

Persuasion Strategies and Posthumanism: a corpus-based study

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PERSUASION STRATEGIES AND POSTHUMANISM: A CORPUS-BASED STUDY


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FAGO CONSTAR

que a devandita tese de doutoramento reúne os requisitos formais e técnicos necesarios para a súa lectura e defensa pública.

A Coruña, 16 de Xaneiro de 2023

Asdo. Isabel Moskowich-Spiegel Fandiño

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“Technology creates the context for persuasion, but content persuades. Technology helps get content to the right people at the right time. The content still has to influence. Delivering the wrong content at the right time is as bad as delivering the right content at the wrong time.” (Jones n.d.)

“Language is a process of free creation; its laws and principles are fixed, but the manner in which the principles of generation are used is free and infinitely varied. Even the interpretation and use of words involves a process of free creation.” (Chomsky 2008: 87-88)

“When we use or respond to language in the real world our understanding of what the words mean is supplemented by a vast number of contextual and situational issues: language is an enabling device; it allows us to articulate the sequence of choices, decisions, responses, acts and consequences that make up our lives.” (Bradford 2005: xi)

“The job of the linguist, like that of the biologist or the botanist, is not to tell us how nature should behave, or what its creations should look like, but to describe those creations in all their messy glory and try to figure out what they can teach us about life, the world, and, especially in the case of linguistics, the workings of the human mind.” (Arika 2009: 5)

“Persuasion is clearly a sort of demonstration, since we are most fully persuaded when we consider a thing to have been demonstrated.” (Aristotle 2004: 5)

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Abstract

Taking the reality as a reference, science fiction, somehow, connects the concepts of *science*, or knowledge about the structure and behaviour of the natural and physical world, based on facts that can be proven, and *fiction*, a type of literature that describes unreal events that occur to imaginary people within a fantasy environment. Thus, one of the most interesting issues regarding science fiction lies in its use of language due to its stylistic and narrative development; also, on the communication of ideas that sooner or later engage and influence the reader. Although the most usual thing is expecting science fiction to be particularly concerned with science, this is not always the case. In fact, as with non-fiction texts, the main preoccupation is usually what is communicated, rather than how it is communicated, even though the latter also affects the effect.

The aim of this study is to contribute to a better understanding of how in science fiction literature, as well as in non-fiction works, the explicit and implicit material of the texts provokes the persuasion of the reader (regarding the content of the texts). Likewise, I intend to study the most common linguistic strategies of persuasion used in discourse (i.e., stance, hedging, interpersonal markers, etc.), as well as to see whether differences in use can be observed attending to certain factors such as the sex of the authors and the period in which a work was composed. For this purpose, data will be drawn from a corpus of my own, consisting of the compilation of science fiction and non-fiction texts published by male and female authors between 1950 and 2017 and relating to transhumanism and posthumanism. These corpora will allow a diachronic, comparative-contrastive (both quantitative and qualitative) study of discourse from numerous linguistic, pragmatic, and stylistic points of view.

Resumen

Tomando como referencia la realidad, la ciencia ficción, conecta, de algún modo, los conceptos de *ciencia*, o conocimiento sobre la estructura y el comportamiento del mundo natural y físico, basados en hechos que pueden ser probados, y la *ficción*, un tipo de literatura que describe eventos irreales que les ocurren a personas imaginarias dentro de un entorno de fantasía. Así, uno de los aspectos más interesantes de la ciencia ficción radica en su uso del lenguaje debido a su desarrollo estilístico y narrativo; asimismo, en la comunicación de ideas que, tarde o temprano, enganchan e influyen en el lector. Aunque lo más habitual es esperar que la ciencia ficción se preocupe especialmente por la ciencia, no siempre es así. De hecho, como ocurre con los textos de no ficción, la principal preocupación suele ser lo que se comunica, más que cómo se comunica, aunque esto último también influye en el efecto.

El objetivo principal de este estudio es contribuir a una mejor comprensión de cómo en la literatura de ciencia ficción, así como en las obras de no ficción, el material explícito e implícito de los textos provoca la persuasión del lector (con respecto a los contenidos de los textos). Asimismo, se pretende estudiar las estrategias lingüísticas de persuasión más utilizadas en el discurso (i.e., adverbios de posicionamiento, mitigación, marcadores interpersonales, etc.), y determinar si existen diferencias de uso en función de variables como el sexo de los autores y el período en que se compuso la obra. Los datos se extraerán de un corpus propio consistente en la recopilación de textos de ciencia ficción y no ficción publicados por autores y autoras entre 1950 y 2017 y relacionados con el transhumanismo y el posthumanismo. Estos corpus permitirán un estudio diacrónico, comparativo-contrastivo (tanto cuantitativo como cualitativo) del discurso desde múltiples puntos de vista lingüísticos, pragmáticos y estilísticos.

Resumo

Tomando a realidade como referencia, a ciencia ficción conecta dalgún xeito os conceptos de *ciencia*, ou coñecemento sobre a estrutura e o comportamento do mundo natural e físico, a partir de feitos que se poden probar, e a *ficción*, un tipo de literatura que describe acontecementos irrealis que acontecen a persoas imaxinarias dentro dun escenario de fantasía. Así, un dos aspectos máis interesantes da ciencia ficción reside no uso da linguaxe polo seu desenvolvemento estilístico e narrativo; así mesmo, na comunicación de ideas que, antes ou despois, enganchan e inflúen no lector. Aínda que é máis común esperar que a ciencia ficción estea especialmente preocupada pola ciencia, non sempre é así. De feito, como ocorre cos textos de non ficción, a principal preocupación adoita ser o que se comunica, máis que cómo se comunica, aínda que isto último tamén inflúe no efecto.

O obxectivo principal deste estudo é contribuír a unha mellor comprensión de como na literatura de ciencia ficción, así como nas obras de non ficción, o material explícito e implícito dos textos provoca a persuasión do lector (respecto dos contidos dos textos). Así mesmo, preténdese estudar as estratexias lingüísticas de persuasión máis empregadas no discurso (é dicir, adverbios de posicionamento, mitigación, marcadores interpersoais, etc.), e determinar se existen diferenzas de uso en función de variables como o sexo dos autores e o período no que se compuxo a obra. Os datos extraeranse dun corpus propio consistente na recompilación de textos de ciencia ficción e non ficción publicados por autores e autoras entre 1950 e 2017 e relacionados co transhumanismo e o posthumanismo. Estes corpus permitirán un estudo diacrónico, comparativo-contrastivo (tanto cuantitativo como cualitativo) do discurso desde múltiples puntos de vista lingüísticos, pragmáticos e estilísticos.

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Introduction

Known as anticipation literature, one of the main characteristics of science fiction is its connection with scientific research and new technologies. Taking the current reality as a reference, science fiction stories are constructed by extrapolating credible facts and/or physical laws to speculate on an uncertain dystopian or utopian future that could transcend (or not) fiction. Endowed with themes that reflect on technological development, artificial intelligence, and human evolution such as transhumanism and posthumanism, as well as specific characters like robots, androids, cyborgs and humanoids, science fiction extends the scope of what people see as possible, facilitating the understanding and assimilation of alternative realities. The only tool these texts use to do so is language and it is precisely for this reason that one of the main sources of interest with respect to its study lies in its use of language, due to its stylistic

characteristics, which differ from those of other types of textual manifestations such as scientific discourse.

According to Biber (1998: 1), the study of language can be divided into the ‘study of structure’ or linguistic analysis, and the ‘study of use’, which (at least for the current study) can be related to pragmatics. Yule (2010: 128), on the other hand, highlights that pragmatics is the study of the ‘invisible’ meaning or how we recognise and infer what is meant, even when it is not said or written directly, which leads us to consider whether what is communicated is really what the addressee interprets, or what the addresser wanted to transmit. From this, we can infer that the use of language is affected not only by the context in which it is used, but also by a purpose. As a result, intentionality seems to play an important role in writing because any text (e.g., expository, descriptive, or narrative) that aims to obtain a result needs to be persuasive. One of my general research questions regarding this matter is whether the persuasion of the reader has to do with the language used in scientific and literary texts (by means of style, grammar and/or lexicon) or even with other variables such as the genre (i.e., fiction or non-fiction), the sex of the author, the period or date in which the work was written, the topic, and the tone (i.e., utopian or dystopian), among others. Thus, an initial hypothesis regarding fiction texts is that science fiction novels tend to be dystopias or post-apocalyptic plots to engage readers from the very beginning. Besides, if we consider the variable of sex, we can find that many of the novels written by women tend to be romance, which leads us to think that the appealing aspect in fiction has to do with the plot rather than with the topic itself. Nevertheless, it is equally valid to make the content more attractive and exciting, and hence, persuasive. In that sense, and since fiction let readers get involved into the story and go back to their “real” worlds or reality, it seems easy to contrast pros and cons, allude to dystopias and conclude with “happy ever after” optimistic and promising endings. In terms of enhancement, transcendence and evolution, fiction texts tend to be more positive and credible despite the negative aspects highlighted. Non-fiction texts, on the other hand, seem to be more realistic and direct by providing positive, negative, or even neutral arguments that rely on aspects such as metadiscourse or language. In that sense, metadiscourse can be defined as “the range of devices writers use to explicitly organize their texts, engage readers, and signal their attitudes to both their material and their audience” (Hyland and Tse 2004). When we use metadiscourse, we are structuring a three-way relationship between the text, the reader, and the writer, precisely the three elements intervening in the process of persuading. This is so, especially if, as I mentioned in a previous work, stance is considered to be “closely related to persuasive strategies” since it refers to “the way in which writers communicate with readers through their

texts” (see Moskowich 2017: 74 and Barsaglini-Castro 2021:171). Stance also manifests itself as the open expression of an author’s attitude or commitment to the message, and hence, its analysis covers the linguistic choices that include those ways in which authors mention themselves through giving personal opinions. Such authorial presence has become a crucial aspect in the study of language due to the diverse kinds of assessments or judgements that it may convey, and because of how these are transmitted to the addressees. Following Landert’s (2017: 489) theory, according to which stance influences the perception of stories, and considering that readers are somehow ‘guided’ by the precise wording of the text (Hyland 2005; Toolan 2010), it seems logical to think that authorial presence is a significant aspect of persuasion. After all, it is the writer who decides which discourse markers to use, and when and how these might best be employed to influence the reader. We should also note here that despite the difference that may exist between engagement and stance, authors’ commitment to their ideas, the confidence they show, and the identity they project all serve to reinforce their credibility (Hyland 2002: 1091, 2005: 173). With all these ideas in mind, it seems that there is a direct relation between persuasion and style, especially if we consider how writers achieve their purposes through the language used in their writings.

One of the main reasons for choosing transhumanism and posthumanism for the study of persuasion is because, as Harbridge states, “influence is the beginning of nearly everything we create” (2017). As such, it seems logical to relate the concept of “creativity” mainly (although not exclusively) to fiction, and “influence” to the concept of persuasion. For instance, if we consider that previous science fiction novels have become our reality (e.g., space travel), it seems that, in some way, these novels have influenced or inspired us to materialise what was written. In terms of influence, specific terminology does not need to be a relevant issue to allude to posthumanism and change our mind. Engagement can also occur thanks to repetition, originality, novelty, creativity, or humour, and hence, making us to believe or do something. In Toolan’s words: “It is hard to see how a narrative, in itself, can constitute an act of persuasion, an attempt to get the reader or listener to do something or see things a certain way. Not directly.” (see Toolan 2011: 18).

The current dissertation analyses the use of suasive verbs and intensifiers as linguistic strategies of persuasion and their relationship to the author’s stance and style. It aims at determining how does persuasion manifest itself in science fiction and scientific texts, and if that manifestation proves to be related to (or affected by) other variables —such as the field¹,

¹ The variable *field* represents both fiction and non-fiction texts.

the sex, the tone, the context, the topic and the period— or not. In order to do this, and taking into account that the variability of the linguistic use may occur at different levels (i.e., morphological, lexical, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, stylistic, etc.), and even simultaneously at more than one level, it will make use of ‘corpus stylistics’ by combining corpus linguistics (as a quantitative method) with stylistics (as a qualitative method). Known as a ‘tool kit’ or ‘tool box’ (Nørgaard et al. 2010: 6), corpus stylistics contains a broad range of linguistic tools available for an interdisciplinary analysis of texts that bring “the study of language and literature closer together” (Mahlberg 2007: 219). On the other hand, and although the relationship between corpus linguistics and pragmatics is not exempt from difficulties, Alba-Juez (2009: 70) defines the latter as an indispensable source for discourse analysis since elements such as context, speech acts, meaning beyond the literal meaning, interpretation, implication, deixis, etc., are considered important components of it.

