...), de forma que la escuela quede organizada no en un espacio interior sino en un espacio exterior. [CR-06]

### 3.2.3. Solidarity

Sometimes the author uses the hedging strategy of expressing solidarity with the rest of the discourse community, or assuming that its members share certain knowledge

and have common desires and objectives, and that the project presented is a response to these rather than a result of the concerns of an individual. The project is described as something which helps to achieve certain general objectives, and we find expressions of the idea of the project as a ‘contribution’:

- (64) Its shape allows the creation of reading rooms in many different sizes and oriented in all different directions... [CR-19]
- (65) The folding structure offers a partial interplay and confrontation with the subject matter which strives to evoke the participant to think. [CR-12]
- (66) La recuperación de este espacio para centro de ocio y cultura permitirá renovar las antiguas construcciones... [CR-04]
- (67) Este desnivel entre viales nos hace considerar el soporte como un terreno en ladera, explotable para obtener (...) una trinchera que proporcione a la instalación un deseable aislamiento respecto al intenso tráfico de las inmediaciones. [CR-05]

#### 3.2.4. Provisionality and tentativeness

On occasions, the authors seem to anticipate and protect themselves against the possible negative consequences of being proved wrong in their decision, expressing their views with strategies of provisionality and tentativeness. To this end, we can find expressions which transmit the idea of the project as a ‘proposal’:

- (68) In our proposal for the competition, we suggested placing two rectangular buildings on the area to the west of the university campus to house the library and the main lecture building. [CR-19]
- (69) For this reason, we decided instead of planning the building as an independent object within an open space, we would propose a building that will generate and structure this open space. [CR-21]
- (70) Con el fin de garantizar la conexión que el desmonte había interrumpido durante años y de activar el potencial turístico de la cumbre y de las grutas, se propusieron dos construcciones complementarias. [AV-05]
- (71) De ahí que nuestra propuesta para el Auditorio y la Sala de Congresos (...) entienda aquéllos como dos gigantescas rocas que quedaron varadas en la desembocadura del Urumea. [CR-07]

#### 3.2.5. Justification

Sometimes, the author also tries to justify the chosen solution as the only possible reaction to –and a consequence of– the given conditions and makes it clear to the reader that what is being presented is the ‘response’ to the posed problem:

- (72) The three-dimensional composition of the buildings is a consequence of the immediate topography and the desire to retain a number of large tree specimens. [CR-15]
- (73) The conception of a building with a coupling of interior and exterior space (...) responds to the need for social durability from the collective point of view. [CR-21]
- (74) Nuestra respuesta al solar del Kursaal es sencilla: no debe construirse un edificio que destruya la presencia del Urumea. [CR-07]
- (75) En el interior se ubican, conforme exigía el programa, una sala principal, una sala de lecturas dramatizadas y varias salas de ensayos. [AV-02]

### 3.2.6. Indetermination and accuracy level

Typical of these texts is the use of another kind of expressions which reduce or attenuate the semantic weight of the utterances. I am referring to the use of indeterminate or vague expressions when quantifying or qualifying the information. From a pragmatic point of view, this strategy seems to be an indication of the fact that the genre of architecture project descriptions is somehow situated in a pre-informative stage of communication, in which a greater precision in the provision of specific data is simply not considered necessary. These are some examples:

- (76) The M.H. de Young Memorial Museum houses numerous collections, representing a variety of cultures from all over the world. [CR-20]
- (77) The new master plan for the site consists of a number of components... [CR-15]
- (78) In 2004 the decision was taken to commission what is the latest in a series of architectural interventions at Kew... [CR-18]
- (79) ...the interior is lit by large-scale sheets of glass that sit directly on the ground... [CR-16]
- (80) A series of courtyards (...) establish multiple relations between the street level and the other levels of the building... [CR-21]
- (81) En los trabajos de investigación aparecieron numerosos restos de la época romana. [AV-05]
- (82) En el mismo solar triangular que acogió durante años el volumen de la Sala Olimpia se levanta ahora un nuevo teatro. [AV-02]
- (83) La ubicación del Instituto Alhamilla en la Rambla de Almería, en una parcela de dimensiones reducidas, plantea los dos temas más singulares del concurso. [CR-01]
- (84) ...el cerramiento vertical se transforma en una cubierta baja y de escasa inclinación, mientras hacia el interior se bisela ligeramente a partir de la quinta planta y algo más pronunciadamente tras superar el último forjado. [AV-07]

### 3.3. *Communicative functions of hedging*

The analysis of this group of different and diverse hedging strategies seems to indicate that they fulfil three main rhetorical functions or communicative goals. Firstly, these strategies seem to express the author's wish to *show deference and politeness towards the audience*; secondly, some of these strategies are an indication of the author's need to *protect him/herself against the potential negative consequences of being proved wrong*; and lastly, they are evidence of the *author's consideration of the degree of precision deemed necessary in his/her text*.

