

CHAPTER «PHILOLOGICAL SCIENCES»

PRAGMATIC TYPES OF CRITICAL REMARKS IN ENGLISH-LANGUAGE RESEARCH ARTICLES IN PSYCHOLOGY

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30525/978-9934-588-15-0-104>

Abstract. The article analyzes pragmatic types of criticism in English-language research articles in Psychology, whereas the research article is considered to be the leading genre of English-language scientific discourse. The issue has been studied in a corpus of 35 English-language research articles in Psychology published in scientific journals of the UK and the USA. The methods used in the research include definitive, text, text-interpretation, component, pragmatic-functional, quantitative analysis, as well as cognitive-discursive interpretation method. According to the obtained results, the pragmatic potential of criticism in the English-language research article in Psychology is represented by modifications of negative evaluation, which form not two types of criticism as indicated in other studies that deal with pragmatic types of academic criticism, but three types, which include: weak criticism, moderate criticism, and strong criticism. In order to determine modifications of expressing negative evaluation in critical remarks we used their formal features (extendedness / unextendedness of a critical remark), content features (belonging of a critical remark to the personal / impersonal type), means of negative evaluation (explicit (lexical or lexico-grammatical) means of negative evaluation, implicit means of negative evaluation), the use of hedges and boosters. Weak criticism in research articles in Psychology is verbalized with unextended, impersonal critical remarks that have explicit lexico-grammatical means of negative evaluation or, less often, implicit means of

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negative evaluation. Most weak critical remarks are also hedged. Pragmatic potential of strong critical remarks varies depending on their features. The most intensive strong critical remarks are extended and personal ones with explicit lexical means of negative evaluation and boosters. If a strong critical is extended, indefinite-personal and contains explicit lexical means of negative evaluation, as well as explicit lexico-grammatical means of negative evaluation and implicit means, boosters and hedges, it becomes less intensive than the one described above. The latter pragmatic features are typical for most strong critical remarks in English-language research articles in Psychology. Moderate criticism has the widest range of characteristics forming numerous configurations. Moderate critical remarks can have intermediate pragmatic features (belonging of a critical remark to indefinite-personal type, using explicit lexico-grammatical means of negative evaluation) and / or it can also have a combination of features that are typical for weak criticism and for strong criticism and are combined in equal / different proportions that offset one another. In conclusion, modern scholars when writing their research articles in Psychology use moderate critical remarks much more often than weak critical remarks or strong critical remarks.

1. Introduction

The increasing role of science in the life of modern society, integration processes in the world scientific community, together with acquiring the status of *lingua franca* by the English language have all led to the fact that nowadays linguistics scholars focus even more attention on English-language scientific discourse and its genres. In particular, the research article, which is considered to be the leading genre of English-language scientific discourse, has been studied as a whole and in its individual components. However, such an important and obligatory component of research article as criticism has not been studied enough, there is still a need for discussing pragmatic types of critical remarks in English-language research articles in Psychology.

Therefore the aim of the study is to describe and analyze pragmatic types of criticism in English-language research articles in Psychology.

With this in mind, we have to fulfil the following research objectives: to outline the pragmatic types of criticisms in an English-language research article in Psychology, and to analyze typical configurations of the characteristics of each type of criticism.

The object of the study is a critical remark in the English-language research article in Psychology. The subject of research is the pragmatic characteristics of criticism in English-language research articles in Psychology.

The problem has been studied in a corpus of 35 English-language research articles in Psychology which were published in scientific journals of the UK and the USA from 2009 to 2011. The methods used to carry out the research include definitive, component, text, text-interpretation, pragmatic-functional, quantitative analysis, and cognitive-discursive interpretation method.

2. Classification of pragmatic types of criticism

Criticism, viewed in this paper as a negative evaluation judgement, is a discursive phenomenon – a scholar’s mental activity and its verbal realization based on the corresponding fragment of knowledge (a stereotypical scenario) and meant to reach the strategic aim: to expose and to eliminate the shortcomings of research activities [1]. Criticism is a text fragment verbalized as critical remarks (CR) in any part of the research article (RA).