As will be outlined in Section 2.2 of Chapter 1, stylistics can be considered the integrated study of language and literature due to the analysis of style (Leech and Short 2007: 11) or characteristic pattern of choices associated with an author, character, period, or genre (Jeffries and McIntyre 2010: 1), as well as with specific contexts or situations. Thus, this analysis may be conducted by using a corpus-linguistics methodology to study all kinds of texts, not just the literary ones. The concept of corpus stylistics is relatively recent since the idea of combining corpus linguistics and stylistics originated a few years ago to promote a productive interplay on both sides and to provide additional tools and frameworks by which texts could be analysed. In other words, this interaction between corpus linguistics and stylistics gives some extra ways to “measure, describe and handle [...] creativity²” (Mahlberg 2007: 221). Known for being particularly useful for synchronic and diachronic studies of linguistic variation and change, corpus linguistics can be also applied to any area of linguistics such as morphology (e.g., Baayen and Renouf 1996), semantics, syntax and lexicology (Quirk et al. 1985; Biber 1999), as well as pragmatics (e.g., Aijmer 2008). The latter is closely linked to stylistics because of its aim to identify not only specific features related to certain contexts or situations, but also to its attempt to ascertain why we use certain structures instead of others. Moreover, since the empirical nature of corpus linguistics clashes with the subjective characteristic of stylistic analysis, the emergence of corpus stylistics has generated certain controversy regarding the accuracy and reliability of language analysis.

² Although Mahlberg’s *creativity* refers to literary texts only, its use in this dissertation will also refer to the ‘ingenuity’ or how writers use language to persuade in fiction and non-fiction texts.

Throughout the history of corpus linguistics, several linguists (Sinclair 1991, 2005; Biber 1993; McEnery and Wilson 1996, 2001; Dash 2005; Baker et al. 2006; Crystal 2008) have put forward their own definition of *corpus*, agreeing that a *corpus* is basically a collection of real samples of a language that are compiled by following a systematic procedure for a specific purpose. The need to follow strict criteria when creating corpora is so crucial for corpus linguistics that includes features such as register selection, research scope, size, balance and time-span, as well as representativeness. It is precisely representativeness that is arguably one of the most relevant and defining characteristics of a corpus, since corpus linguistics' aims at providing evidence that allows the affirmation or refutation of hypotheses. From Latin 'body' (plural *corpora*), we can also define a *corpus* as a large collection of machine-readable texts stored in an electronic database for linguistic description and argumentation. Taken from oral or written sources, these linguistic data, which are selected to be representative of language, can be used for both quantitative and qualitative analyses and research, or, as Crystal (2008: 117) points out, as "a starting point of linguistic description or as a means of verifying hypotheses about a language." For instance, Leech's (1991: 9) early definitions of *corpus*³ promoted corpus-based research by describing it as "a source of systematically retrievable data and a testbed for linguistic hypotheses". Sinclair (1994: 14, 2005: 16), on the other hand, highlighted the need for representativeness by defining a corpus as a collection of pieces of language selected according to explicit linguistic criteria in order to be used as a source of data for linguistic research, coinciding with McEnery and Wilson's (1996: 24, 2001: 32) modern and more accurate definition of a corpus, described as a finite-sized body of machine-readable texts sampled to be maximally representative of a particular variety of a language.

In the late 1950s, the dispute between rationalism and empiricism increased considerably with respect to the study of language through corpora. Empiricists considered corpora as the only reliable source of linguistic evidence (Leech 1991: 8), whereas linguists such as Chomsky (1957, 1962, 1988) maintained that a corpus was irrelevant for linguistic inquiry, since the study of language should be based on competence (by means of knowledge) rather than on natural performance. For him, identifying if an utterance or language construct was grammatical or not had to do with the intuition of the speaker, and not with the performance itself, which might vary depending on the situation. In that sense, it can be argued that this influence, which relies on researchers' limited personal experience and intuition, has certain

³ It is worth mentioning here that Leech's ideas were not always shared or supported among other authors proposing definitions in the literature of that period.

resemblance with the nature and original or traditional concept of stylistics and literary studies, which as has been seen, based its analysis of texts on interpretation rather than on corpora. Thus, and despite the difficulties in finding a specific definition or even a way to ascribe it to a particular discipline, corpus stylistics has proved its potential by combining the use of corpus linguistics as a quantitative method to support qualitative stylistic analyses.

Considering the conclusions reached in a prior study (see Barsaglini-Castro 2017), we can say that the allusion to posthumanism seems to be indirect, more frequent, and creative in fiction, whereas on the contrary, it tends to be more direct, less frequent, and argumentative in non-fiction. This can be taken as the starting point for the current study since regardless of how direct/indirect or creative/argumentative a text (i.e., fiction or non-fiction) might be in terms of a topic (posthumanism in our case), its use of language (and organisation of the text) is what really makes it persuasive, among other objective/subjective reasons such as culture, education, knowledge, emotions, opinions, respectively.

The structure of this dissertation, determined by the nature of its goals and methodology, is as follows:

Chapter 1 provides a general overview of the most relevant concepts and literature regarding persuasive strategies and compares the different approaches of tackling the study. Thus, the first part begins with a general review of the concept of persuasion and discusses the relevance of pragmatics and stylistics as well as the research methods such as discourse analysis considered to carry out the analysis. The second part of this chapter provides the theoretical background on suasive verbs and intensifiers, by describing their main characteristics and revising the various terminology, definitions, and classifications applied to them.

Chapter 2 begins with a brief review of the central issues to consider for a corpus-based research, following with a presentation of the PET (Posthumanism English Texts) corpus and its characterisation with respect to its research scope and its compilation principles. Thus, the first part describes each of the subcorpora created for this study in detail, with a focus on the decisions made for the design and creation of the corpus, focusing on the issues of corpus representativeness, sampling, and balance. The second part is concerned with the methodology followed between the data collection and the analysis by detailing the process of selection, retrieval and counting of linguistic features in the corpus, describing the digitisation process and the tools chosen for the analysis, disambiguation process, data treatment and the parameters used to analyse the material.

Chapter 3 analyses and interprets the results. Findings are supported with examples from the texts, which are contrasted and discussed. The first part provides an overview of the general results from the whole corpus according to the different variables described in Chapter 2, followed by the analysis of data regarding suasive verbs, and intensifiers.

Conclusions are presented in the last chapter, to answer the research questions and hypotheses presented in this introductory chapter and to analyse the findings in the light of the trans-posthumanist context of the study.

Three Appendices are included at the end. Appendix 1 contains a table with the metadata records of each sample of PET that have been kept in a spreadsheet created with Excel. Appendices 2 and 3 present a translated summary of the doctoral dissertation into Spanish and Galician, respectively.

A brief overview of the literature about these terms, as well as some other concepts that are in one way or another related to my main interest here (i.e., the use of persuasion in texts dealing with trans- and post-humanism), will be outlined in the following chapter to set the terminological boundaries required for this dissertation.

Chapter 1: Theoretical background and Contextualisation of the study

1. Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the most relevant concepts and considerations taken into account for the current dissertation. It is divided in two sections. The first one (Section 2) begins with a general review of the concept of persuasion as the main aim of this thesis is to study how readers of scientific and science-fiction texts are persuaded about certain ideas. It also discusses the relevance of pragmatics and stylistics as well as the research methods such as discourse analysis considered to carry out the analysis. The second part (Section 3) provides the theoretical background on suasive verbs and intensifiers, the elements I will focus on, in an

attempt to summarise their main characteristics –in the case of the former, and to compare their various terminology, definitions and classifications –in the case of the latter.

2. Some relevant concepts

This section presents some concepts and considerations that are central to the present study, and which are interrelated. Section 2.1 begins with a general review of the concept of persuasion, followed by section 2.2 in which the most relevant aspects of *stylistics* and *style* are considered. Section 2.3 highlights how context and discourse analysis have to do with *style* and *metadiscourse*. The scope and limits of pragmatics, semantics and meaning are discussed in section 2.4. Section 2.5 presents some information regarding *stance*, *hedging* and *point of view* as some of the key elements for persuasion.

2.1. Persuasion

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*, persuasion involves “the addressing of arguments or appeals to a person in order to induce cooperation, submission, or agreement”. In other words, it is a strategy intended to provoke a belief or an action in the listener or reader through argumentation and/or emotion. The combination of these two features is already present in classical authors such as Barnes (1984). In his work, he refers to Aristotle’s *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos* as sources of persuasion due to their relevance in terms of justified argumentation. We can briefly summarise Aristotle’s theory by saying that *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos* create the author’s profile or image, the reader’s state of mind, and provide evidence from data, respectively. This is complemented by the other two components of argumentation, language and the organisation of speech, which provide the specific wording and structure depending on the content, the topic or field, intentionality, the context and the target audience. Thus, writers may convey their ideas or knowledge in many ways. These can be more or less direct (as well as conscious), influence readers and hence constitute an act of persuasion. Toolan (2011: 16) suggests that the act of persuading consists of providing previously known information and optionally adding extra information to manipulate or change the addressee’s point of view. Another characteristic of the linguistic power of persuasion is what Holtgraves and Lasky (1999: 196) call the ‘powerless style’, in which the presence of hedges, tag questions or hesitations is frequent, as opposed to the ‘powerful style’, which lacks these features. This

‘powerless style’ is also related to Lakoff’s (1973, 1975, 1990) study on language, gender and power. Lakoff, like many other scholars before her (see Stoffel 1901:101; Jespersen 1922: 250), claimed that women’s use of certain linguistic features such as intensifiers (e.g., *so*) and hedges (e.g., *I think, I guess*, etc.) is more frequent than that of men and hence qualified it as a prominent feature of ‘powerless language’ due to their semantic vagueness. Lakoff’s work was later examined by numerous studies on this topic to determine whether these characterisations represent valid generalisations about females’ and males’ language use. For instance, Lakoff (1977) herself doubted that gender differences of speech could be replicated in writing, since writing is less spontaneous and more heavily governed by a deliberate application of editorial conventions. However, the findings yielded in such research have often been inconsistent. For example, while some studies confirm Lakoff’s (and hence Stoffel’s and Jespersen’s) claim that women use intensifiers more frequently than men (Bradac, Mulac and Thompson 1995; Stenström 1999; Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005), others find just the opposite.

One of them is that of Biber (1995), who initially outlined an involvement-informational dimension that refers precisely to the differences between men’s and women’s use of language. According to that, female language was claimed to make use of linguistic features that denote participatory involvement or direct interaction with the audience, including “egocentric sequences” (Rubin and Greene 1992: 20) such as *I believe, in my opinion, I think* and *I guess*. Likewise, other studies (Rubin and Greene 1992; Mulac and Lundell 1994; Koppel et al. 2002; Baron 2004) have also suggested that women were said to be “more tentative than men in their use of language” (Biber and Burges 2000: 21) tending to use more hedges (e.g., *somewhat, probably*), possibility modals, and intensifiers such as *really, strongly, and very* (Sterkel 1988; Rubin and Greene 1992; Mulac and Lundell 1994). Consequently, linguists (see Flynn 1988; Rubin and Green 1992; Leaper and Ayres 2007) have categorised this gender divergence in language use by associating female and male language with an affiliative and assertive approach, respectively.

Following Lakoff’s (1975) theory, Holmes (2001) and many others also observed that linguistic features such as intensifiers, tag questions and hedges characterise the so-called “powerless language style” due to the lack of assertiveness or authoritativeness. On the contrary, studies such as Hosman’s (1989) dynamic interaction between different linguistic features suggested that intensifiers might be perceived as powerful—at least in the absence of hedges, by making it even more difficult to judge whether the contribution of intensifiers empowered or weakened language. Furthermore, Burgoon and Stewart (1974) observed that in the gender-intensifier relation women’s over-use and men’s under-use of amplifiers could

make them less persuasive. Finally, Janssen and Murachver (2004) and Guiller and Durndell (2006) point out and agree that the use of intensifiers has to do with a “gender-preferential language use” or even a “socio-emotional” aspect of communication.

With all this in mind, and considering the inconsistent behaviour displayed by intensifiers in affecting both powerful and powerless style, the current study will attempt to verify if intensifiers act as agents of persuasion. To do this, I will quantify their frequency in fiction and non-fiction texts considering the author’s sex as well as style, which will be further explained in the following section.

2.2. Stylistics and Style

Although *style* is not easy to define, it can be seen as “the characteristic pattern of choices associated with the writer’s or projected character’s ‘mind style’⁴, or the pattern associated with particular periods, genres or literary movements” (Stockwell 2006: 746). As previously stated by Crystal and Davy (1969: 9), *style* not only might refer to a person’s language habits or idiosyncrasies and, hence, be confused and identified with an individual’s personality, but it might also refer to the effectiveness of a mode of expression, when used in an evaluative sense. This is what Short (1996) distinguishes as *authorial style* and *text style*, respectively, in order to explain the object of study of stylistics. According to him, *authorial style* is a way of writing that belongs to a particular writer, whereas *text style* refers to the characteristics of the text itself. In 2002, Semino (2002: 97) also made a clear distinction between the aforementioned ‘mind style’ and ‘world view’ by suggesting that the former has a personal or cognitive origin, whereas the latter represents ideological aspects determined by external circumstances such as culture. In that sense, it seems logical to agree with Stockwell (2006: 746) on the idea that “every dimension of linguistic expression represents a choice –whether idiosyncratic or socially determined”, and hence try to analyse it through *stylistics*.