This latter function –linguistically signalled by the deliberate use of vague and indeterminate expressions when expressing qualification or quantification– seems to look primarily towards the propositional content, i.e., approaching the matter from a semantic perspective. However, it cannot be completely dissociated from pragmatic and cognitive factors, the domain of the first two communicative goals. As mentioned before, and from a cognitive point of view, the use of hedging strategies is a result of the utterer's intention, but their interpretation ultimately depends on the addressee's intuition or his/her ability to perceive the whole context of the communicative situation. The use of hedging appeals to the background knowledge of all the participants in such a situation, both from the linguistic and from the pragmatic point of view.

## 4. CONCLUSION

The results of the hedging analysis suggest that the above-mentioned functions are fulfilled by a wide array of rhetorical strategies. On one hand, the strategies described as *depersonalization, detachment, modesty, humility, deference and solidarity* seem to serve the author's wish to show deference and politeness towards the audience. The author's need to protect him/herself against the possible negative consequences of being proved wrong seems to be fulfilled by strategies of *provisionality, tentativeness and justification*. Finally, the expression of the author's consideration of the degree of precision deemed necessary in his/her text is achieved by strategies of *indetermination and accuracy level*.

These hedging strategies are signalled by a very heterogeneous range of lexicogrammatical items, of which almost parallel examples appear in both languages. The most significant category within these lexical items is that of lexical verbs and their corresponding derived nouns serving the function of rhetorical attenuation, numerous instances of which have been found. Non-verbal items such as adverbs, adjectives and prepositional groups are often used to characterize the information as uncertain, tentative or not quite precise. Finally, there is a discreet use of modals in the English texts under study, whereas the Spanish texts use other linguistic resources such as adverbial expressions and the potential mood or the subjunctive to express modality.

We may conclude that the phenomenon of hedging in architecture project descriptions is not apparently manifested at the surface level of the utterances, as seems to be the case in other genres. In other types of texts, hedging is mainly signalled by the



insertion of certain elements or expressions which modulate the rhetorical weight of the statements but usually do not add any extra meaning. In most cases, the absence of these elements does not modify the semantic contents of the author's statements to a great extent. Instead, the authors of architecture project descriptions tend to resort mainly to lexical choices which add a certain amount of information to the semantic contents of their statements. They try to be more precise and accurate in the selection of the words which they judge to be most appropriate for fulfilling the specific goals of this communicative situation.

## REFERENCES

- Banks, D. 1994. "Hedges and how to trim them". *Applications and Implications of Current LSP Research*, Vol 2. Ed. Magnar. Brekke, Oivin. Andersen, Trine. Dahl and Johan. Myking. Bergen: Fagbokforlaget. 578-592.
- Banks, D. 1998. "Vague quantification: an interpersonal aspect of scientific writing". *Proceedings of the 10<sup>th</sup> Euro-international Systemic Functional Workshop*. Liverpool, Reino Unido: University of Liverpool. Internet document available at <<http://www.univ-brest.fr/erla/members/banksdocs/LIVERPL.DOC>> [Consultation: February 2006].
- Caballero, R. 2002. "The lexicogrammar of metaphor in the discourse of architects". *Estudios Ingleses de la Universidad Complutense* 10: 43-66.
- Caballero, R. 2003. "Metaphor and genre: The presence and role of metaphor in the building review". *Applied Linguistics* 24 (2): 145-167.
- Caballero, R. 2006. *Re-viewing Space. Figurative Language in Architects' Assessment of Built sSpace*. Berlín/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Crompton, P. 1997. "Hedging in academic writing: some theoretical problems". *English for Specific Purposes* 16 (4): 271-287.
- Crompton, P. 1998. "Identifying hedges: definition or divination". *English for Specific Purposes* 17 (3): 303-312.
- Cuenca, M.J. y J. Hilferty. 1999. *Introducción a la lingüística cognitiva*. Barcelona: Ariel Lingüística.
- Hyland, K. 1995. "The author in the text: hedging scientific writing". *Hong Kong Papers in Linguistics and Language Teaching* 18: 33-41.
- Lakoff, G. 1972. "Hedges: a study in meaning criteria and the logic of fuzzy concepts". *Papers from the Eighth Regional Meeting, Chicago Linguistics Society Papers*, Vol. 8: 183-228.
- Lakoff, G. 1987. *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Markkanen, R. and H. Schröder. 1997. "Hedging: a challenge for pragmatics and discourse analysis". *Hedging and Discourse: Approaches to the Analysis of a*