Pragmatic features of criticism, in particular the intensity of negative evaluation, have been addressed in a few studies. According to their authors, verbalization of negative evaluation in criticism is related to a particular language and culture, that is, to the linguistic and cultural community to which the scholar belongs [5, p. 64], as well as to the academic discipline and personality of the scholar [3, p. 73]

At the same time, the linguists are unanimous in their opinion that English-speaking scholars are not inclined to express harsh criticism in their works.

The generally accepted norm of English-language scientific discourse is the authors’ ability to subtly convince their audience – first of all, of course, journal editors and referees – of the soundness and validity of their own empirically-based claims. When criticizing, authors have to be careful, “politically correct” and “diplomatic”, they cannot be offensive, ironical or sarcastic. This is useful for the authors themselves, as violating this rule may in the future make them objects of strong criticism, which in turn may adversely affect their scientific reputation or that of the institutions they work at [5, p. 76–77]. That’s why it is in their interest not to criticize their peers in too harsh and direct a tone, but in a subtle, disguised fashion [5, p. 78]. Therefore harsh criticism is rare in English academic writing.

The fact that CRs can have different level of directness/indirectness was the reason for developing their classifications, that is defining different pragmatic types of CRs.

For example, Salager Meyer has divided criticism into 2 broad categories (*direct* and *indirect*) according to their level of directness/indirectness:

a) direct criticism (straightforward, overt “attack”) is a strong, unmodulated utterance of the truth of whose propositional content the writer takes full responsibility;

b) indirect criticism is a covert, subdued or “polite” criticism [6, p. 28–29].

In Giannoni’s terms, the classification of criticism developed by Salager Meyer looks as follows: implicit critical speech acts (where more indirect rhetorical devices are preferred for conveying disagreement) and explicit critical speech acts (which use more overt rhetorical devices) [3, p.80].

In the classification worked out by A. Fagan and P. Martin Martin, these types of criticism have other names: + *hedging* (direct academic criticism) and –*hedging* (indirect academic criticism) [2, p. 128].

Harwood classifies criticism into “mild” where authors simply argue that an otherwise excellent paper suffers from a minor flaw and the harsher type that identifies a more serious flaw, or may even baldly state that the paper is wrong [4].

However, in our opinion, categorizing CRs into pragmatic types cannot be as clear as, for example, classifying CRs into their formal types, so using a three-type, rather than a two-type classification of pragmatic types of criticism, as in other papers, can help get more reliable results when analyzing English-language research articles.

Taking into account the theories of other scholars and the results obtained during our analysis of empirical material, in our study we propose to classify CRs in the English-language RAs in Psychology into three pragmatic types, namely: weak, moderate and strong CRs. Each of these types of criticism is characterized by a number of special features.

The defining criteria for establishing whether or not a CR corresponds with any of these types were characteristics revealed during our analysis of formal, structural and content aspects of criticism [1], such as:

– extendedness / unextendedness of a CR (the more extended the CR, the more intensive its pragmatic meaning, i.e. the larger size of a CR corresponds to strengthening of criticism, the smaller size of a CR corresponds with weakening of criticism);

– methods of expressing negative evaluation (direct, explicit expression of negative evaluation with the use of lexical means is the most categorical, and it makes criticism stronger; while expressing negative evaluation with the help of explicit lexico-grammatical means we consider to be a little less categorical, and we believe that it makes criticism weaker to some extent; expressing negative evaluation with implicit means reduces categoricity, mitigates criticism, and therefore, it also makes criticism weaker);

– CR belonging to the personal / impersonal type (the presence of a direct verbal indication of the scientist whose work has a limitation / shortcoming makes the criticism stronger; when it belongs to indirect (indefinite-personal) type, the CR becomes less categorical; while the absence of information concerning the scholar who is the object of criticism (impersonal CRs) mitigates criticism).

– the presence / absence of hedges / boosters, the former of which are focused on mitigating criticism and the latter are used in order to make criticism stronger.

It should also be noted that pragmatic types of CRs, which, at first glance it seems logical to analyze sequentially (weak, moderate, and strong criticism), were studied in the research in the following order:

– firstly, we defined weak and strong CRs (based on identifying essential characteristics of CRs that make the pragmatic potential of criticism weaker or stronger);

– secondly, the CRs that we could not classify into any of these types were referred to as moderate CRs, and then their typical characteristics were systematized.