Stylistics can be defined as “the analysis of distinctive expression in language and the description of its purpose and effect” (Verdonk 2002: 4). It uses the theories and methods developed within linguistics and metalinguistics to analyse and explain the meaning of texts, and how language is built and varies according to a specific situation, purpose, author and/or

⁴ In 1977, Fowler (1977: 103) famously coined the concept of ‘mind style’, describing it as ‘any distinctive linguistic representation of an individual mental self’, suggesting the way narratives build up and/or mirror an individual’s (cognitive) perception of the world, whether of a character, narrator, or implied author.

period (Busse 2017: 200). *Stylistics* also refers to the integrated study of language and literature, or even the linguistic study of style in (literary) texts. Thus, the connection between form and effect becomes essential to explore the language used by authors in order to influence readers both in fiction and non-fiction texts. In other words, it could be said that the aim of *stylistics* is to investigate the relation between the writer's conveyance of a message and how the 'magic' of persuasion occurs; as well as to explore creativity in the use of language (Simpson 2004: 3) by focusing on aspects such as *deixis*, *modality* and *viewpoint*, *stance* and *hedging*, which will be dealt with in section 2.5.

Since the early 1980s, the development of pragmatics and discourse analysis as well as the use of computational techniques such as corpus linguistics made stylistics "one of the most dynamic and interdisciplinary fields within applied linguistics" (Stockwell 2006: 746). For instance, *modern stylistics* focuses on how speech and thought are represented in stories. This interest gives way to *cognitive stylistics*, where, as Simpson (2004: 41) notes, the study of the way authors transfer their 'mental constructs' when writing, or how readers map their own 'mental representations' when reading texts is the main question to research. In other words, *cognitive stylistics* differs from other stylistic models in that it focuses on mental representations (or *mind style*) rather than on textual representations (or *text style*). Besides, the analysis of linguistic features to explain literary or aesthetic effects as perceived by readers is what Mahlberg (2014: 249) points out as literary stylistics. In that sense, it could be said that *stylistics* aims at analysing how we respond to literary and non-literary texts. That response, known as inference, explains –in relation to pragmatics– the interconnection among what is said, what is meant, and what is understood, thus establishing the writer-reader relationship studied in metadiscourse.

In addition to this and taking into account that "much of our everyday experience is shaped and defined by actions and events, thoughts and perceptions" (Halliday 1994: 106), it is important to consider how language helps us to encode, and hence transmit our thoughts and experiences into the grammar of a clause. Likewise, we should also be aware of how these linguistic patterns can be also decoded into a mental image in order to understand the world in our own way, and even how we manage to capture the same event in several textual representations by using the resources of language. This is precisely what Halliday (1994: 106) defines as *experiential function*, or representation of physical/abstract world (i.e., patterns of experience) in written texts. He also mentions that this *experiential function* is an important marker of style since it highlights "the concept of style as a choice". Choice in style is,

therefore, motivated, which justifies its impact on the way texts are structured (by writers) and interpreted (by readers).

Finally, some authors (Crystal and Davy 1969; Simpson 2004) coincide in emphasising that *stylistics* aims at analysing not only language habits to identify and classify those linguistic features associated with specific contexts or situations, but also understanding and explaining, if possible, why one type of structure should be preferred to other alternatives. In that sense, the current study will consider the interdisciplinary character of *stylistics* in an attempt to interpret and/or explain the use of specific linguistic features for persuasive purposes.

2.3. Discourse Analysis, (Con)Text and Metadiscourse

Without getting too far away from the study of language in use and context, we find *discourse analysis*, which according to Johnstone (2018), has not only been used to answer questions related to anthropology, psychology, communication and sociology or even geography, human-computer interaction, medicine, law, and politics, but also to shed some light on linguistic fields such as pragmatics or semantics (which will be seen in depth in the following section).

Discourse analysis (DA) is a term that was first introduced by Harris (1952) to refer to a way of analysing speech and writing (Paltridge 2012: 2). Its main purpose, as Chimombo and Roseberry (1998) state, is to provide a deeper understanding and evaluation of texts and how they become meaningful to their users by examining the patterns of language associated with particular meanings and/or situations, and the relationship between language and socio-cultural contexts. As such, *discourse analysis* is concerned with the examination of language above the level of the sentence or the clause, and with a micro-level description of ‘language in use’. In line with Brown and Yule (1983: 1), who had established that “the analysis of *discourse* is, necessarily, the analysis of ‘language in use’”, and also that doing *discourse analysis* certainly involves ‘doing syntax and semantics’, but it primarily consists of ‘doing pragmatics’ (ibid. 1983: 26), Fasold (1990: 65) and Candlin (1997: ix) stated that *discourse* is the study of ‘language in use’. According to Schiffrin (1994), discourse analysis involves the study of both text and context. Alba-Juez (2009: 18) also highlights that the terms *text* and *discourse* have been –and still are– used ambiguously and systematically defined in different ways by different researchers. For this reason, it becomes difficult to establish a proper distinction between these

concepts, so she finally opts for the term *text* to refer to the ‘purely’ linguistic material and *discourse* in a broader sense, defining it as ‘language in use’, composed of text and context.

On the other hand, Richards and Schmidt (2010: 174) argue that *discourse analysis* is the study of how the choice of linguistic features affects the structure of the discourse, the relationship between utterances, and the ‘moves’ to introduce or change a topic. In that sense and given the different ways authors may organise their material for specific readers and contexts, we get to what Hyland and Tse (Hyland and Tse 2004; Hyland 2005) refer to as *interactive metadiscourse*. In their own terms, *metadiscourse* is defined as the set of linguistic resources writers use to project themselves into their discourse to signal their attitude or stance towards both the content and the audience of the text (Hyland and Tse 2004: 156). In Hyland’s model (2005: 50-52) these interactive resources comprise features such as transitions (e.g., *accordingly, moreover*), frame markers (e.g., *in the next section*), endophoric markers (e.g., *as noted above*), evidentials (e.g., *according to*) and code glosses (e.g., *in other words*) that enable writers to manage the information flow and to explicitly establish their preferred interpretations. They represent the writer’s knowledge of the context and what readers are likely to find most familiar, plausible, and persuasive.

Since the study of discourse can be carried out in a more quantitative (objective) or qualitative (subjective) way depending on the text itself and the context in which it occurs, it is convenient to highlight the three most common methods of analysis. Hodges et al. (2008: 570-1), for instance, distinguish three different approaches: (1) formal linguistic discourse analysis, (2) empirical discourse analysis and (3) critical discourse analysis (CDA). The first approach involves the microanalysis of linguistic, grammatical, and semantic uses and meanings of the text in order to determine its structure and communicative function. The data source for this formal procedure is a collection of samples of oral or written language and texts. The second approach focuses on both micro- and macroanalysis of the language in use (e.g., conversation analysis), in order to study repeated patterns or genres of language that share similar structures and contexts. This empirical analysis examines samples taken from oral and written sources as well as data on the uses of the language or the text within social settings. The third approach, also called *Foucauldian discourse analysis*, includes the characteristics of the two approaches already mentioned and the metadata regarding the object of study⁵. Thus, this critical analysis encompasses the examination of the text itself and the social uses of language, and the study of how discourses construct and portray (reflect) the way of thinking

⁵ With *metadata* we mean the data about the individuals and/or institutions that produce the discourse.

and speaking/writing of individuals and society, and vice versa. Therefore, and in an attempt to provide a corpus-based microanalysis of the most frequent patterns relating to persuasion, the current study will consider approaches 1 and 2 due to their formal and empirical characteristics.

In addition to what has already been mentioned, Paltridge (2012: 4) also points out that *discourse analysis* is not only concerned with linguistic features but also with how we organise what we say or write, *i.e.*, what do we say first and next in a conversation or even in a piece of writing. This is something that not only varies across different cultures and languages but also within the same culture and language, considering the singularities and idiosyncrasies of each individual, as well as their context and purpose⁶. As such, and since context is one of the variables that might affect the way in which messages are conveyed and understood the most, it seems logical to use DA as a method to examine the patterns of persuasive language in fiction and non-fiction texts. Van Dijk (2009) refers to context as a ‘subjective construction’ or a ‘mental model’ of the communicative situation and argues that “in order to fully understand *discourse* we need to understand it in its ‘context’” (Van Dijk 2009: 1), which emphasises the relevance of the concept of context for pragmatics or even how important pragmatics is for discourse analysis.

2.4. Pragmatics, Semantics and Meaning

Since the analysis of persuasion involves the interpretation of the purpose of a certain message and how it is conveyed, I will also resort to *pragmatics* to study language in context or language in use. *Pragmatics* is concerned with the use of language in particular situations (*i.e.*, according to context and intentionality), and with the inferences we make when reading a text or even with what the writer meant. It is, therefore, the study of the ‘invisible’ meaning and the relationship between language form and language use. For this reason, and although it does not seem to have a widely accepted definition either, *implicitness* (*i.e.*, anything suggested or understood though not directly expressed) is essential to the pragmatic study of persuasion.

Following Leech’s (1983: 6) definition of *semantics* and *pragmatics*, we could say that the main difference between them lies in two different uses of the verb *to mean*. Thus, the question underlying semantics is ‘what does X mean?’ whereas pragmatics deals with ‘what

⁶ Note its close connection with the study of *style* and the organisation of speech (described in section 2.2).

does a speaker or writer mean by X?'. Hence, semantics is concerned with 'abstract' or 'literal' meanings, and pragmatics is concerned with the 'addresser's meaning'. From a different point of view, we can also say that *pragmatics* focuses on the relation between meaning and context (or 'sentence meaning'), whereas *semantics* does not require a context. In other words, semantics deals with the 'utterance meaning'.

Sperber and Wilson (1995) argue that *context* depends on the listener or reader who accesses his/her background⁷ in search of whatever information is necessary to process an utterance. In fact, readers tend to use lexical meaning, grammatical features, and gestures and/or prosody (all of them in their learned background) in order to interpret the meaning of pragmatic markers, for example. This explains why different people may interpret the same utterance differently according to the information they have access to, or they already have (i.e., cognition). Thus, Griffiths (2006: 6-7) categorises three stages of interpretation: (1) *literal meaning*, which is a semantic characteristic that focuses on sentences without requiring a context; (2) *explicature* and (3) *implicature*, which are typically pragmatic, and focus on utterances that require a context. The main difference between these two stages is that *explicature* analyses 'ambiguous expressions' and *implicature* is concerned with 'what is intended'. If we pay special attention to the concept of *implicature*, we can highlight that it depends on language and the situation, since its meaning is based on the intentionality of the addresser.

In order to explore the idea of intentionality —as persuasion is almost always an intended action on the part of the addresser— in some more depth, the concept of meaning and how it has been defined in the literature deserves further attention. Aijmer (2013: 4-5) considers that there is an important distinction between the 'addresser's meaning' (i.e., speaker or writer) and the 'semantic meaning'. Although language is used to express meaning, *meaning* itself is not easy to define given its subjective nature. In fact, writers tend to make assumptions when writing, which are basically presuppositions based on context. In that sense, they use pragmatic markers as overt indicators of their metalinguistic activity (i.e., speaker's mind) that create or alter the context. Thus, *pragmatic markers* get their meaning from that specific context. On the other hand, readers infer meaning by using additional information to connect what is written and what is meant. Moreover, as Hyland (2005: 173) notes, one of the central aspects of

⁷ With *background* we mean the knowledge each person may have, which is based on life experiences, education, beliefs, culture, etc.

persuasive argumentation, especially in the field of scientific communication, dwells precisely in the search of a ‘credible representation of themselves and their work’ that authors pursue by ‘claiming solidarity with readers, evaluating their material and acknowledging alternative views’. In that sense, *stance* and *hedging* become important dimensions of the communicative situation since they are taken up by speakers and writers depending on the context and on how they want to appear.