- Pragmatic Phenomenon in Academic Texts*. Eds. R. Markkanen and H. Schröder. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter. 3-18.
- Mendiluce Cabrera, G. y A.I. Hernández Bartolomé. 2005. "La matización asertiva en el artículo biomédico: una propuesta de clasificación para los estudios contrastivos inglés-español". *Ibérica* 10: 63-90.
- Myers, G. 1989. "The pragmatics of politeness in scientific articles". *Applied Linguistics* 10: 1-35.
- Oliver del Olmo, S. 2004. *Análisis contrastivo español/inglés de la atenuación retórica en el discurso médico. El artículo de investigación y el caso clínico*. PhD Thesis. Barcelona: Universitat Pompeu Fabra. Internet document available at <[http://www.tdx.cesca.es/TESIS\\_UPF/AVAILABLE/TDX-1020105\\_124115/tsoo1de1.pdf](http://www.tdx.cesca.es/TESIS_UPF/AVAILABLE/TDX-1020105_124115/tsoo1de1.pdf)> [Consultation: April 2006]
- Prince, E., Frader, J. and C. Bosk. 1982. "On hedging in physician-physician discourse". *Linguistics and the Professions*. Eds. R.J. di Pietro. Hillsdale, NJ: Ablex. 83-97.
- Roldán Riejos, A. 2004. "Strategic features of ESP from a socio-cognitive perspective". *Ibérica* 7: 33-51.
- Salager-Meyer, F. 1994. "Hedges and textual communicative function in medical English written discourse". *English for Specific Purposes* 13: 149-170.
- Salager-Meyer, F. 1995. "I think that perhaps you should: a study of hedges in written scientific discourse". *The Journal of TESOL France* 2 (2): 127-143
- Skelton, J. 1988. "The care and maintenance of hedges". *ELT Journal* 41: 37-43.
- Varttala, T. 1999. "Remarks on the communicative functions of hedging in popular scientific and specialist research articles on medicine". *English for Specific Purposes* 18 (2): 177-200.
- Varttala, T. 2001. "Hedging in scientifically oriented discourse: exploring variation according to discipline and intended audience". Tampere, Finlandia: University of Tampere. Internet document available at <<http://acta.uta.fi/pdf/951-44-5195-3.pdf>> [Consultation: February 2006].

## APPENDIX 1. CORPUS

### *Spanish texts*

- CR-01: "Delegación de Hacienda de la Junta de Andalucía" (Iñaki Ábalos, Juan Herreros, Ángel Jaramillo S. & Ángel Jaramillo E.). *In Progress / En Proceso 1999-2002*. Madrid: El Croquis Editorial, 2002. pp. 452-457.
- CR-02: "Pabellón de Gimnasia en el Parque del Retiro" (Iñaki Ábalos, Juan Herreros & Ángel Jaramillo). *In Progress / En Proceso 1999-2002*. Madrid: El Croquis Editorial, 2002. pp. 458-461.
- CR-03: "Viviendas en San Jerónimo" (José Morales & Juan González Mariscal). *In Progress / En Proceso 1999-2002*. Madrid: El Croquis Editorial, 2002. pp. 506-515.