3. Weak criticism

Based on the analysis of the RA corpus, we define weak CRs as those which are:

1) unextended (i.e. they consist of one utterance and formally correspond to one simple or complex sentence);

2) impersonal (the object of negative evaluation in a CR, that is a person whose scientific activities are criticized, is not verbally indicated in the CR, or the object of criticism is scientific community as a whole);

3) characteristic of using implicit means of negative evaluation or explicit lexico-grammatical means of negative evaluation;

4) hedged.

As a result of the analysis of the empirical material, we have registered CRs that have a complete set of the characteristics mentioned above, e.g.:

(1) *To date, no research has identified treatment options available for those with mental health problems in the primary care setting.*

The CR in Example (1) we refer to weak criticism, because it is unextended (formally, it corresponds to one simple sentence), impersonal (a particular person / group of people criticized in the CR can not be identified using the text of the RA, because research community as a whole acts as an object of criticism). The CR has explicit lexico-grammatical means of negative evaluation (*no research has identified*), and a hedge presented by the time deictic expression *to date*.

(2) *<...> however, further research is needed to confirm our findings in other samples with a larger number of cases.*

CR (2) is considered to be an example of weak type of criticism because it is unextended (it is represented by one simple sentence), impersonal, contains implicit means of negative evaluation (*further research is needed* → *isn't studied enough*), and a hedge – passive voice (*is needed*).

(3) *To our knowledge, no other study has examined levels of knowledge and acceptance of biological evolution within a select sample of the community of educational psychologists, educational researchers, and other education professionals.*

This CR illustrates weak criticism as it is unextended (at the formal level, it corresponds to one complex sentence) and impersonal. The CR uses explicit lexical means of negative evaluation (*no other study has examined*), as well as a hedge – an expression demonstrating the author's personal doubt and direct involvement (*to our knowledge*).

In addition, during the analysis of empirical material, we have also found CRs, that do not have all of the features of weak criticism mentioned above, in particular we registered CRs that do not have any hedges, e.g.:

(4) *Although not describing in detail the behavior patterns of the play, many ethnographic studies provide evidence for locomotor play such as chasing, running, climbing, jumping down, sliding, swinging and different forms of acrobatics in a wide range of hunting-and-gathering and agricultural village cultures throughout the world (see, e.g., Gosso, Otta, Morais, Ribeiro, and Bussab, 2005; Power, 2000; Smith, 1982, 2005).*

(5) *However, scientific exploration of self-protective processes in pregnancy is still in its infancy.*

CR (4) and CR (5) are unextended (each of them formally corresponds to one simple sentence), impersonal, CR (4) contains explicit lexico-grammatical means of negative evaluation (*not describing in detail*), whereas CR (5) uses implicit means of negative evaluation (*scientific exploration of self-protective processes is still in its infancy* → *isn't studied enough*), hedges in both the CRs are not registered.

It has been found that weak criticism makes up 26.79% of all the CRs.

Besides CRs in the English-language RAs in Psychology that have all the characteristics typical for weak criticism are the most numerous (91% of CRs representing weak criticism), and most of them (81.03%) contain explicit lexico-grammatical means of negative evaluation (implicit means of negative evaluation in CRs which belong to this type were recorded in 18.97% of all weak CRs correspondingly).

The percentage of weak CRs in English-language RAs in Psychology not revealing all their potential characteristics is only 9.4%. Furthermore, absence of hedges is typical for the most of these CRs, as in CR (4) and CR (5).

The obtained results show that focusing only on hedges or mitigating devices, explicitness or implicitness of criticism (its means of negative evaluation), etc., does not give sufficient grounds to interpret criticism as “soft” (in terms of this study weak) or more “harsh”: in modifying pragmatic meaning different characteristics of CRs participate, which together determine the essence of such modifications.