2.5. Stance, Hedging and Point of view

Although *stance* and *hedging* may seem far away from the concept of persuasion, their connection with the way authors express themselves when communicating something with a specific purpose and in a specific context makes them actually close. *Stance* and *hedging* are crucial aspects in the study of language due to their role as indicators of the writers’ personal attitudes and assessments to connect with readers, and also to see how these readers infer meanings from texts. The literature relating to both (see Chafe 1986; Hunston 1994; Hyland 1996; Biber 2004; Alonso-Almeida 2012 and 2017, Álvarez-Gil 2017, among others) seems to suggest that the study of *stance* covers the analysis of linguistic choices in discourse, which can express meaning beyond the literal, while *hedging* is concerned with linguistic choices that contain an inherent component of confusion. It appears therefore that although *stance* and *hedging* are pragmatic features or discourse strategies used to express the addresser’s point of view in both speech and writing, they are not entirely the same. *Stance*, for instance, has been reduced to the fact of self-mention by including and reinforcing an opinion, whereas *hedging* has done just the opposite by mitigating expressions and therefore reducing the risk (of rejection) that addressers undergo when issuing their message or making strong or firm assertions (Schneider et al. 2010: 1). As such, *stance* manifests itself as an overt expression of an author’s attitude, perspective, feelings, judgements, or commitment concerning the message, whereas *hedging* acts as a means of self-protection or self-defence.

Stance has been studied under different labels to refer to the same concept (Alonso-Almeida and Vázquez 2009: 1173; Moskowich and Crespo 2014: 92). Some examples are *evidentiality* (Chafe 1986), *affect* (Ochs 1989), *evaluation* (Hunston 1994), and *hedging* (Hyland 1998). *Stance* refers to the ways that writers project themselves into their texts to communicate their integrity, involvement, credibility, and relationship to their subject matter and their readers. Thus, and coinciding with Aristotle’s sources of persuasion —as already stated—, Candlin and Hyland (2014: 101) suggest three fundamental components in the

communicative act: relation (*ethos*), which concerns the extent to which writers choose to engage with their readers, the degree of intimacy or remoteness, and the ways they represent themselves in the discourse; affect (*pathos*), which involves the explicit or implicit declaration of personal and professional attitudes towards what is said; and evidentiality (*logos*), which refers to the writer's expressed commitment to precision, reliability, strength of the statements presented. Hyland (2005: 37) also points out that the interpersonal features of stance, engagement, and evaluation overlap with that of metadiscourse, which, according to him, comprises two dimensions of writer-reader interaction: interactive and interactional (see also Hyland and Tse 2004: 156).

Although the terms *hedge* and *hedging* have been part of the linguistic vocabulary for a long time, and even though the concept of *hedging* is considered a multi-faceted phenomenon that has been approached in different ways in the literature, there is still no unified description of these two concepts. However, if we look at the linguistic items that researchers have associated with hedging, it becomes clear that its scope has increased considerably since Lakoff's (1973) initial work. In fact, hedging has not only been linked to the expression of linguistic politeness, but also to epistemic modality due to the similarities in meaning both modal devices and hedges have when showing the issuers' degree of confidence towards a statement. According to Hübler (1983), hedges are used to increase the appeal of utterances and therefore, their probability of acceptance. Thus, when writers use hedges such as adjectives and adverbs, or other elements like modals or tag questions, readers can evaluate the reliability of the statement, avoiding the possibility of being biased by the absoluteness of a non-hedged statement. Moreover, as Hyland (1996: 437) points out, hedging may also be described as a polypragmatic interactional strategy that may have a myriad of functions, depending on the communicative situation. This is precisely what persuasion consists of.

3. Suasive verbs and Intensifiers

Since the core of this dissertation relies on the study of some of the linguistic features indicating persuasion, this section will revolve on the relevance of suasive verbs and intensifiers in the existing literature on the topic. Thus, the following subsection (3.1) begins with a general overview of suasive verbs and their main characteristics. Subsection 3.2 provides an account of intensifiers –or degree modifiers– and their semantic classification according to several

authors. Finally, subsection 3.3 presents a summary of the most relevant models to be considered for the current study.

3.1. Suasive verbs

Even though the ways of conveying knowledge have evolved over time, studies both on the lexical and grammatical levels of the scientific discourse have revealed that (scientific) language has a persuasive character (see Bryce et al. 1994; Hyland 1995 and Montgomery 1996). Whether through stance or hedging –among other features– authors have shown an inclination towards both the content and the reader to highlight the validity of their claims and make the target audience to deduce and comprehend the ideas discussed.

One of the best known and studied features that seem to be a suitable means of expressing argumentation and persuasion is that of suasive verbs, which have been classified as overt markers of persuasion in Biber's (1988) Dimension 4 for that specific work. As many scholars have stated, suasive verbs “imply intentions to bring about some change in the future” (Quirk et al. 1985: 1180; Biber 1988: 242)⁸, regardless of whether these are formulated as requests, commands, suggestions, recommendations, or directives. If we consider their semantic classification⁹ provided by Quirk et al. (1985), suasive verbs can also overlap with public and private verbs (Quirk et al. 1985: 1182), which are characterised by referring to actions that are used to introduce indirect (and reported) directives and expressing intellectual states and non-observable intellectual (emotive, mental, or cognitive) acts, respectively (see Hinkel 2002: 104).

This group of verbs also describes a communicative situation in terms of negotiation between the writer (or persuader) and the reader (or addressee), which involves certain diversity as well as a complex distribution of complementation patterns. For instance, if we say that something is *highly recommended*, we are combining the use of the suasive verb *recommend* with the amplifier *highly*, which might increase our chances of persuading our audience. In that sense, intensifiers seem to have a special pragmatic function in relation to suasive verbs, thus justifying their joint study in the current dissertation.

⁸ Since Biber's (1988) work is based on Quirk et al.'s (1985), the authors say literally the same thing in their works.

⁹ According to their meanings and textual functions.

3.2. Intensifiers or degree modifiers

Although the terms *intensifiers* and *degree modifiers* are sometimes used interchangeably, they do not refer to the same thing. In fact, intensifiers derive from a group of words called degree modifiers, also known as adverbs of degree or degree adverbs¹⁰. Thus, intensifiers are basically modifiers that syntactically change either adjectives or adverbs and semantically speaking enhance and provide additional emotional context to the word or expression modified¹¹. In that sense, and as Huddleston and Pullum (2002) note, intensifiers function as mere semantically vacuous fillers since they do not increase the proposition of a sentence but rather allow writers to express their subjectivity by giving emphasis to what is written.

Taking into account that the meaning of words and phrases may vary (i.e., may be altered or modified) depending on the adverbs that accompany them, reference grammars of English such as Quirk et al.'s (1985) and Huddleston and Pullum's (2002) have classified intensifiers according to their semantic function. Moreover, regardless of whether these adverbs can modify adjectives, other adverbs, noun phrases, particles, prepositional phrases and numerals (Quirk et al. 1985: 446-551) and also denote degree scaling upwards or downwards, the set of terms used to refer to these lexical elements does not seem to be entirely uniform among the scholars and grammarians who have studied them. It is precisely because of this scale variability (in terms of intensity and extent) that there is some overlap regarding terminology. For instance, Stoffel (1901) refers to them as *intensive adverbs*, whereas Bolinger (1972) prefers *degree words* or *degree adverbs*. More recently, scholars such as Quirk et al. (1985), Biber et al. (1999) and Ito and Tagliamonte (2003) adopt the term *intensifiers* to refer to adverbs that increase meaning. Allerton (1987), however, makes use of *degree intensifier*. Due to their striking semantic similarities, Paradis (1997) proposes the term *degree modifier*, which she believes to be more appropriate to be used as an umbrella term to refer to all types of degree. This lack of uniformity among scholars is not just limited to terminology but transcends the classification of intensifiers. For example, Bolinger (1972), Quirk et al. (1985), Allerton (1987), Paradis (1997) and Biber et al. (1999), among others, have grouped intensifiers differently depending on the criteria and research methodology applied in their own studies.

¹⁰ Degree adverbs describe the extent of a specific characteristic. They can be used to emphasise that such characteristic is either higher or lower than the standard level.

¹¹ It should be noted here that although "modifier" is a syntactic concept and "adverb" is a morphological category, "intensifiers" get their name because of their meaning (semantics) rather than anything else.

Considering the increasing interest in degree modifiers –to understand the nature of this linguistic phenomenon– as well as their possible ways of classification, the following sections (3.2.1, 3.2.2 and 3.2.3) will outline some of the most influential taxonomies proposed by different authors between 1901 and 2002, by highlighting those of Quirk et al. (1985), Allerton (1987), and Paradis (1997) due to their meaningful contributions to the field.

3.2.1. From Stoffel (1901) to Bolinger (1972)

One of the earliest known studies about intensifiers is that of Stoffel (1901), whose classification distinguishes two main sub-types on semantic criteria: upward scaling, and downward scaling. These are *intensives* and *downtoners*, respectively. After him, other scholars such as Borst (1902) also observed this two-way direction, but later in the twentieth century and due to a more in-depth analysis, new and wider taxonomies were formulated. Among these authors the influential work of Bolinger (1972) stands out. He maintained the same basic binary division as his predecessors but conducted a more detailed analysis of a few individual degree modifiers. As a result, his classification consisted of four main groups according to the place in the degree scale they occupy: *boosters*, *compromisers*, *diminishers* and *minimizers*¹² (see Figure 1 below).



Figure 1. Stoffel's (1901) and Bolinger's (1972) classification of degree modifiers

As can be seen, *boosters* (e.g., *more* and *most*) comprise all *degree modifiers* from the ascending part of the earlier classifications –i.e., Stoffel's (1901) *intensives*, whereas within the overall group of descending scale *degree modifiers* (or *downtoners*) we find *diminishers* such as *less*, *least*, *rather*, *fairly* and *pretty*, and *minimizers* like *slightly*, *mildly* and *moderately*. According to Bolinger (1972: 17) himself, the former include those items that refer to the

¹² Terms such as *minimizer*, and forthcoming *maximizer* or *zeroizer* will keep their original -ize spelling as provided by authors.

“lower part of the scale, looking down”, and the latter are those that point to the absolute bottom of the degree scale. *Compromisers*, however, occupy an in-between place by disassociating from the previous two-way direction as they denote an intermediate degree on the scale (1972: 17). This peculiar category seems to reflect not only how challenging and complex the classification of these items might be, but also the need to provide a more accurate and/or open delimitation that considers all possibilities, given the degree variability within the whole scale.

3.2.2. Quirk et al. (1985)

Quirk et al. (1976) classify *intensifiers* into three semantic categories: *emphasisers*, *amplifiers* and *downtoners*. Due to the fact that *emphasisers* have a reinforcing effect that does not require a gradable predicate, they will not be considered in the present study. Therefore, we will focus on the description of *amplifiers* and *downtoners*.

Quirk et al. (1985) discuss degree modification in two chapters. Even though each chapter concerns a different issue (i.e., “adjectives and adverbs” and “the semantics and grammar of adverbials” respectively), both can be comparable to the degree of modification of adverbs (see Quirk et al. 1985: 445-446) and verbal constituents (see Quirk et al. 1985: 566-612). Thus, the classification method of *intensifiers* is almost the same in both instances.

The first one, which seems to follow the general principle of the semantic classifications provided by Stoffel (1901) and Borst (1902), distinguishes two broad categories of degree modifiers: *amplifiers* and *downtoners* (see Figure 2 below). According to Quirk et al. (1985: 445), *amplifiers* “scale upwards from an assumed norm” whereas *downtoners* “have a generally lowering effect, usually scaling downwards from an assumed norm”. The second one, which is in line with the classification made by Bolinger (1972), distinguishes at least six subcategories. *Maximizers* and *boosters*, which belong to the group of *amplifiers*, occupy the upper extreme and convey a high degree on the scale, respectively. The remaining ones, that is, *approximators*, *compromisers*, *diminishers* and *minimizers*, correspond to the group of *downtoners*. *Approximators* are defined as those that express an approximation to the strength of the modified constituent, indicating that it expresses more than is relevant (Quirk et al. 1985: 597). *Compromisers* have “a slight lowering effect and tend...to call in question the appropriateness of the [modified constituent] concerned” (Quirk et al. 1985: 597). *Diminishers* indicate a very low degree, and *minimizers* denote the lowest extreme.



Figure 2. Quirk et al.'s (1985) classification of intensifiers

As shown in Figure 2, Quirk et al.'s division focuses on the various types of *degree modifiers* presented and their position within the overall scale structure, as well as the interrelation between them. However, unlike Bolinger (1972), who highlighted the difficulty in defining the exact position of some items (such as those found in the *compromisers* category), Quirk et al. (1985) clearly identify *maximizers* and *boosters* as the two types manifesting an ascending degree (i.e., amplifiers), and all the remaining ones as indicators of a descending degree (i.e., downtoners). In other words, we can summarise it by saying that *compromisers* are, somehow, downgraded here if compared with the groupings previously discussed.

