



Original Research

To be or not to be critical in academic communication? Pragmatics of evaluative language in Russian academic book reviews

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Evaluation is considered a key tool in professional communication as well as a signal of the communicants' engagement in professional discourse. Linguistic analysis of evaluative devices employed in the professional field is of great importance as it indicates the level of professional reflection in the community which in its turn affects the production of a new research result. Considering evaluation is an integral concept of the review, this paper focuses on the pragmatics of evaluative language in Russian academic reviewing practice to explore how criticism contributes to the determining and advancing of a new result and what kind of linguistic choices are conducive to expressing critical attitude of the peer reviewer. The study introduces an analysis of a corpus of forty Russian book reviews in the field of sociology. The structure of the review text was analysed to reveal the contexts with linguistic instances conveying positive and negative evaluation by the reviewer (the presented result), the structure, practical value, and applicability of the academic book under review. The instances of criticism were identified based on their lexical and grammatical features, and a pragma-semantic analysis was employed to explore the contexts found. Negative evaluation was further subcategorised into direct explicit disagreement and indirect negative evaluation (mitigated evaluation). Characteristic strategies of mitigated criticism were summarised. The findings show that criticism expressed is often restrained and devoid of direct disagreement with the author. Criticism is managed by various evaluative de-intensifiers which serve to tone down and mitigate it. Praise is more prominently used in Russian book reviews to establish solidarity. The study outlines the typical strategies of criticism such as limited critical evaluation, critical judgement as an alternative opinion, presenting the peer as the collective subject, praise criticism, and default of first-person pronouns in the peer's identification. The study suggests that reviews should mark and advance a new significant result, as an implicit and vague character of evaluation might hinder scientific knowledge transfer and communication between specialists.

KEYWORDS: language of evaluation, academic communication, critical genre, criticism, mitigation, academic book review



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1. INTRODUCTION

This paper will engage with the evaluation of ways of expressing a critical attitude in academic discourse. The main point will be that evaluation is a key tool in professional communication and the voicing of evaluation makes it possible to study the scientific community and various practices of scientific activity in the transfer of knowledge. Evaluation of and variations in evaluative language presume socio-communicative competence on the part of communicants, in accordance with Hymes' (1974) concept, as well as sociocultural knowledge (see Molodychenko & Chernyavskaya, 2022; Molodychenko, 2022; Tcherniavskaya, 2014). This extends the studies of academic genres and their features to a socio-linguistic cross-cultural perspective. The eval-

uative language highlights the academic discourse. Scholars address the construction of evaluative meanings in different perspectives and under various headings. These refer to the writer's stance towards the subject of the research, the writer's stance towards other researchers' views, and the writer's stance towards their personal statements in order to reveal and elucidate their personal viewpoint (Biber & Finegan, 1989; Biber, 2006; Gray & Biber, 2012; Hood, 2010; Hunston & Thomson, 2000; Sanz, 2011). Evaluation is considered as the system of linguistic, lexical and grammatical principles and methods at the discourse semantics level in the framework of Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005; Martin & Rose, 2007) and in the conceptions following this theory.

Central to a value-based orientation in the academic text is a research rationale. Thus epistemic (cognitive) evaluation is of crucial importance. It manifests itself as logical (cognitive) evaluation and correlates with the content of scientific knowledge, methods of scientific knowledge production, its evidence-based character and practical value. Cognitive aspects are expressed through evaluative actions such as *to accept/to reject, to agree/to disagree* as well as through evaluative qualification like *true/doubtful/false, good/bad*. Cognitive evaluation is formulated by a wide range of devices: (1) epistemic qualification of knowledge value and/or a cognitive action used to express scientific knowledge (in this respect linguistic units bearing the semantics of cognitive forms, methods, ways and sources are used such as *hypothesis, typology, conclusion, observation, interpretation, to argue, to put forward arguments, to conduct experiments, etc.*); (2) evaluation (positive or negative) is expressed through the epistemic qualification of knowledge representation on epistemic grounds (*topical issue, new idea, appropriate method, evidence-based procedure, acknowledged specialist, advantage, clichéd method, error, disadvantage, weaknesses, insufficient data, unconvincing arguments, etc.*); (3) the modality of the writer's claims and views (*evidently, indisputably, one should agree, it is hard to accept, etc.*). Cognitive (rational) evaluation can also be demonstrated as emotive evaluation through the expression of a personal, positive or negative attitude of the subject to various aspects of knowledge. The emotive and expressive character of epistemic evaluation can also be illustrated through the means of (de)-intensification of the characteristics of the object or cognitive actions (*very, quite, completely, absolutely, etc.*) (Nefedov, 2021).