4. Strong criticism

CRs that belong to this type of criticism:

1) are extended (contact, or contact and distant [1]), i.e. the CRs consist of two or more utterances, each of which at the formal level corresponds with one simple / complex sentence;

2) are personal (definite-personal or indefinite-personal [1]), that is, the identity of the researcher whose scientific activity(-ies) is criticized can be identified from the text of the RA due to availability of explicit data about this person (name, surname, place of work, title of the scientific work, year of publication, etc.);

3) contain explicit lexical means of negative evaluation (which can be accompanied by explicit lexico-grammatical means of negative evaluation and / or implicit means);

4) contain boosters.

However, it should be noted that, according to the obtained results, due to sociocultural features of the English–language scientific discourse, most strong CRs also have antagonistic characteristics in addition to those listed above, namely, they contain hedges. Since, in general, this feature is neutralized by other characteristics of strong criticism, we do not consider the use of hedges to be an obstacle to classifying a particular CR as an example of strong criticism.

Among the examples of the material used to perform the research were recorded CRs which have all of the characteristics of strong criticism described above, e.g.:

(6) *This study was an outcome study investigating the effectiveness regarding three different treatment groups, psychologically/psychodynamically-oriented-, pharmacological treatment and its combination in a routine psychiatric unit. <...> There are many limitations in the study. First, a limitation is that the treatment groups were fairly small and also the unequal sizes of the treatment groups. This leads to a restricted power and a risk of type II error, implying a limited ability to detect group differences. This applies to all treatment groups but is especially evident concerning the pharmacological group and any non-differences for this group versus the other treatment groups may be due to the very small sample. Also the analyses regarding CS and RCI are very unsure due to the small sample sizes. Further, no control group was used which means that all positive outcome may be credited to a natural remission of symptoms and cannot with certainty be attributed to the treatments. Threats like maturation or other external influences may be present. However, each treatment is separately shown in randomised trials as having a documented effect, so this is not very likely. Further, the fact that no random assignment of patients to the treatments was made implies that selective referrals cannot be ruled out. However, it would be ethically impossible to withhold treatments from patients in this kind of public service psychiatric setting and randomisation would also undermine the clinical representativeness. <...> The unequal distribution of diagnosis across the treatment groups may nevertheless be a limitation*

to the generalisability of the study. Also, a limitation may be the impact of the dropout group.

The CR in Example (6) illustrates strong criticism, as it is extended (consists of ten utterances), contact and distant (utterances constituting the CR are both located one immediately after another, and have between them other utterances that are not critical), introverted definite-personal (the data on the subject of scientific activity – object of criticism is given in the title of the RA, that is the author of the article (*Håkan Johansson Ph.D*)). Negative evaluation is verbalized using explicit lexical means (*limitations, limitation, unequal, error, threat, limited, small, unsure*), as well as explicit lexico-grammatical means of negative evaluation (*no random assignment of patients to the treatments was made; referrals cannot be ruled out*). The CR contains boosters (*evident, very, with certainty*) and hedges: modal verb expressing possibility *may* and passive voice (*be credited, was made, be ruled out*).

(7) *It is important to note a number of limitations with the current survey. This was a telephone survey which only contacted private households. As a result, others such as refugees, homeless people, and people who live in sheltered accommodation may not have been included. Furthermore, no distinction was made between the various types of medication such as major and minor tranquillizers or antipsychotics or anxiolytics, which limits further investigation into factors that predict use of particular medication subgroups. It is possible that certain subgroups of the population may be more likely to be prescribed particular subgroups of psychotropic medication.*

Example (7) represents a CR that belongs to strong criticism, as it is extended (it contains 5 utterances), contact (utterances constituting the CR are located one immediately after another, forming a cohesive text fragment), introverted definite-personal (the subject of scientific activity can be identified, it is the author of the article). Negative evaluation in the CR is verbalized explicitly through the use of linguistic units with negative semantics (*limitations, only, limit*). The CR also has explicit lexico-grammatical means of negative evaluation (*others <...> may not have been included; no distinction was made*), and boosters represented by the adverb *likely*. The CR is hedged by using passive voice (*has been included, was made, be prescribed*), impersonal construction (*it is possible*) that has a possibility adjective *possible*, modal verb *may*, and approximator *more*.