3.2.3. From Allerton (1987) to Biber et al. (1999)

Allerton's (1987) classification of *degree modifiers* is based on their co-occurrence with adjectives. Of the three types of adjective modifiers he lists (i.e., degree, aspect and manner), *degree modifiers* are adjective intensifiers. The same as Quirk et al. (1985), Allerton (1987) proposes a semantic consideration and the notion of gradability. However, he does not establish any hierarchy between the different types of *degree modifiers*. Thus, his proposal distinguishes three main subvarieties of *degree modifiers*: *scalar*, *telic* and *absolute*, and includes an additional differential category, which he presents separately. These four groupings of *intensifiers* are defined as follows.

Scalar degree modifiers "indicate parts of a mental scale of assessment of degree which ranges from immeasurably high down to zero" and represent "prototypical gradability" (Allerton 1987: 19). Some examples are *extremely*, *fairly*, *infinitely*, *not at all*, *not specially*, *not very*, *pretty*, *rather*, *reasonably*, *slightly*, *somewhat*, and *very*. Within this group Allerton (1987) includes most of Quirk et al.'s (1985) subcategories, except for *maximizers*. Thus, he distinguishes *boosters*, *compromisers*, and *diminishers*, and incorporates two more:

moderators and *zeroizers*. Likewise, the comparatives and superlatives *more* (or *-er*), *most* (or *-est*), *less*, *least*, and *too* also belong to the scalar group (see Figure 3 below).

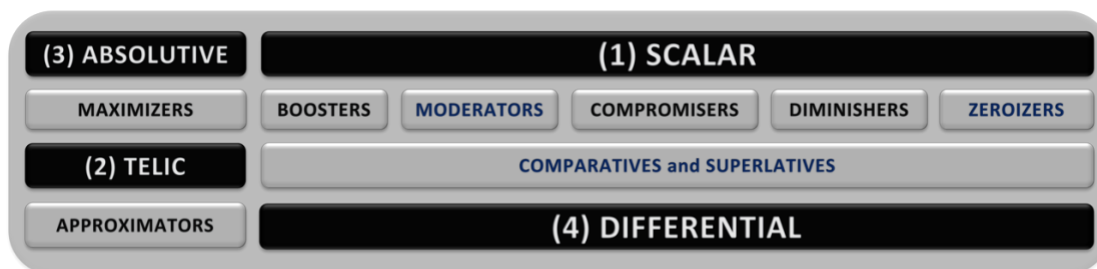


Figure 3. Allerton's (1987) classification of degree modifiers

Allerton describes the *telic degree modifiers* as those that “relate the actual degree of the adjectival quality to the degree required for a particular purpose” (Allerton 1987: 19). According to him, they can be placed above or below that mark, either by a wide or narrow margin. Thus, items such as *barely*, *easily*, *hardly*, *nearly*, *not quite*, *nowhere*, *only just*, *virtually* can be found within this group, which corresponds to Quirk et al.'s (1985) *approximators*.

Absolute degree modifiers, which correspond to Quirk et al.'s (1985) subcategory of *maximizers*, “emphasize that the degree of the adjectival quality is genuinely within the range required by the ‘superlative’ type of adjective with which they occur” (Quirk et al. 1985: 19-20). This group comprises items such as *absolutely*, *entirely*, *totally* and *utterly*, which are used to modify superlative adjectives like *ridiculous*, *huge*, *scorching* (hot) and *freezing* (cold).

The fourth category, known as *differential*, is defined as the one comprising those items that “indicate the difference of degree between the item being described and some reference point” (Allerton 1987: 21). This marginal class includes examples such as *a lot*, *far*, *marginally*, *much*, which must occur together with a comparative (*more/-er*, *less* or *too*) or what Allerton refers to as “differential adjective complexes” (Allerton 1987: 21), as well as *a bit* and *slightly*, which also occur with scalar adjectives. Unlike the other categories, most of the examples included in this group are not discussed by Quirk et al. (1985) in the context of degree modification, except for a few.

One of the most relevant differences between the grouping provided by Allerton (1987) and the one previously devised by Quirk et al. (1985) is the unbreakable link established between the classification of *degree modifiers* and adjectives. In that sense, Allerton's proposal seems to be more insightful than the previous accounts due to the fact of considering not only

the complexity of the combination of *degree modifiers* and their constituents, but also to the gradability of the combined items might vary with the context. Despite this, both models were a great influence for later authors such as Paradis (1997), whose proposal combines the two-level distinction of Quirk et al. (1985) and their predecessors with Allerton's (1987) interest in elements that modify adjectives with respect to degree. Therefore, Paradis (1997) goes one step further to provide a more detailed description of the reasons that motivate distinctions for the proposed categories.

Inspired by scholars such as Lakoff (1987), Taylor (1989), and Cruse and Togia (1996), and assuming that “the meanings of linguistic expressions arise by the activation of conceptual patterns in the cognitive system” (Paradis 1997: 48), she makes use of a cognitive approach. Thus, Paradis (1997) does not only focus on semantic and intonational features of speech, but she also pays attention to their use in terms of collocability and frequency. As a result, her classification of *degree modifiers* is made up of five categories (see Figure 4 below), which are governed by the notion that “in context, the use of degree modifiers is constrained by the semantic features of the collocating adjective on two dimensions: totality and scalarity” (Paradis 1997: 26). Besides, these five types of *degree modifiers* (*maximizers*, *boosters*, *approximators*, *moderators* and *diminishers*, respectively) are classified according to their reinforcing and attenuating functions.

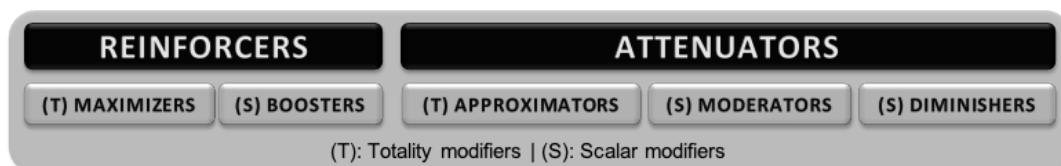


Figure 4. Paradis' classification of totality and scalar modifiers¹³

As the figure above illustrates, the terminology used for the five categories, or “levels of degree”, is basically that of Quirk et al. (1985), except for *minimizers*. Paradis (1997) argues that *maximizers* and *approximators* are totality modifiers. The difference between them is that *maximizers* act as reinforcers, whereas *approximators* have an attenuating function. *Boosters*, *moderators* and *diminishers*, on the other hand, work as scalar modifiers. *Boosters*, by reinforcing the gradability denoted by the adjective; *moderators*, by attenuating with a hedging function; and *diminishers* by indicating the “lowest possible degree of a certain property and a

¹³ Adapted from Paradis (1997: 28)

bit up” from that point (Paradis, 1997: 69). Furthermore, it should be noted that Paradis (1997) substitutes Quirk et al.’s (1985) label *compromisers* with that of *moderators* asserting that this better reflects the capability of this type to express either reinforcement or attenuation. Likewise, and although the classification in general maintains the same basic structure made by Quirk et al. (1985), it also adopts the terms *reinforcers* and *attenuators* from Allerton (1987), which replace those of *amplifiers* and *downtoners* from Quirk et al. (1985).

In his early works, Biber (1988: 240) relates *downtoners* with *hedges* by pointing out that the former indicate the degree of uncertainty, whereas the latter simply mark a proposition as uncertain. Likewise, he also claims that the relation between *amplifiers* and *emphatics* is similar to that between *downtoners* and *hedges* in the sense that *amplifiers* indicate the degree of certainty towards a proposition while *emphatics* only mark the presence (or absence) of certainty (Biber 1988: 241). Subsequently, Biber et al. (1999) classify degree adverbs into two groups: *amplifiers* (or *intensifiers*) and *diminishers* (or *downtoners*). These are shown in Figure 5.



Figure 5. Biber et al.’s classification of degree adverbs

Although their work takes Quirk et al.’s (1985) classification of *degree modifiers* as a model, it has some nuances that are worth mentioning, especially if we take into account that most of the linguistic features to be considered for the current study (see Methodology in Chapter 2) correspond precisely with the lists provided by both works. Thus, the first distinction Biber et al. make regarding *degree modifiers* is the one between those “degree adverbs that increase intensity” (Biber et al. 1999: 554), also known as *amplifiers* (or *intensifiers*), and those that, on the contrary, “decrease the effect of the modified item” (Biber et al. 1999: 555), that is, *diminishers* (or *downtoners*). Some examples include *extremely*, *more*, *so*, *too*, and *very*, for the group of *amplifiers*, and *less*, *quite*, *rather*, *slightly*, and *somewhat* (in the sense ‘to some extent’), for that of *diminishers*.

Biber et al. make a clear and practical distinction between *amplifiers* (or *intensifiers*) and *diminishers* (or *downtoners*). However, as Wang (2017: 9) points out, the classification

of *intensifiers* into two categories seems to be “too rough to show the accurate information of the attitudinal meaning” of the addresser.

3.2.4. *Huddleston and Pullum (2002)*

One of the most remarkable proposals that Huddleston and Pullum (2002, 2016) make in contrast to the series of classifications described in the subsections above is, as previously stated, the consideration of *intensifiers* as semantically vacuous fillers. According to them, the term *intensifier* is used as a functional term, which does not improve the traditional *degree modifier* at all. Instead, intensifiers just allow addressers to express their subjectivity. Moreover, given the inappropriateness of the term *intensifier* to refer to degree adverbs that might indicate either high or low degree, they adopt *intensifier* for those modifiers indicating a high degree (see footnote 18 in Huddleston and Pullum 2016: 585).

Apart from a few changes here and there, and ironic as it may seem, Huddleston and Pullum (2016: 721) divide what they call *degree adverbs* and *degree adjuncts* into the following groups: *maximal* (e.g., *completely, fully, totally, absolutely*), *multal* (e.g., *badly, much, well, vastly*), *moderate* (e.g., *rather, somewhat, quite*), *paucal* (e.g., *a bit, a little, slightly*) and *minimal* (e.g., *at all, so much as, barely, hardly*). In addition, there are *approximating* (e.g., *almost, kind of, nearly*) and *relative modifiers* (e.g., *enough, less, more, too much*), whose positioning on the scale is somewhat uncertain and variable, depending on the case.

The items included in the *maximal* group tend to “indicate a degree at the top of the scale” (Huddleston and Pullum 2016: 722). Most of them can also signal “either completion of an accomplishment [...] or extremely high degree of a gradable property” (Huddleston and Pullum 2016: 721). The *multal* group “covers a range on the scale from above the midpoint to near the top end” (Huddleston and Pullum 2016: 721). These authors highlight that some of them, such as *immensely* or *tremendously* can sometimes be confused with the maximal group since they “hardly admit further intensification themselves (*very immensely**)” (Huddleston and Pullum 2016: 721). This group also excludes *very* from the list since it “modifies adjectives and adverbs but not verbs” (Huddleston and Pullum 2016: 722). Although considerably fewer than those in the previous subgroups, items included in the *paucal* group denote a greater lexical variation at the upper end of the scale. Items included in the *minimal* group can be non-affirmative (e.g., *at all, in the least, so much as*) or negative (e.g., *barely, hardly, scarcely*). As Huddleston and Pullum (2016: 723) point out, the latter can occur with the former as in the following example:

(a) We *hardly* enjoy it at all

Expressions with a negative implicature such as *almost*, *nearly* and *practically*, as well as those considered informal or even complex (e.g., *more or less*, *kind of*, *sort of*) –all of them belonging to the approximating group–, “indicate that the conditions for application of the verbal expression are almost but not entirely satisfied” (Huddleston and Pullum 2016: 723). For instance, and following their own reasoning, we can say that the sentence shown in example (b) below means that the fact was near to take place but did not happen, which has an interesting connotation in terms of analysis.

(b) They *almost* missed the flight

As can be seen, the utterance in example (b) is literally focusing on the negative aspect of the fact, instead of the positive meaning of ‘not missing the flight’, thus inspiring the current study on intensifiers. In that sense, intensifiers seem to have a special semantic function that not only allows syntactic flexibility as well as a pragmatic connotation, but in combination with suasive verbs makes them ideal items to test whether they reinforce or weaken the (persuasive) argument or not. Finally, Huddleston and Pullum (2016: 724) call the relative group as such because although they do not identify a specific area of the scale, they “quantify the degree relative to some other situation”.

3.3. Summary chart

This section has delimited the definition of *intensifiers* to be considered in the current study based on the description and classification of *degree modifiers* provided by several scholars. In general terms, and as Paradis (1997:19) has stated, *intensifiers* or *degree modifiers* can be defined as those elements that modify another element with respect to degree. Thus, and as has been stated previously, most degree modifiers have parallel functions, which are determined by the addresser’s intentionality as well as by syntactic, semantic, and contextual factors that help the addressee to interpret the message.

In order to provide a clear summary of the aforementioned classifications of degree modifiers provided by different authors from 1901 to 2002, this section presents a mind map in Figure 6 below.