Scientific communication has special genres of texts with evaluation being highly explicitly expressed. These include a peer-review (of a research paper to be published or of a grant proposal), and a published journal review of an academic contribution. It is crucial that experts in modern contexts agree on the significant and increasing role of review in the scientific community. Review procedure continues to perform its fundamental gate-keeping function as well as to maintain the mechanism of gaining authority and credibility in science. Reviews also have a considerable influence on shaping new research areas and subject fields. Moreover, reviews are seen as the key genre of professional communication in the academic sphere. As such they relate to forms and methods of self-regulation in the academic community, the readiness of researchers for knowledge transfer, the exchange of views and ideas, and the role of academic criticism in generating and developing scientific results. As Hyland (2000) reveals, even though all academic genres are evaluative per se, reviews are the most explicit in appraisal and critical attitude. It is important to notice, that evaluative language should be analysed as a pragmatic tool, and following Nefedov's (2021, p. 761) definition, as a semiotic and pragmatic resource of integration of discourse participants into science and as an indicator of their engagement in the academic professional community with its shared interests and goals. Furthermore, the clear-cut, and prominent character of evaluation in the utterance structure

plays a crucial role in providing an evidence-based and precise analysis. This also enables statements that sound clear and convincing (Malyuga & Grishechko, 2021). Reviewing standards have led to detailed discussions and monitoring especially in natural sciences and medicine, for example, in the context of the annual International Congress on Peer Review and Scientific Publication (ICPRSP, 2023).

At the same time one can notice that the genre of review in the present-day Russian social and human sciences is far from being popular and is even in crisis (Stepanov, 2016). The researchers note that there are few reviews in Russian journals, including those which are regarded as leaders in their subject areas. If present, they appear irregularly, or the Review section is missing. Experts seem to be dissatisfied with the current reviewing practice in Russia as it has become routine-like and formal. Based on the Russian practice of peer-reviewing and on the experience of editing an international peer-reviewed journal in linguistics, Larina (2019) considers that those procedures and principles of scientific communication which should be regarded as fundamental and conventional for promoting a scientific result are still not recognised in Russian academic communication. As for the Russian blind (anonymous) peer-review, *'it tends to be less restrained. Those evaluated authors who hold high status can hardly accept criticism and often respond negatively'* (Larina, 2019, p. 38). However, there has emerged a strong tendency towards promoting and increasing published reviews.

The present paper focuses on published academic book reviews. Academic book reviews are distinguished from other forms of appraisal by playing a central role in promoting new scientific knowledge. In the humanities it is the academic book which is associated with personal scientific contribution and traditionally correlates with a new result and promoting scientific knowledge. Thus, the choice of the academic book to be reviewed determines among other factors, upon whether this result will receive the attention of specialists.

The *research question* stated in the framework of this paper is how scholarly criticism and the evaluative stance of the writer are expressed in reviews published in Russian academic communication. Critical scrutiny can be aimed at the content of the book, the scientific knowledge represented in it (including such aspects as novelty, originality, topicality and prospects), the structure of the book (whether it is illustrative, clear, well-investigated, verifiable), its practical value, and the application of the results obtained. Generally, criticism and critical attitude are seen as the discussion and expression of a personal opinion, both positive and negative, aimed at shaping evaluation. As such, criticism is encouraged as a necessary condition for advancing new knowledge. Discussed in a broader sense, criticism is different from the concept's meaning as discussion aimed at negative judgement, opposing another view, highlighting contradictions and drawbacks. This very aspect is basic to our research, namely the expression of negative judgments in Russian reviews in terms of their socio-cultural variations and specifics in the way criticisms are managed.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The corpus for this study consisted of Russian academic book reviews in the field of sociology published between 2016 and 2022 in two journals: *Bulletin of the Institute of Sociology* and *RUDN Journal of Sociology*. These journals were chosen as they are considered as reputable in the academic communities. These are international peer-reviewed sociology journals that publish original articles and reviews and are indexed in international citation databases. The corpus contains 40 texts. The size of the corpus is approximately 44,800 words. The largest number of reviews (35 texts) was published in the *RUDN Journal of Sociology*. Five academic book reviews including collective academic book reviews were published in the *Bulletin of the Institute of Sociology*.