At the same time, the research material contains CRs that do not have such a characteristic of strong criticism as the use of boosters, e.g.:

(8) ***Limitations***

This study has some limitations. First, this study was conducted in a sample of students at 14 colleges and universities in the Midwest, a majority of which were female and Caucasian. While the sample characteristics reflect the characteristics of the school populations, these findings may not generalize to other university populations. Second, the low response rate to the Internet screening survey was also an issue and might suggest responder bias. <...> In addition, previous online research has yielded much lower response rates (29-32%) among the general population⁽⁴⁸⁾ and a wide range of response rates (17-52%) among college students.⁽⁴⁹⁾ Third, these analyses were based on self-report data and, thus, some students may have been influenced to give socially desirable answers (i.e., minimize credit card debt, smoking, and other risky health behaviors). In addition, because this is a cross-sectional sample, it is difficult to ascertain the nature and development of the relationship between risky health behavior and credit card debt.

Example (8) demonstrates a strong CR, because it is extended (it contains 7 utterances that formally correspond to simple or complex sentences), contact and distant, introverted definite-personal (the subject of scientific activity – the object of criticism can be identified, that is the author of the article). In the CR negative evaluation is verbalized explicitly using lexical units with negative semantics – nouns (*limitations, bias*), adjective *difficult*, as well as using explicit lexico-grammatical and implicit means of negative evaluation. The CR is hedged by passive voice (*was conducted, have been influenced*), approximator *some*, modal verbs expressing possibility (*may, might*), epistemic verb *suggest*, and impersonal construction *it is difficult*, but it has no boosters.

(9) *<...> the results can be misleading since they fail to reveal the complex distribution of outcome. Some patients may gain substantial effect, some little effect and some may be impaired, but the extent of the individual patient's improvement after therapy, compared to well-functioning peers, is not captured. Furthermore, a revealed statistically significant effect may be of no practical and clinical meaningful importance.*

CR (9) is an example of strong criticism, since it is extended (it consists of 3 utterances that formally correspond to simple or complex sentences),

contact, introverted definite-personal (data on the scholar whose scientific activity is subject to criticism can be reconstructed from the text of the RA, they are the authors of the article). The CR has explicit lexical means of negative evaluation (*misleading, fail*) and explicit lexico-grammatical means (*the extent is not captured; effect may be of no importance*). It is hedged by the modal verb *can*, approximator *more* and passive voice (*be taken, were considered, be avoided, be obtained*), but it does not have boosters.

Among the CRs that represent strong criticism, the CRs that have the full potential of the essential characteristics of strong criticism make up 76.4% of all strong CRs (however, as already mentioned, they also have the atypical characteristic, i.e. the use of hedges). Those CRs that do not have all the characteristics typical for this pragmatic type of criticism account for 23.6% of strong CRs (but most of them have no boosters).

It is also worth noting that extendedness of the CR is typical for all strong CRs, such CRs are usually contact (53.8%), and contact and distant (41.12%) (distant CRs make up only 5.08% of all strong CRs), which, in our opinion, is a manifestation of the criticism intensification, since the coherent verbalisation of critical utterances enhances their pragmatic potential. At the same time, such factor of criticism intensification as negative evaluation verbalized explicitly with lexical means only, is recorded in 21.94% of all strong CRs. 78.06% of strong CRs use explicit lexical means of negative evaluation together with explicit lexico-grammatical and / or implicit means. Moreover, the number of introverted strong CRs is larger than the number of extraverted strong CRs (63.57% and 36.43% of all CRs belonging to this pragmatic type of criticism correspondingly), which proves that in more than half of the cases, the author of the CR criticizes himself / herself, rather than another scholar.

In general, strong CRs are the least numerous, as long as they account for 19.64% of the total number of CRs.

5. Moderate criticism

This pragmatic type has the greatest potential of characteristics, thus occupying the intermediate position between weak and strong criticism.

In establishing its potential, first of all it was taken into account that the second and third groups of characteristics have both clear oppositions (impersonal CRs and definite-personal CRs; explicit lexical means of negative eval-

uation – implicit means of negative evaluation) and mediums (indefinite-personal CRs; explicit lexico-grammatical means of negative evaluation), which we decided to consider as characteristics typical for moderate criticism. The rest of the characteristics of CRs belonging to this type partly coincide with those typical for weak criticism (unextendedness, and the use of hedges), and partly with those peculiar to strong criticism (extendedness, and the use of boosters). That is in addition to characteristics typical for moderate criticism, a moderate CR can have some of the characteristics typical for weak and some characteristics typical for strong criticism.