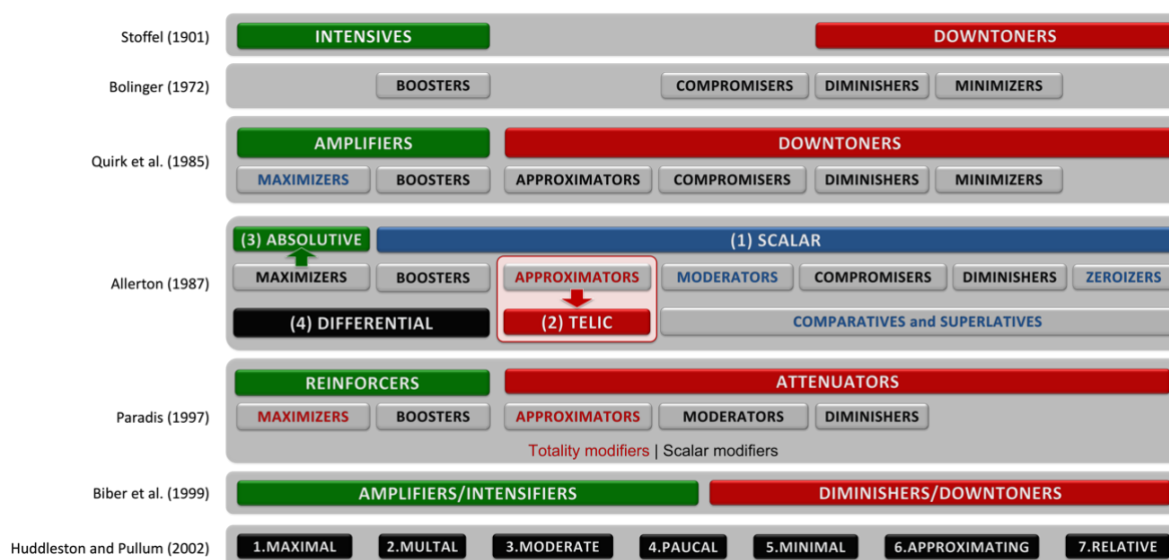


Figure 6. Classification of degree modifiers from 1901 to 2002

Coinciding with his predecessors, Bolinger’s (1972) classification of intensifiers consisted of four main groups (*boosters*, *compromisers*, *diminishers* and *minimizers*, respectively), which were distributed into the two main categories originally defined by Stoffel (1901): *intensives* and *downtoners*. Quirk et al.’s (1985) proposal was largely the same as that of Bolinger (1972), except for the fact that they broke categories down a bit differently. Thus, Bolinger’s (1972) *intensives* became *amplifiers*, including a new subgroup called *maximizers*. Quirk et al.’s (1985) *downtoners* category did not only incorporate a new group called *approximators*, but also Bolinger’s (1972) *compromisers*, which according to him were in-between *intensives* and *downtoners*.

The main difference between Allerton’s (1987) proposal and that of Quirk et al.’s (1985) is that Allerton’s classification of *degree modifiers* considers their semantic aspect due to their occurrence with adjectives. Thus, most of Quirk et al.’s (1985) *downtoners* become part of Allerton’s (1987) *scalar* category and incorporate two new subgroups: *moderators* and *zeroizers*. Likewise, *approximators* were included in the *telic* category and *maximizers* in the *absolute* category, respectively. Influenced by these two models, Paradis’ (1997) proposal

maintains the initial two-level distinction of Quirk et al. (1985) and includes more detail in line with Allerton's (1987). As a result, Quirk et al.'s (1985) *amplifiers* and *downtoners* become *reinforcers* and *attenuators*, respectively.

Although Biber et al.'s (1999) work was based on the classification of *degree modifiers* suggested by Quirk et al. (1985), it made a distinction regarding *degree adverbs*. Thus, those that increase intensity became known as *amplifiers* or *intensifiers*, whereas those that decrease it were called *diminishers* or *downtoners*. Huddleston and Pullum (2002, 2016), on the other hand, defined *intensifiers* as specifically those *degree adverbs* that scale upwards, corresponding to Quirk et al.'s *amplifiers*.

This dissertation will mainly follow Quirk et al. (1985) in what regards the classification of the types of intensifiers (see Table 3 in the following chapter), as well as Paradis (1997) and Huddleston and Pullum (2002, 2016) regarding the analysis of results. The main reason for this choice is because the classification provided by Quirk et al. (1985) is, at least for the current study, one of the most complete and varied ones if we consider the hierarchy established and the notion of gradability. Likewise, the proposal provided by Paradis (1997) and, especially the nuances made by Huddleston and Pullum (2002, 2016) are a great support for the analysis since they complement and broaden the spectrum of interpretation of the use of intensifiers with a persuasive function.

Chapter 2: Corpus material and Methodology

1. Introduction

This chapter provides a description of the corpus used as the data source for the current dissertation as well as the methodology applied for its compilation and analysis. It is divided in two sections. The first one (Section 2) begins with a brief overview of the corpus design and main characteristics, addresses the compilation principles, and analyses the distribution of words and samples. The second part (Section 3) describes the digitisation process and the tools chosen for the analysis. It also presents the steps taken to obtain the cases analysed in Chapter 3, by considering aspects such as the linguistic features under study, disambiguation process, data treatment and the parameters used to analyse the data.

2. The Corpus

Taking into account that one of the central issues for a corpus-based research is to ensure that the corpus chosen for the analysis is representative of the language and also suitable for the research questions inquired (Biber et al. 2007: 17), this section revolves around the decisions made for the design and creation of the corpus, focusing in particular on the issues of corpus representativeness, sampling and balance. Thus, Section 2.1 describes the general design of the corpus, Section 2.2 addresses the compilation principles, and finally, Section 2.3 reviews the distribution of words and samples according to the parameters used during the compilation process.

2.1. Corpus design

The corpus of Posthumanism English Texts (PET) is a purpose-built electronic corpus created for the study of persuasion in texts relating to transhumanism, posthumanism, transcendence, technology, and artificial intelligence (AI). It contains a carefully planned selection of 50 samples out of an initial amount of approximately 200 texts taken from contemporary novels, essays, book chapters and articles written in English. The time span of the corpus comprehends an interval between 1950 and 2017. The relevance of this period for the study of persuasion is determined by the topic. Although there are previous works relating to posthumanism and transhumanism such as Dante's masterpiece *Paradise* in *The Divine Comedy* (1313) or even Shelley's *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus* (1818), which was also considered as the origin of science fiction, the lack of non-fiction texts for the same periods and hence, the gap between periods until nowadays could weaken the corpus in terms of accuracy.

When compiling my material, I used the British National Corpus (BNC) as a model. The BNC (see Davies n.d.) is a one hundred-million-word collection of samples of spoken and written language taken from a wide range of sources, designed to represent late twentieth-century British English. The corpus I have built also consists of two subcorpora, both written: Corpus of Fiction Posthumanism English Texts (CoFiPET) and Corpus of Non-Fiction Posthumanism English Texts (CoNFIPET), respectively. Both subcorpora follow the same design and principles of compilation and contain samples from several fields of knowledge such as Education, Philosophy, Medicine, Technology, and Life Sciences. Of all the material

to be analysed, 1,533,787 words (86%) pertain to the sphere of fiction, and 252,967 (14%) to that of non-fiction. Thus, the total number of words under examination is 1,786,754, with the distribution shown in Figure 7.

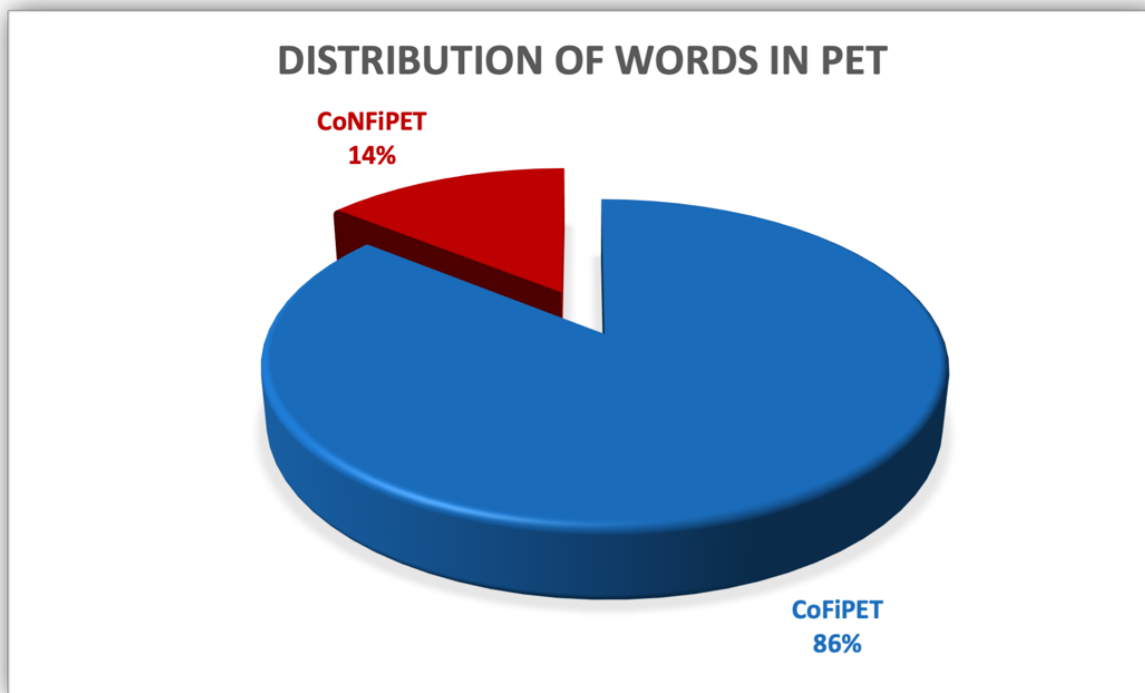


Figure 7. Distribution of words in PET

The exact number of words per sample in each subcorpus, as well as the information relative to authors' names and dates of publication, are indicated in Tables 1 and 2 below:

CoFiPET

YEAR	AUTHOR	WORDS
1950	Isaac Asimov	72,561
1968	Arthur C. Clarke	62,523
1968	Philip K. Dick	65,658
1974	Barrington J. Bayley	72,857
1993	Nancy Kress	128,223
1994	Greg Egan	112,803
2009	Paolo Bacigalupi	147,612
2011	Nicole Sobon	69,520
2011	Daniel H. Wilson	105,497
2012	William Hertling	71,531
2012	Marissa Meyer	90,850
2012	Tiffany Truitt	79,637
2013	Julia Crane	54,769
2013	Amy Tintera	83,635
2014	Denise Kawaii	61,307
2015	Spencer Wolf	114,160
2016	Meredith Katz	23,616
2016	Hayley Stone	117,028
TOTAL		1,533,787

Table 1. Distribution of words in CoFiPET (fiction)

CoNFIPET

YEAR	AUTHOR	WORDS
1973	Boden, Margaret A.	6,250
1984	Glover, Jonathan	4,523
1990	Pollock, John	12,683
1991	Haraway, Donna	14,538
1992	Harris, Vicky	4,249
1996	Sharkey, Amanda J. C.	7,333
1997	Ansell-Pearson, Keith	13,161
1999	Hayles, N. Katherine	15,602
1999	Kirby, Vicki	5,925
2000	Clough, Patricia Ticineto	9,549
2002	Fukuyama, Francis	5,512
2005	Turkle, Sherry	12,453
2007	Stevenson, Melissa Colleen	10,002
2007	Doucet, Hubert	3,437
2009	Doede, Bob	11,957
2009	Hauskeller, Michael	6,635
2010	Jotterand, Fabrice	1,630
2012	Gagnon, Philippe	6,357
2012	Herzfeld, Noreen	5,174
2013	Bostrom, Nick	15,817
2013	Braidotti, Rosi	14,570
2013	More, Max	7,358
2013	Neill, Daniel B.	2,192
2014	Ferrando, Francesca	4,961
2014	Rothblatt, Martine	7,914
2014	Vita-More, Natasha	2,554
2014	Wellington, Naomi	5,936
2015	Klichowski, Michal	2,361
2016	Habibi, Don	13,956
2016	Schneider, Susan	6,515
2016	Skågeby, Jörgen	7,952
2017	Holm, Søren	3,911
TOTAL		252,967

Table 2. Distribution of words in CoNFIPET (non-fiction)

The reasons behind the principles followed in the compilation of PET as well as the decisions made in terms of organisation of extra-linguistic data and the distribution of samples are dealt with extensively in the following section.