The analysis proceeded as follows. Firstly, the structure and composition of the review, the opening and closing sections of the text were analysed to reveal the contexts which contain linguistic instances conveying evaluation, positive praise evaluation and negative evaluation by the reviewer towards the content (the presented result), the structure, practical value, and applicability of the academic book under review. Evaluative attitudes (critical acts) were identified as positive and negative judgments, remarks on a given aspect of the book under review. Secondly, the evaluative contexts with negative evaluation were identified. As a result, 498 evaluative contexts were found, including 388 contexts which express positive evaluation and 110 contexts demonstrating negative evaluation. Negative evaluation was further subcategorised into direct explicit disagreement, opposition, criticism, and indirect negative evaluation (mitigated evaluation). The instances of criticism were identified based on their lexical and grammatical features and a pragma-semantic analysis method was employed to analyse the contexts found. The studied corpus revealed no instances of direct disagreement only mitigated criticism. As a result, four characteristic strategies of mitigated criticism were summarised.

3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Peer review has played a central role in evaluating a research result. As a qualitative method of evaluating the result, review is contrasted with quantitative methods which account for the number of a researcher's publications and a journal's impact factor. Functionally, peer-review as a text genre differs from a book review in terms of critical analysis principles and their subject. Peer-review often implies that the expert is anonymous, and the review itself is not available to a wide scope of specialists and scientific community. This type of review is commissioned by different stakeholders. Thus, it is firstly aimed at revealing a new significant prospective result, secondly, it is involved in deciding whether the result should be advanced economically, politically and ideologically (Biagioli, 2002; Hirschauer, 2010; Hyland & Diani, 2009; Rheinhardt, 2010). Reviews appear after the academic book is published and are open to the public and available for a wide range of specialists, experts and other readers. Such a critical review is the least formal one

and has no qualification status as it does not affect the procedure of granting academic degrees in the way that a thesis review or a paper/book review does. However, reviews convey public evaluation of the author's academic merits and influence the reputation of the author.

The international review process has introduced new journal review formats. For example, *rejoinder*, which contains both the reviewer's critical remarks and the answer of the book writer, allows making discussion objective and to balance the evaluation of the text under review. The *multidisciplinary* format implies that a book is subject to simultaneous review by specialists of various subject areas to attract attention in a broader research perspective. The *integrated* review format is used when the book reviews are collected in accordance with the topic of the issue. It can include retrospective reviews of books published a long time ago. *Review essay* is a synthesis of reviews of several books on a given topic. *Systematic reviews* involve reviewing major trends in research publications on a specific subject.

Thus, the review has specific features and performs a set of important functions in scientific communication between specialists and experts. Evaluation is regarded as a central characteristic of the review; it serves as identification of the text genre. That is why due to specific ways of expressing scholarly criticism the review has received a great deal of attention in the works of sociologists and linguists. The critical function of the review which deals with determining and advancing a new significant result is affected by numerous intra-professional conjuncture factors.

The review has several identifying genre features. First, unlike other secondary texts in scientific communication such as reports, abstracts, and overviews, the review does not fulfil a double function. It is seen as a reply of one professional peer when communicating with another specialist, researcher. On the one hand, it addresses the problems discussed in the primary text but, on the other hand, it raises new questions. The major purpose of the review is to reveal and to mark a new scientific result which contributes greatly to the scientific community rather than to give an overview of the information obtained by others. This very aspect is grounded in evaluation which serves as a comparison with what has already been achieved in science and current prospects. Moreover, the review itself can provide new information, i.e., knowledge interpretation – representation of scientific results from a different research perspective; adding, revealing of discrepancies and errors; and establishing alternative ties between the investigated phenomena and facts. The review itself might become a starting point for new discussions (see Hood, 2010; Hunston & Thompson, 2000; Kondratenko, 2022).