It is possible for moderate criticism not to have characteristics that occupy an intermediate position (indefinite-personality, explicit lexico-grammatical means of negative evaluation). In this case, they are partly replaced by the characteristics of weak criticism and of strong criticism.

Typical configurations of characteristics inherent in moderate criticism in English-language research article in Psychology are as follows:

– Unextendedness, impersonality, using explicit lexical means of negative evaluation, and the use of hedges (12.8% of all moderate CRs):

(10) *Regarding Extraversion, results seem to be inconsistent as we mentioned it before.*

(11) *Research on discrete emotions like anger is relatively limited; and this limitation is more pronounced in the elderly population.*

In the above examples, the CRs are unextended (both the CRs correspond to one simple sentence) and impersonal. They contain explicit lexical means of negative evaluation (CR (10) – *inconsistent*; CR (11) – *limited, limitation*), and hedges (CR (10) – semi-auxiliary *seem*, CR (11) – approximators (*relatively, more*), and passive voice (*is limited*)).

Consequently, in the CRs with these characteristics, the features of weak criticism (unextendedness, impersonality, and hedges) coexist with features typical for strong criticism, which is the most categorical as far as the method and means of expressing negative evaluation are concerned.

As in case of other pragmatic types, among the CRs that belong to this type there are those that do not contain hedges or boosters and, accordingly, have such features as unextendedness, impersonality, and the use of explicit lexical means of negative evaluation (6.72% of all the CRs).

(12) *Research on the anger emotion is increasing, but there are still unresolved methodological and theoretical issues concerning the domain*

of anger (anger vs. aggression vs. hostility) and about the components of anger (feelings, thoughts, physiological, behavioral, musculoskeletal).

(13) *There is paucity of information on the epidemiology of this disorder in the developing world, especially among university students.*

CRs in Example (12) and Example (13) are unextended (CR (12) corresponds to a complex sentence, CR (13) to a simple sentence), impersonal (the above examples criticize the scientific community as a whole), negative evaluation is verbalized by explicit lexical means (CR (12) – adjective *unresolved*, CR (13) – noun *paucity*).

As we can see, this configuration, as well as the previous one, combines characteristics typical for strong criticism (explicit lexical means of negative evaluation) and characteristics typical for weak criticism (unextendedness, impersonality).

– Unextendedness, personality, explicit lexico-grammatical means or implicit means of negative evaluation, and using hedges (12.16% of all moderate CRs):

(14) *If one considers mate selection as studied extensively in evolutionary psychology (for example, see²²), this issue of anxiety makes sense considering the separate difficulties in long-term versus short-term mating strategies between men and women. This evolutionary perspective does not, however, provide a handy explanation for why women might actually do better under conditions of anxiety.*

(15) *Our stimuli have only a dark limbal ring or no limbal ring; perhaps adding more subtle variations to the limbal rings would lead to more nuanced results.*

CR (14) and CR (15) are unextended (both of them correspond to one complex sentence), extroverted definite-personal (objects of criticism, i.e. the subjects of scientific activity which is criticized, in Example (14) are represented by whose names and works that are made reference to in the utterance preceding the CR, and in Example (15) they are referenced in the CR itself), negative evaluation is expressed using explicit lexico-grammatical means (CR (14) – *perspective does not provide a handy explanation*) or implicit means of negative evaluation (CR (15) – *our stimuli have only a dark limbal ring or no limbal ring* → *isn't studied enough*; *adding more subtle variations to the limbal rings would lead to more nuanced results* → *isn't studied enough*). The CRs are hedged (CR (14) – using thematiza-

tion shift (*evolutionary perspective does not, however, provide*), modal verb expressing possibility *might*; CR (15) – approximator *more*, modal verb *would*, and probability adverb *perhaps*).

Similarly to the previous one, in this configuration the characteristics of the CRs coincide with both those typical for weak criticism (unextendedness, explicit lexico-grammatical means of negative evaluation or implicit means of negative evaluation, and hedges), and strong criticism (personality), whereas characteristics inherent in weak criticism are prevailing.