2.2. Compilation principles

One of the most controversial issues in corpus linguistics concerns whether and to what extent any corpus can be said to be representative of a particular register or not. As McIntyre and Walker (2019: 73) point out, the more texts (or excerpts from texts) it contains, the more representative the corpus is likely to be. Likewise, the number and size of texts raises the matter of balance. In order to ensure balance, the distribution of samples that constitute the corpus does not necessarily have to be equal. In fact, as with PET, a balanced corpus is one in which each component is represented by a different number of texts. Therefore, and as part of the corpus design, it is important to consider not only whether the number of texts should be equal or whether they should attempt to reflect the actual proportions, but also whether to include the whole texts or samples from texts. In this respect, there are two opposite approaches of which is the optimal distribution of number of samples. On the one hand, and as Biber (1993: 248-52) suggests when referring to academic texts, the representation of a genre is better achieved by using samples from many different texts of approximately 1,000 words each. On the other hand, Sinclair (2005) suggests that including whole texts is more accurate, since extracts from the texts might be subject of choices that do not necessarily represent language. An intermediate approach between these two would be that of Moskowich (2017) in *The Coruña Corpus of English Scientific Writing (CC)*¹⁴, whose work compiles samples of approximately 10,000 words each.

Taking this into account, the process of compilation of PET has followed Sinclair in selecting full-text samples to make it representative enough in terms of the topic (i.e., posthumanism) but focusing mainly on balance. For instance, and precisely because the size of each sample varies depending on features such as the genre of the texts (i.e., essay, article, book chapter) or even the author's style of writing (Litosseliti 2013: 96), only one text per author has been collected in an attempt to avoid the abundance of any particular idiosyncratic

¹⁴ *The Coruña Corpus of English Scientific Writing* is one of the projects currently being carried out in the University of A Coruña (Spain) by the Research Group for Multidimensional Corpus-based Studies in English (MuStE).

linguistic features¹⁵ (see Claridge 1997, Moskowich 2016a and Moskowich et al. 2021). Moreover, and since sampling does not need to be so strictly or carefully considered when including whole texts (Litosseliti 2013: 96), PET comprises 18 science fiction novels and 32 non-fiction texts of which 16 are articles and the other 16 are book chapters. A chart-summary of the general organisation of samples is shown in Figure 8 below.

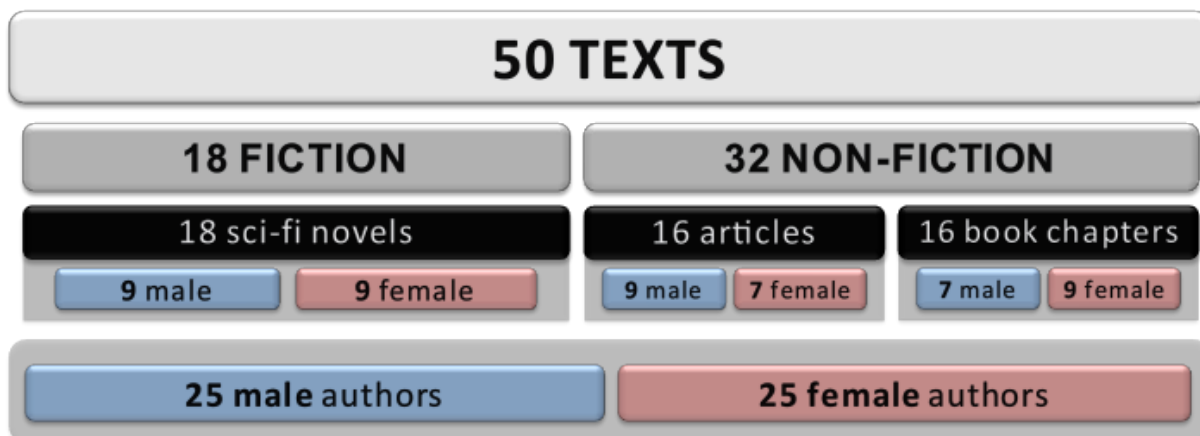


Figure 8. Distribution of samples in PET

The decision of selecting this apparently unbalanced distribution of fiction and non-fiction samples, and hence, unavoidable and noticeable size difference between the two subcorpora is based mainly on the belief that non-fiction texts, although shorter, tend to be linguistically more uniform as well as more precise and explicit than fiction ones. Fiction texts, instead, vary widely as they make use of different, not so evident, discursive strategies to address the same topic. However, although each subcorpus has a different number of texts, and each text sample is made up of an irregular number of words, PET has the same distribution of male and female authors (i.e., 25 and 25, respectively).

2.3. Distribution of words and samples

In what follows, I will review the distribution of words according to the four basic parameters used during the compilation process, which are also the variables considered in the analysis of

¹⁵ The reasons behind the principles, including representativeness and balance are dealt with extensively in Siemund and Claridge (1997) and Moskowich (2016a).

data. The first and perhaps most important parameter of selection is the type of corpus, which distinguishes two categories: fiction and non-fiction (see Figure 8 above).

The three remaining variables include the date of publication or period, the sex of the author, and the tone with which the texts were written. It should be noted here that regarding the analysis of results, only the first three will be taken into account due to their objective nature. The variable tone, however, might be used to support the other three when it comes to determining whether the more or less persuasive effect of the texts can be related to a positive, negative or neutral point of view.

Concerning the variable period, PET comprehends an interval between 1950 and 2017. As shown in Figure 9 below, those texts published in the twentieth century represent a little more than a quarter with 608,438 words (34%), whereas the material published in the twenty-first century constitutes almost three quarters with 1,178,316 words (66%).

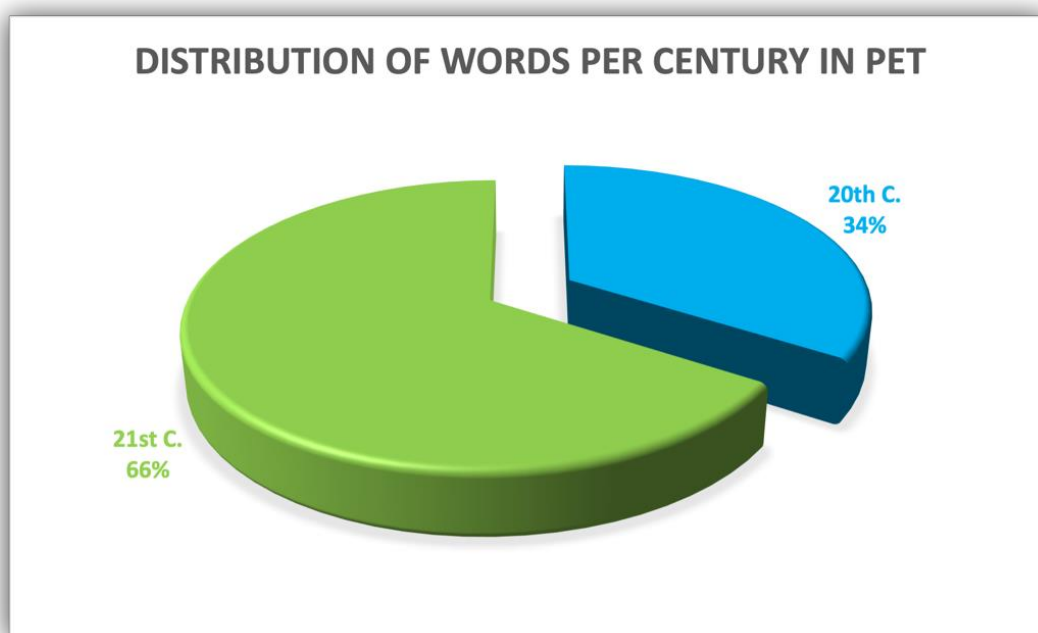


Figure 9. Distribution of words per century in PET

As Figure 10 depicts, PET contains nearly twice as many words in the twenty-first-century samples as those in the twentieth century. When considering each of the subcorpora, we see that the fiction section (CoFiPET) has 514,625 words (29%) for the twentieth century and 1,019,162 (57%) for the twenty-first. On the other hand, the non-fiction section of my material (CoNFIPET) contains 93,813 words (5%) and 159,154 (9%) words, respectively.

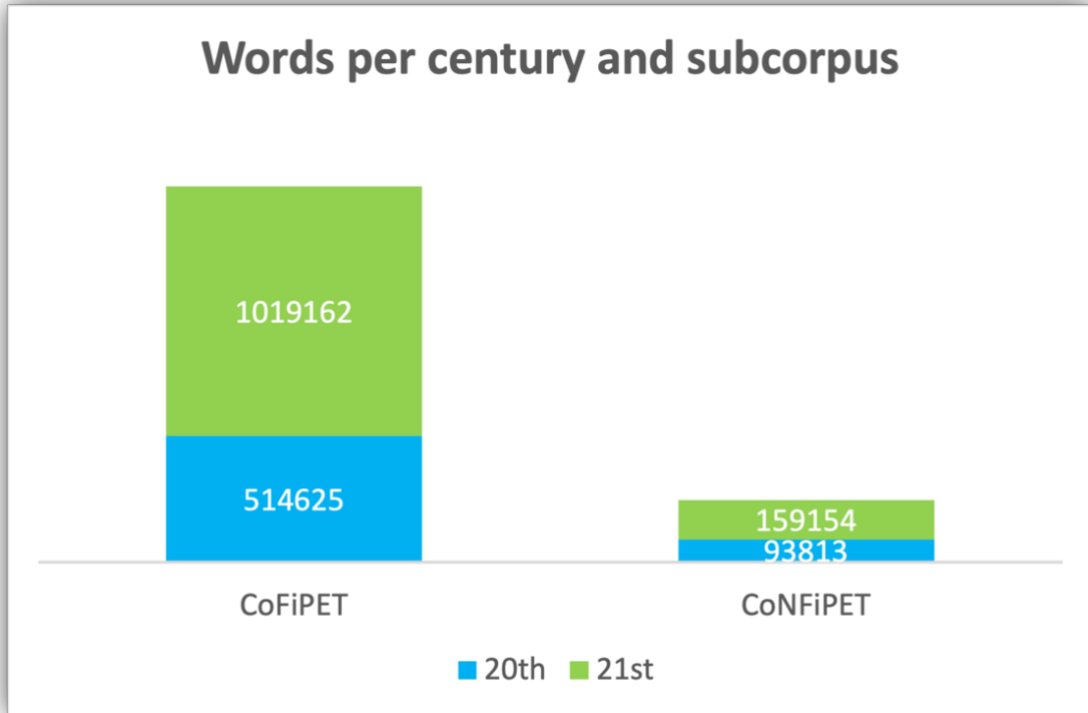


Figure 10. Distribution of words per century and subcorpus

Taking some advantage of the fact that the reality of the period studied allows us to find more texts written by women than in previous times and/or works (see Moskowich 2016b and Barsaglini-Castro 2021) and considering that PET is intended to reach representativeness¹⁶ by sticking to balance, the whole corpus has almost the same distribution in terms of sex. Thus, as can be seen in Figure 11 below, 47% of the words (842,110) in the corpus are of female authorship, whilst 53% (944,644 words) are written by men.

¹⁶ The number of samples considered has deliberately been the same for both sexes.

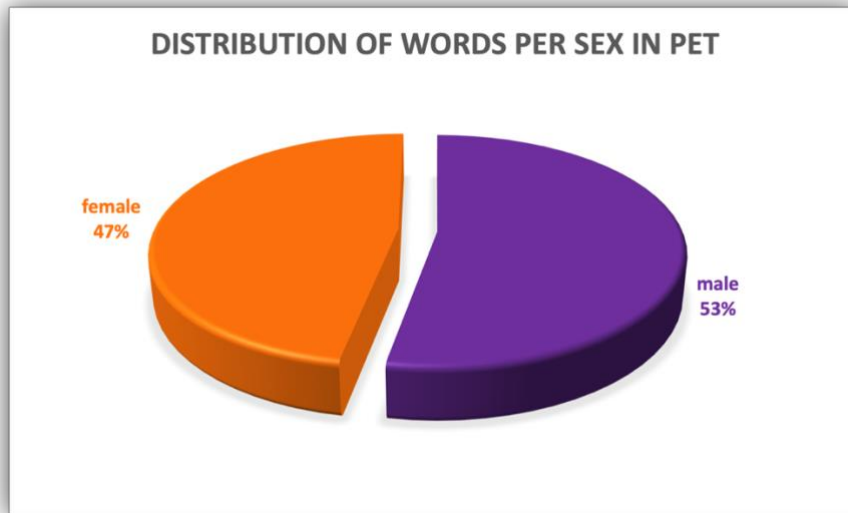


Figure 11. Distribution of words per sex in PET

When considering the two sections of my material separately, and as detailed in Figure 12 below, CoNFIPET shows 133,525 words written by women, and 119,442 words written by men. Likewise, the number of words written by men in CoFiPET is 825,202, and 708,585 by women.