Along with such understanding of the review functions various sociocultural practices of reviewing indicate a number of social, institutional, political and ideological factors which lie behind scholarly criticism and affect its disputing nature. Hyland (2000) provides a detailed and multidimensional analysis of

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English academic book reviews in the fields of natural, social and human sciences as applied to English-American culture, showing the key differences in expressing evaluation in various subject areas. For example, in social and human science fields, in the so-called 'soft' disciplines, evaluation is conveyed in a more detailed and extensive way if compared with critical research texts in the natural sciences. This can be explained by the role of an academic book in the humanities, which serves as a major tool for presenting a new result. As such, it determines the specific character of presenting arguments and scholarly criticism in an academic book of this kind. Writing a review is affected by a number of factors, one of them being cognitive interest and presenting a personal research viewpoint of the problem. The choice of the academic book to be reviewed often depends on the importance for the expert of the problem discussed. Another factor concerns the conventional and ceremonial relationships inherent in scientific communication which relate to specialists' status and the community they refer to.

Since the 1970s, sociologists have paid attention to the inevitably selective and thus biased nature of reviews. It was noted that the reviewers demonstrated a biased attitude and were worried about what impression their review would produce. As Champion and Morris (1973) suggested, a critical function of the review is limited to the mechanism of scientific community self-preservation. When making a public evaluation of the other researcher the reviewer fears to appear badly before their colleagues and expects a positive review in response. This feature was defined as reciprocity in the review process: *'It is difficult not to think highly of somebody who thinks highly of you'* (Champion & Morris, 1973, p. 1264).

The works to be reviewed are often selected from authors among well-known specialists and familiar colleagues in their subject areas. A remarkable survey of authors who reviewed academic books has been discussed by Moreno and Suarez (2008). According to their study, English-American respondents claimed that they had never reviewed the books written by their colleagues and friends, considering such practice as unacceptable. However, Spanish researchers admitted that they had reviewed works by colleagues familiar to them and pointed out that that factor shifted or might shift their critical approach.

Arguably, expressing agreement and support in favour of the stance under consideration is one of the central strategies in the academic field and an instrument to maintain corporate solidarity in the scientific community. Positive evaluation indicates that both researchers' views coincide. Mitigated criticism which accompanies evaluation illustrates respect for the specialist/au-

thor of the work under review. Existing conventions contribute to the ceremonial nature of scientific discussion and can even shift critical attitude towards agreement. Projecting this into modern Russian contexts, it should be noted that scientists are somewhat sceptical of the role of scholarly criticism since among other factors, *'research administration hinders professional discussion rather than encourages the society to foster science'* (Guba, 2009, p. 32-33).

The sociological research line in investigating reviews as a special genre has been expanded by linguistic research. Review investigation has received the attention of researchers in various subject cultures and social practices, 'evaluative cultures', as Lamont (2009) put it in her seminal work. It is focused mainly on developments and explanatory approaches in linguistics of the 1980s-2000s. The study of the review in English-American, German and Russian academic fields has become part of functional linguistics which covers communicative functions of texts and genres. It has been incorporated in discourse-oriented research of academic discourse as a specific form of communication and cognition (Diani, 2009; Hyland & Diani, 2009; Kondratenko, 2022; Larina, 2019). The interest in the review is also caused by globalisation of language of science. It has become part of scientific writing (academic writing, academic publishing) which is used in training specialists in language and communication areas. Numerous studies conducted between 1990 and 2010 revealed that the review crystallises the sociocultural specifics of the academic field to a certain extent, and this becomes crucial in studying the genre of the review in contrastive and sociocultural research. Evaluative language reflects existing conventions, norms and non-written rules, beliefs about what is acceptable and appropriate in the academic sphere. A pivotal issue in discussing the sociocultural specifics of professional texts in the academic field is the use of mitigation devices, politeness formulae and the means that allows expression of the author's stance towards the subject under analysis and other researchers' stances in accordance with the conventions and norms present in academic communication in various sociocultural practices.