– Extendedness, impersonality, explicit lexico-grammatical means or implicit means of negative evaluation, the use of hedges (9.4% of all moderate CRs):

(16) *Findings from this study indicate the need for further research among this population in two primary areas. First, additional focus groups should be held to explore the experiences of culturally and racially diverse family members of veterans, minor siblings of veterans, and family members who have joined formal organizations, such as Blue Star Mothers and Military Families Speak Out. Second, in addition to gathering qualitative data, surveys and scales to assess physical ailments, mental disorders (i.e., anxiety and depression), and help seeking behaviors should be implemented.*

CR in Example (16) is extended (it consists of 3 utterances), contact, impersonal, contains implicit means of negative evaluation (*findings indicate need for further research* → *isn't studied enough*; *additional focus groups should be held* → *isn't studied enough*; *surveys and scales should be implemented* → *isn't studied enough*), and hedges – passive voice (*be held, be implemented*).

In this configuration of characteristics, as well as in the preceding ones, outweigh those inherent in weak criticism: impersonality, the use of hedges are combined with implicit means of negative evaluation, or explicit lexico-grammatical means of the negative evaluation; the only feature typical for strong criticism is extendedness.

– Unextendedness, impersonality, explicit lexico-grammatical means of negative evaluation or implicit means of negative evaluation, and using boosters (10.37% of all moderate CRs):

(17) *Previous studies of depression, anxiety and stress on people in institutions of learning focused mainly on teachers and school administrators.*

This potentially possible variant is represented by CR (17), which is unextended, impersonal and contains implicit means of negative evaluation (*previous studies of depression, anxiety and stress on people in institutions of learning focused mainly on teachers and school administrators → isn't studied enough*), as well as a booster (adverb *mainly*).

Thus, in this set of characteristics prevail those inherent in weak criticism (unextendedness, impersonality, non-categorical way / means of expressing negative evaluation), the only feature of strong criticism here is the use of boosters.

– Extendedness, impersonality, explicit lexical means of negative evaluation, and boosters, e.g. (9.19% of all moderate CRs):

(18) *There are even less data available on the health and well-being of spouses and children of military service members, and virtually no research on the health and well-being of parents, partners, siblings and other relatives of war veterans.*

Addressing the effects of war on spouses and children of veterans is crucial, not only for their well-being, but also for the well-being of veterans. However, there is a paucity of information about indirect effects of war on loved ones (other than spouses) in the lives of veterans, i.e., parents, partners (i.e., girlfriends, boyfriends, fiancées, those living in a committed relationship without benefit of marriage), siblings and extended family members.

CR (18) is extended (it corresponds to two utterances), distant (in the CR there are non-critical utterances between other utterances that constitute the CR), explicit lexical means of negative evaluation (*paucity*), as well as implicit means of negative evaluation (*there are even less data available → isn't studied enough*), and boosters – adverbs (*even, virtually*).

This configuration combines some features of strong criticism (extendedness, explicit lexical means of negative evaluation, the use of boosters), which brings it closer to strong criticism, and it has only one feature inherent in weak criticism, i.e. impersonality.

– Unextendedness, personality, explicit lexical means of negative evaluation, and presence of hedges (11.8% of all moderate CRs):

(19) *To date, empirical investigations of how individuals modify their behavior when they know or sense that they are observed by others have neglected moral judgments (e.g. Haley and Fessler, 2005; Kurzban, DeScioli, and O'Brien, 2007; Piazza and Bering, 2008).*

CR (19) is unextended (it corresponds to one complex sentence), extroverted definite-personal (the examples indicate the names of the scholars whose works are criticized), uses explicit lexical means of negative evaluation (*neglected*), hedges – time deictic expression *to date* and passive voice (*are observed*).

CRs of this type are similar to the previous ones, since in this configuration, its two characteristics (unextendedness, presence of hedges) correspond with weak criticism, while the other two (personality; explicit lexical means of negative evaluation) with strong criticism.

– Unextendedness, impersonality, explicit lexical means of negative evaluation, and presence of boosters (8.81% of all moderate CRs):

(20) *Psychometric testing in older adults, particular those over the age of 60 is limited across all instruments.*

In Example (20), the CR is unextended, impersonal, has explicit lexical means of negative evaluation (*limited*), and boosters (*particular, all*).