- CR-04: "Centro de Ocio y Cultura" (Juan Domingo Santos). *In Progress / En Proceso 1999-2002*. Madrid: El Croquis Editorial, 2002. pp. 538-543.
- CR-05: "Guardería Infantil en Trebujena" (Ignacio Rubiño, Pura García Márquez, Luis Rubiño). *In Progress / En Proceso 1999-2002*. Madrid: El Croquis Editorial, 2002. pp. 572-575.
- CR-06: "Escuela Politécnica de Alicante" (Lola Alonso Vera). *In Progress / En Proceso 1999-2002*. Madrid: El Croquis Editorial, 2002. pp. 592-595.
- CR-07: "Kursaal. Auditorio y Centro de Congresos de San Sebastián" (Rafael Moneo). *Rafael Moneo 1967-2004. Antología de Urgencia*. Madrid: El Croquis Editorial, 2004. pp. 350-381.
- AV-01: "Centro de Arte Contemporáneo, León" (M. Mansilla & Tuñón). *España 2005 / Spain Yearbook. AV Monografías*. Madrid: Arquitectura Viva, 2005. pp. 76-85.
- AV-02: "Teatro Olimpia, Madrid" (Paredes & Pedrosa). *España 2005 / Spain Yearbook. AV Monografías*. Madrid: Arquitectura Viva, 2005. pp. 86-91.
- AV-03: "Plaza de Salvador Dalí, Madrid" (Mangado & Torres). *España 2005 / Spain Yearbook. AV Monografías*. Madrid: Arquitectura Viva, 2005. pp. 118-123.
- AV-04: "Guardería, Manlleu (Barcelona)" (RCR Aranda, Pigem & Vilalta). *España 2005 / Spain Yearbook. AV Monografías*. Madrid: Arquitectura Viva, 2005. pp. 150-155.
- AV-05: "Torre de Ascensores y Oficinas, Cartagena" (Amann, Canovas, Maruri & Lejárraga). *España 2005 / Spain Yearbook. AV Monografías*. Madrid: Arquitectura Viva, 2005. pp. 164-169.
- AV-06: "Plaza y Torre Woermann, Las Palmas" (Ábalos & Herreros). *España 2005 / Spain Yearbook. AV Monografías*. Madrid: Arquitectura Viva, 2005. pp. 172-177.
- AV-07: "Viviendas Sociales, Madrid" (Chipperfield & Fernández Isla). *España 2005 / Spain Yearbook. AV Monografías*. Madrid: Arquitectura Viva, 2005. pp. 186-191.

#### *English texts*

- CR-08: "University of Iowa Art and History Building" (Steven Holl). *Steven Holl 1986-2003. In Search of a Poetic of Specifics / Thought, Matter and Experience*. Madrid: El Croquis Editorial, 2003. pp. 426-431.
- CR-09: "Musée des Confluences in Lyon" (Steven Holl). *Steven Holl 1986-2003. In Search of a Poetic of Specifics / Thought, Matter and Experience*. Madrid: El Croquis Editorial, 2003. pp. 442-449.
- CR-10: "Los Angeles County Museum of Art" (Steven Holl). *Steven Holl 1986-2003. In Search of a Poetic of Specifics / Thought, Matter and Experience*. Madrid: El Croquis Editorial, 2003. pp. 456-461.
- CR-11: "The Peak Club" (Zaha Hadid). *Zaha Hadid 1983-2004. Forms of Indetermination / Landscape as a Plan*. Madrid: El Croquis Editorial, 2004. pp. 72-83.

- CR-12: "Mind Zone, Millenium Dome" (Zaha Hadid). *Zaha Hadid 1983-2004. Forms of Indetermination / Landscape as a Plan*. Madrid: El Croquis Editorial, 2004. pp. 338-355.
- CR-13: "House in Corrubedo" (David Chipperfield). *David Chipperfield 1998-2004 - Dense Minimalism. El Croquis 120*. Madrid: El Croquis Editorial, 2004. pp. 36-49.
- CR-14: "Figge Art Museum" (David Chipperfield). *David Chipperfield 1998-2004 - Dense Minimalism. El Croquis 120*. Madrid: El Croquis Editorial, 2004. pp. 128-135.
- CR-15: "Residential Complex. Athlone House" (David Chipperfield). *David Chipperfield 1998-2004 - Dense Minimalism. El Croquis 120*. Madrid: El Croquis Editorial, 2004. pp. 240-243.
- CR-16: "Tilty Barn" (John Pawson). *John Pawson 1995-2005 - Pause for Thought. El Croquis 127*. Madrid: El Croquis Editorial, 2005. pp. 26-33.
- CR-17: "Lansdowne Apartments" (John Pawson). *Pawson 1995-2005 - Pause for Thought. El Croquis 127*. Madrid: El Croquis Editorial, 2005. pp. 114-119.
- CR-18: "The Sackler Crossing, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew" (John Pawson). *John Pawson 1995-2005 - Pause for Thought. El Croquis 127*. Madrid: El Croquis Editorial, 2005. pp. 172-177.
- CR-19: "IKMZ Cottbus" (Herzog & de Meuron). *Herzog & de Meuron 2002-2006 - The Monumental and the Intimate. El Croquis 129/130*. Madrid: El Croquis Editorial, 2006. pp. 98-125.
- CR-20: "De Young Museum" (Herzog & de Meuron). *Herzog & de Meuron 2002-2006 - The Monumental and the Intimate. El Croquis 129/130*. Madrid: El Croquis Editorial, 2006. pp. 146-181.
- CR-21: "Forum 2004 Building and Plaza" (Herzog & de Meuron). *Herzog & de Meuron 2002-2006 - The Monumental and the Intimate. El Croquis 129/130*. Madrid: El Croquis Editorial, 2006. pp. 236-271.