Contrastive research into evaluative language in scientific communication is oriented towards two academic traditions: the so-called western academic culture tradition, and the eastern (Asian) tradition. In the works published between the 1990s and 2000s (see Scollon & Scollon, 1991), the authors concluded that western academic culture is characterised by a more directly expressed evaluation, whereas researchers belonging to the Asian culture tend to sound less categorical. The studies by Rose (1996) and Tanaka (1997) indicate that Japanese scholars prefer indirect ways of expressing criticism as compared with English writers. The research conducted by Itakura and Tsui (2011) presents the results of the contrastive analysis of means used to express criticism in English and Japanese reviews. The empirical data suggest that in Japanese reviews negative criticism is expressed through diverse mitigation devices. This might be related to cultural values prevailing in Japan such as modesty, generosity and tolerance (Itakura & Tsui, 2011, p. 1378). These

findings are compatible with Mey's (2004) study, which suggests that expressing harmony typical of Japan can be traced in scientific argumentation as well. Evidence obtained by Itakura and Tsui (2011) referring to the research by Slayer-Meyer and Alcaraz-Ariza (2004) indicate that French academic book reviews tend to sound authoritarian with the author's stance expressed in a direct categorical way. As for Spanish scholars, their language is somewhat sarcastic, whereas criticism in English reviews is clearly expressed as a personal view of the reviewer.

Table 1
Distribution of evaluative instances for criticism in book reviews

BOOK REVIEWS			EVALUATIVE INSTANCES		
Total	Generally positive evaluation	Negative evaluation	Total	Positive evaluation instances	Negative evaluation instances
40	29	11	498	388	110

Thus, positive evaluation contexts tend to be more intensified. This is expressed by a large number of positive evaluative linguistic units and intensifiers. Focus on the status of the academic book's writer as a well-known, reputed professional can confirm the favourable and noncritical manner of the Russian reviews registered in the corpus. Linguistically, the status is evaluated by direct nominations of their outstanding contribution to the subject area:

(1) *Замысел книги-исследования видного российского социолога В.Н. Иванова [...] вызревал на протяжении более десятилетия (An outstanding Russian sociologist V.N. Ivanov [...] has been designing his research book for more than a decade).*

(2) *Книга написана ведущим международным экспертом по вопросам налоговой политики и ее влияния на экономическое развитие. Танзи рассматривает экономическую роль государства в XX-XXI веках в историческом и географическом контексте (The book was written by a leading international expert on tax policy and its impact on economic development. Tanzi considers the economic role of the state in the XX-XXI centuries in the historical and geographical context).*

(3) *Данная книга посвящена обоснованию нового видения проблем монопрофильных городов России – именно такую позицию во Введении постулируют ее авторы Н.Ю. Замятина и А.Н. Пилиасов, признанные специалисты в области исследований монопрофильных городов в северных регионах России (The book under review justifies a new vision of Russian monotowns – this very viewpoint is given in the Introduction by the authors N.Y. Zamyatina and A.N. Pilyasov, respected specialists in the field of Northern Russian monotowns).*

Criticism as discordance from a research viewpoint and reference to drawbacks is toned down. A number of previous studies of criticism in academic genres have drawn on mitigation of criticism. The above highlighted devices and linguistic choices

4. STUDY RESULTS

4.1. General observations

The corpus under analysis contains reviews which are generally positive and express positive evaluation. 29 out of 40 reviews do not convey criticism as an expression of discord, drawbacks and weak points of the concepts reviewed. 498 evaluative contexts selected in the sample include 388 contexts with positive evaluation instances and 110 contexts with negative evaluation instances (Table 1).

are seen as characteristic of scientific communication in the professional community in general and have been previously discussed as mitigation devices (see Crompton, 1997; Lewin, 2005; Matsuda & Tardy, 2007; Sanz, 2011), as an evaluative praise-criticism pair (see Hyland, 2000). This study has discovered the following typical strategies used to tone down criticism: (1) limited critical evaluation, (2) critical judgment as an alternative opinion, (3) presenting the peer as the collective subject covering the opinion of a professional community, (4) praise-criticism pairs, and (5) non-use of first-person pronouns in the peer reviewer's identification. Strategies 1, 2 and 4 were drawn from Hyland's (2000) analysis of criticisms in book reviews as labelled by the author as 'hedging', 'other attribution', and 'praise-criticism pairs'.