Thereby, in this configuration the characteristics typical for weak criticism (unextendedness, impersonality) are balanced by explicit lexical means of negative evaluation, and boosters.

– Extendedness, impersonality, explicit lexical means of negative evaluation, and hedges (7.83% of all moderate CRs):

(21) *On the other hand, studies on mental health in general and anxiety disorders in particular, often neglect a person's perception of his or her quality of life. Judging the impact of a mental disorder based on symptomatic distress, while ignoring one's overall quality of life, is incomplete.*

The CR in Example (21) is extended (it is made of two utterances), contact, impersonal, uses explicit lexical means of negative evaluation (*neglect, ignoring, incomplete*), and has a hedge – approximator *often*.

Thus far, in this configuration, we have a combination of features inherent in weak criticism (impersonality, hedges) with features of strong criticism (extendedness, explicit lexical means of negative evaluation).

– Extendedness, personality, explicit lexico-grammatical means of negative evaluation or implicit means of negative evaluation, and the use of hedges (6.17% of all moderate CRs):

(22) *Because there were only seven women who participated in this study, our result are more valid for men. These findings may have two ma-*

for implications, one for evolutionary psychology and one for personality psychology; however, these suggestions have to be treated cautiously as a consequence of the small sample size.

CR (22) is extended (it contains 2 utterances), distant, introverted (the subject of criticism is the author of the RA), and has implicit means of negative evaluation (*because there were only seven women who participated in this study → isn't studied enough, our result are more valid for men → it's bad, these suggestions have to be treated cautiously → isn't studied enough*), and a hedge – approximator *more*.

In this configuration, the characteristics of weak and strong criticism are distributed approximately equally: on the one hand, it uses hedges and expresses negative evaluation in a non-categorical way, on the other hand, it is characterized with extendedness and personality.

– Unextendedness, personality, explicit lexico-grammatical means of negative evaluation or implicit means of negative evaluation, and the use of boosters (5.72% of all moderate CRs):

(23) *Unfortunately, these studies focus mostly on mood and less on other depression-related symptoms, such as anxiety, hopelessness, impulsivity or anger* ^(8, 9, 10).

CR (23) is unextended (it consists of one sentence), personal (it contains information about the authors whose scientific activity is criticised in the form of a reference). The CR has implicit means of negative evaluation (*studies focus mostly on mood and less on other depression-related symptoms → isn't studied enough*), and a booster – adverb *mostly*.

As you can see, in this configuration, the features of weak and strong criticism are presented in equal numbers: unextendedness and non-categorical expression of negative evaluation inherent in weak criticism are combined with personality and the use of boosters typical for strong criticism.

The analysis of the empirical material has shown that, for moderate criticism unextendedness is more typical than extendedness (63.5% and 36.5% of all CRs of this type); impersonality is more typical than personality (56.81% and 43.19% respectively); explicit lexical means of negative evaluation are used more often than explicit lexico-grammatical means or implicit means of negative evaluation (61.33%, 23.75% and 14.92%, respectively); the percentage of hedges is more numerous than that of boosters (86.24% and 18.15% of the CRs respectively).

In general, CRs that belong to the pragmatic type of moderate criticism were registered in 53.57% of the total number of CRs.

6. Conclusions

The main conclusion that can be drawn is that as far as pragmatic types of critical remarks in English-language research articles in Psychology are concerned, moderate criticism is used more often than weak criticism and strong criticism. Thereby the results of our study have confirmed the views of English-speaking researchers concerning the atypicality of harsh criticism in academic environment. First, this is proved by high percentage of CRs belonging to weak and moderate criticism and, accordingly, by far less often use of strong critical remarks; second, strong criticism can have characteristics which make it not too threatening (in particular English-language research articles in Psychology are characterized with high percentage of self-criticism), and to a certain extent strong critical remarks are mitigated with hedges which were found to be used in a high number of critical remarks belonging to this type.

Future work should also concentrate on performing comparative interlingual and interdisciplinary studies in pragmatic types of critical remarks in research articles.

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