4.2. Limited critical evaluation

To convey limited critical evaluation such linguistic means as evaluation de-intensifiers are widely used. The critical remark is de-intensified through the use of euphemisms. Critical statements, for example, are euphemised as speculation, or 'considerations':

(4) *Впрочем, перечисленные соображения (а не критические замечания) ни в коей мере не отменяют необходимости знакомства с книгой максимально широкой аудитории (However, the considerations made (nor critical remarks) do not mean that it is unnecessary to expose the book to a broader readership).*

Another device employed to understate the scale of the drawback found is a litotes, for example, adverbs *иногда, иногда, отчасти* (sometimes, occasionally, somewhat). Such litotes de-intensifiers are used along with adjectives which express the moderate intensity of the property 'kind of criticism' as well as pronouns and adverbs like *некоторые, несколько* (some, several) which understate the significance of the aspect criticised.

To de-intensify and tone down evaluation subjunctive structures are also largely employed instead of indicative structures. They sound like wishes and recommendations:

(5) *Рецензируемая монография многопланова, в ней поднят широкий круг вопросов социально-философского, историко-философского и теоретико-познавательного планов. Не все они, разумеется, освещены в одинаковой мере, например, хотелось бы детальнее ознакомиться с волевым потенциалом цивилизованности. По-видимому, необходима и более детальная проработка (в свете новейших достижений зоопсихологии, этологии и др.) концепции инвариантов биосоциальной организации, в частности прояснение их связей со способами коммуникации (The academic book under review is multidimensional as it covers a broad range of social, historical, philosophical and epistemological issues. They seem to be discussed in a different manner. For example, a more detailed overview of the volition potential of civilisation would be appreciated. A more detailed investigation (in light of the latest developments in the field of animal psychology, ethology, etc.) of biosocial hierarchy invariants, in particular, their relations with methods of communication might be required).*

4.3. Critical judgement as an alternative opinion

When making a critical judgement as an alternative to other comments, specific utterance modality is produced. The reviewer marks their statements as probable, plausible, or alternative rather than obligatory. Adverbs like *вероятно*, *возможно*, *по-видимому* (*possibly*, *probably*, *seemingly*) produce a modality of probability rather than that of necessity and strong criticism:

(6) *Возможно, книге не хватает именно аналитического воспроизведения невыносимо тягостной устойчивой повседневности монопрофильных поселений, включенной в общероссийскую и глобальную картину регионального развития (The book probably lacks analytical display of the depressive repetitive everyday life of monotowns being part of all-Russian and regional development).*

Modality of possibility can be marked by parenthesis like *однако, стоит заметить* (*however, it should be noted*) being typical criticism indicators, adverb *вряд ли* (*hardly*) meaning doubt and limited criticism as the following examples illustrate:

(7) *Опираясь на данные проведённого социологического исследования, авторы приходят к выводу, что [...] Стоит заметить, что к числу причин, объясняющих ситуацию, можно было бы отнести неразвитость институтов гражданского общества, защищающих социальные права всех групп населения. Эта причина указывается в работе, однако развёрнутый сюжет на эту тему, к сожалению, не нашёл ожидаемого отражения в исследовании (Based on the results of the social study the authors conclude that [...] It should be noted that one of the reasons that could explain the situation is poorly developed civil society institutions which serve to protect the social rights of all population groups. This reason is mentioned in the book; however, a full description of this aspect is regrettably absent in the research).*

4.4. Peer reviewer as the collective subject

Presenting the peer reviewer as the collective subject means that the linguistic choices constructing evaluative meanings shape the reviewers' statements as reflecting the views of the professional community, of other specialists and readers. This is achieved through involving the readers in the critical analysis. Thus, the structure of the text is dialogue-oriented towards the reader and establishes the reader's image as competent, interested, well-read and skilled in understanding the problem. This is expressed by the nomination of the reader and their professional status:

(8) *Основная проблема для читателя с социологически смещенной «оптикой» или ориентированного на извлечение из книги общего понимания характерных черт символического сопротивления в прошлом и настоящем, состоит в ее «нерепрезентативности» — это хороший набор интересных кейсов без уточнений степени их социальной типичности/симптоматичности и критериев их отбора (The major problem for the sociologically-minded reader or the reader focused on the general understanding of characteristic features of symbolic resistance both in the present and in the past lies in the non-representative nature of the book. It is a good set of interesting cases with no degree of their social typicality/symptomaticity and selection criteria mentioned).*

(9) *Безусловно, критически настроенный читатель может предъявить к книге претензии концептуального свойства в связи с отсутствием в ней анализа разных трактовок продовольственной безопасности (An unsympathetic reader may certainly criticise the book for the lack of analysis of various food security interpretations).*

Reader-orientation is implemented by nominating those intellectual actions that the reader is supposed to conduct in order to understand the work, *to reflect, to pursue answers, to doubt, etc.*, and by posing the questions on behalf of the reader.

4.5. Praise-criticism pairs

When positive and negative evaluation clash, positive evaluation comes to the forefront. Negative evaluation is de-intensified as the remarks and weaknesses mentioned by the reviewer are presented along with the significant result.

(10) *Что касается методологического подхода (качественного), то автор совершенно обоснованно обращается к нему для подтверждения гипотезы о [...] Действительно, «качественные методы более чутки к тому, что респонденты говорят и делают»..., но зачем тогда использовать приемы количественного подхода? Выборка слишком смещена в пользу Санкт-Петербурга... Перекос в пользу Санкт-Петербурга можно было бы объяснить рассмотрением его как кейса, а не как 'основного поля' [...] Все сказанное выше не означает, что книгу не нужно читать — обязательно нужно, потому что в ней показаны важные тенденции развития российского общества... Однако следует читать книгу как кейс со множеством ограничений концептуального и методологического харак-*

тера, отстраняться от политизированных выводов автора и воспринимать неполитизированные выводы не как 'доказательства', а как вероятностные суждения, требующие дальнейшей проверки (As for the methodological approach (qualitative) the author reasonably turns to it in order to confirm the hypothesis about [...] Indeed, 'qualitative methods are more sensitive to what respondents say and do'..., however, why are quantitative methods used then? the sample is largely shifted towards St Petersburg... This shift towards St Petersburg could be explained by regarding it as a case rather than 'the main field' [...] All of the aforesaid does not mean the book is now worth reading. It must be read as it covers key trends in Russian society... However, the book should be read as a case study with numerous concept and methodology limitations. The reader should not focus on the author's politicised conclusions, and they should address non-politicised implications as probable speculations requiring further verification rather than 'evidence').

Critical contrast between vices and virtues of the book is made through a balanced evaluative pair of statements based on a 'positive/negative' principle. The reasoning follows the scheme: the opening thesis (the author's viewpoint given in indirect speech), the reviewer's evaluative statement, the reviewer's arguments. Transition to the evaluative statement is signalled by an adverb *действительно* (indeed) used to demonstrate that the reviewer is certain about the thesis whereas the question asked on behalf of the potential reader *но зачем тогда использовать приемы количественного подхода?* (however, why are quantitative methods used then?) implies disagreement with this viewpoint. Explicitly, the reviewer's disagreement is expressed by linguistic units of *смещена, перекос* (shifted, the shift) meaning irregularities and errors in the methods used. Support and positive evaluation are explicitly expressed by the phrase *обязательно нужно читать* (it must be read). Disagreement is expressed in a toned-down manner, as an alternative stance.

Similarly, a balanced praise-criticism evaluation is shown here:

(11) Именно заключительная часть книги вызывает после ее прочтения **неоднозначные впечатления**: осторожность в прогнозах и рекомендациях (у крупнейшего специалиста МВФ) вызывает **едва ли не разочарование**. Подбираясь к финалу, читатель, очарованный масштабной работой автора, явно настроен на более смелые выводы и прогнозы, но в итоге Танзи, по сути, **не предлагает ничего принципиально нового**, а его позиция периодически удивительно напоминает позицию Адама Смита и отчасти позицию Джона Кейнса... развитие экономики каждой конкретной страны все же является для Танзи главной целью... Но тогда **вызывает недоумение** то, что Танзи акцентирует внимание на дальнейшей стратегии развитых стран, не уделяя внимание странам развивающимся. Безусловно, книга представляет **огромный интерес** для тех, кто изучает экономическую роль государства в различные исторические периоды, в том числе в современных развитых странах. Язык и стиль книги также можно

отнести к ее **очевидным достоинствам** (It is the final part of the book that causes **ambiguous impressions** after reading it: caution in forecasts and recommendations (from the leading IMF specialist) is **almost disappointing**. Approaching the final statements, the reader, fascinated by the large-scale work of the author, is clearly inclined to more daring conclusions and forecasts, but in the end, Tanzi, in fact, **does not offer anything fundamentally new**, and his position from time to time surprisingly resembles the position of Adam Smith and partly the position of John Keynes [...] development of the economy of each particular country is still the main goal for Tanzi... But then it is **puzzling** that Tanzi focuses on the future strategy of developed countries, not paying attention to developing countries. Of course, the book is **of great interest** to those who study the economic role of the state in various historical periods, including in modern developed countries. The language and style of the book can also be attributed to its **obvious merits**).

The peer reviewer's critical stance is marked here by words and phrases, such as: *неоднозначное впечатление, разочарование, недоумение, ничего нового* (ambiguous impressions, disappointing, anything fundamentally new, puzzling). However, disagreement is de-intensified through the use of a litotes *едва ли не разочарование* (almost disappointing) and linguistic unit with positive semantics – *огромный интерес, очевидные достоинства* (of great interest, obvious merits).

4.6. Non-attendance of first-person pronouns in the peer reviewer's identification

A characteristic tendency towards expressing negative evaluation as non-categorical and unemotional is also seen in the use of the personal pronoun. *I* is not used to express a personal stance of the subject criticised. In the sample under analysis there are no examples of using the personal pronouns *я* (*I*) or *мы* (*we*) (the plural of modesty, the so-called we-of-modesty) as well as authorised structures like *с моей/нашей точки зрения* (from my/our point of view) to illustrate the subject's stance in first person. As the researchers claim (Matsuda & Tardy, 2007; Hyland, 2000; Sanz, 2006; 2011), in academic communication authorisation based on using personal pronouns should perform two major functions. On the one hand, first-person pronouns can serve as ways of toning down the message and thus indicate the non-absolute but subject-related, personal nature of claims, especially when expressing negative evaluation. On the other hand, the author's voice with first person pronouns does express critical reflection as it helps to identify the reviewer's personal viewpoint and highlight new meanings thus conjoining the scientific result and overcoming uncertainty and the ambiguity of claims.

5. CONCLUSION

This study has provided some evidence from a sociological academic review context for previous observations of the current reviewing practice in the Russian academic environment as it has become rather formal and ritualistic. It has also shown that certain mitigation devices which have been discussed in previous studies in relation to academic criticism in different sociocul-

tural practices were also registered in the corpus of Russian book reviews. The observations suggest that noncritical reviews prevail in the sample under consideration. They seem to convey no negative evaluation and reveal no direct controversy or open questions in the academic books reviewed. This may indicate that in Russian academic communication the review has started to shift from a critical genre and explicit encouragement of critical comments towards possibly more positive attitudes of criticising other academics' books, in a way that is approaching a presentation. In fact, one of the central functions of the review is to inform readers about new results, and this aspect becomes more important than critical discussion and persuasion. Discussion expressed in Russian sociological book reviews is often restrained, devoid of debate and direct disagreement with the author. Criticism is accompanied by various evaluative de-intensifiers which serve to tone down and mitigate it. Scholarly criticism is often

expressed through praise criticism, limited critical evaluation, critical judgement as an alternative opinion and presenting the subject under criticism as one of those belonging to the professional community rather than an individual expert. It might be suggested that the implicit and generalised character of evaluation can hinder the reproduction and exchange of scientific knowledge and communication between specialists. Further investigation of reviews and of the evaluative language pragmatics in professional academic communication will help to give a full sociolinguistic description of norms and forms of scholarly criticism. This will then stimulate researchers to analyse the academic culture in Russian science, in particular, in terms of contrastive linguistics. Linguistic analysis employed in the professional field is of great importance as it indicates the level of professional reflection in the community which in its turn affects the production of a new research result.

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