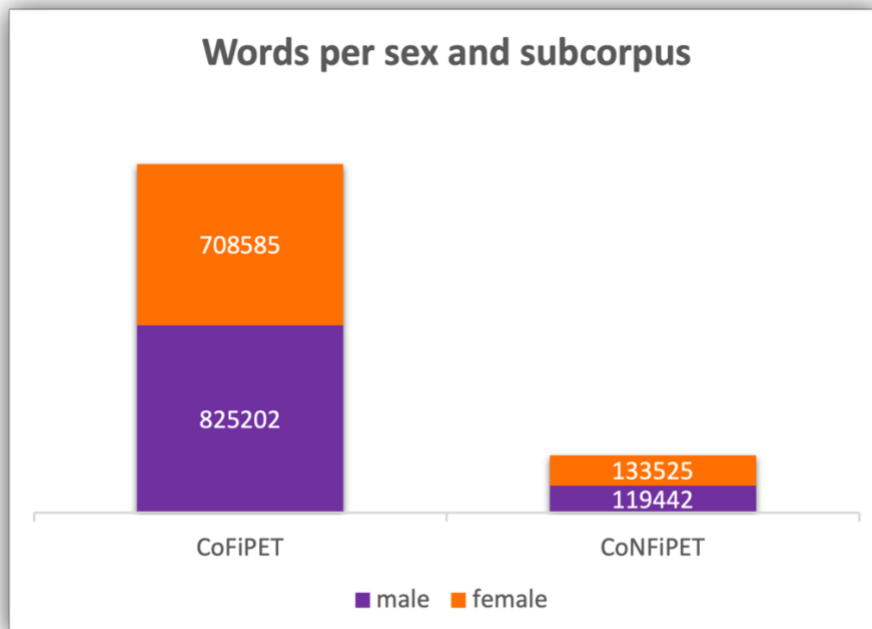


Figure 12. Distribution of words per sex and subcorpus

In an attempt to provide an answer to my research questions, that is, whether persuasion has to do with language or with other factors (see Introduction), the variable called *tone* has been also

included in order to study whether the texts –regardless of being fiction or non-fiction– are more inclined towards an optimistic or pessimistic view of the topic they deal with. For instance, some science fiction novels provide (and contrast) both dystopian and utopian scenarios by starting with an apocalyptic or catastrophic world, to conclude with an open or promising ending. On the other hand, non-fiction texts appear to be mostly utopian due to their attempt to persuade or convince sceptics or even ignorant individuals that “technology is all benefit”, even though scientific texts can presumably argue and “prove” utopias to be wrong. Consequently, the variable of tone has been one of the most challenging parameters to classify samples not only because some texts include a mixture of positive and negative connotations and evaluations or even try to be neutral, but also due to the degree of subjectivity that the process itself implies¹⁷. Thus, the resulting distribution of words is the following:

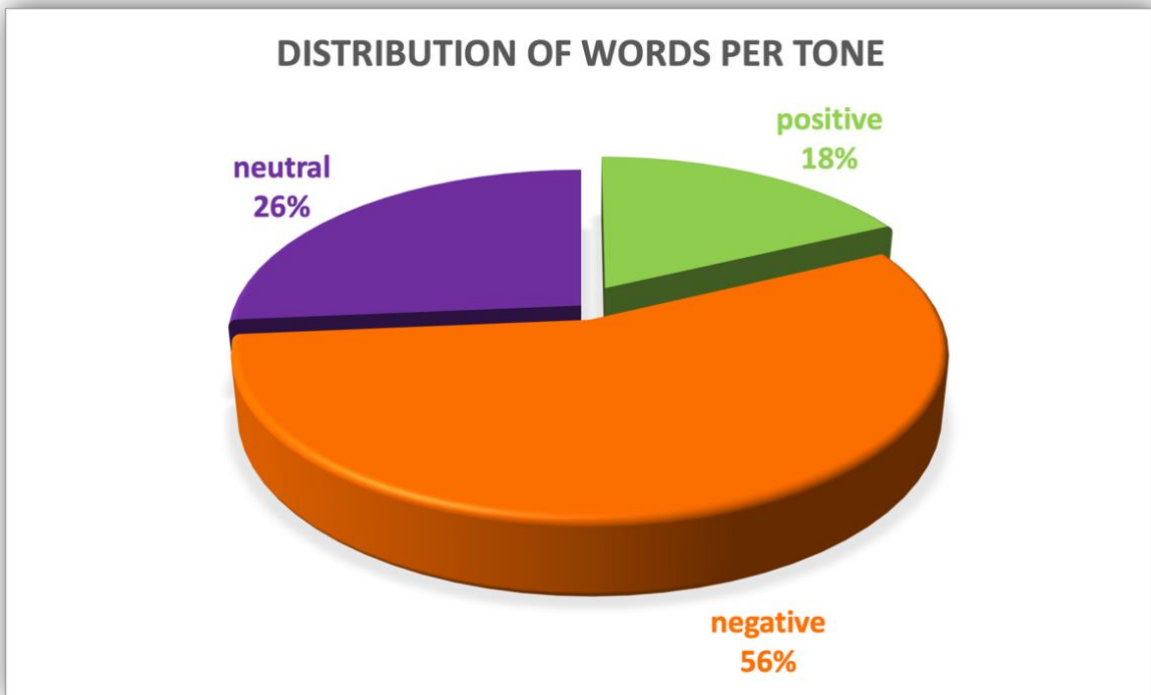


Figure 13. Distribution of words per tone of texts in PET

Figure 13 above shows that the negative tone alone represents a little bit more than half of the total data (996,062 words, 56%), whereas the neutral (471,408 words, 26%) and positive (319,284 words, 18%) almost constitute the other half.

¹⁷ To make this classification, only synopses, abstracts and lexicon in general have been considered.

The distribution of words according to the variable of tone in each subcorpus can be seen in the figure below. A clear difference can be noticed between the corpus of fiction and non-fiction.

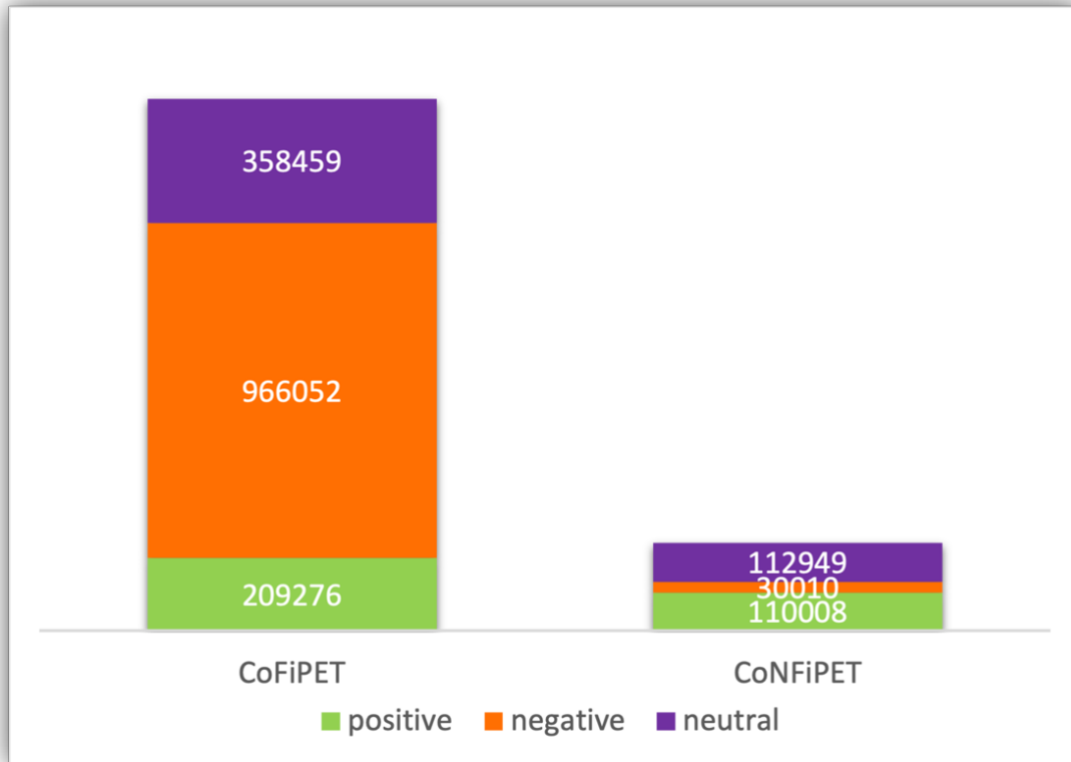


Figure 14. Distribution of words per tone and subcorpus

The texts in CoFiPET have a mostly negative connotation with 966,052 words (54%), followed by a neutral and positive approaches with 358,459 words (20%) and 209,276 words (12%), respectively. Non-fiction as represented in CoNFIPET, on the other hand, presents quite similar values regarding the neutral (112,949 words, 6%) and positive (110,008 words, 6%) tone, which differ considerably from the negative one (30,010 words, 2%).

3. Methodology

This section is concerned with the steps followed between the data collection and the analysis to obtain and classify the cases that will be subject of study in Chapter 3. It is divided in four

sections. Section 3.1 describes the digitisation process and computerisation of the samples. Section 3.2 portrays the tool chosen for the analysis and the way it works, together with some of its main functionalities. The linguistic features used for the study are presented in Section 3.3. Finally, Section 3.4 describes the disambiguation process, frequency counting, and the methodology used for the quantitative and qualitative analyses of results.

3.1. Digitisation process

As mentioned in Section 2.1 above, after selecting the 50 texts to be included in the corpus, all of them were obtained from electronic sources such as JSTOR, Cambridge Core, Project Gutenberg, Research Gate and journals, as well as from the well-known content sales system called iBooks Store (for iOS devices) and the e-commerce company Amazon. Furthermore, each of them was not only converted into a text file (.txt) and saved independently, but also named according to the following structure: type-of-text_year-of-publication_author's-surname sex to facilitate the storage and identification of files (Kennedy 1998). Figures 15 and 16 below provide clear examples of the storage and record-keeping system used:

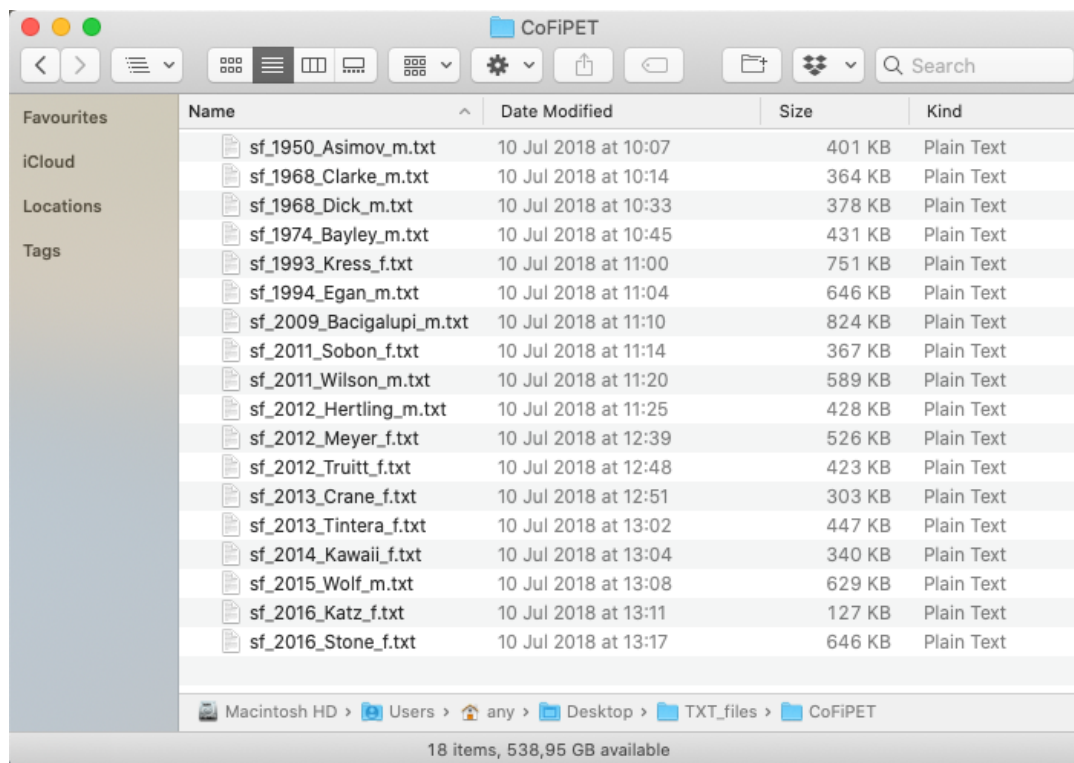


Figure 15. Sample of file storage system (CoFiPET)

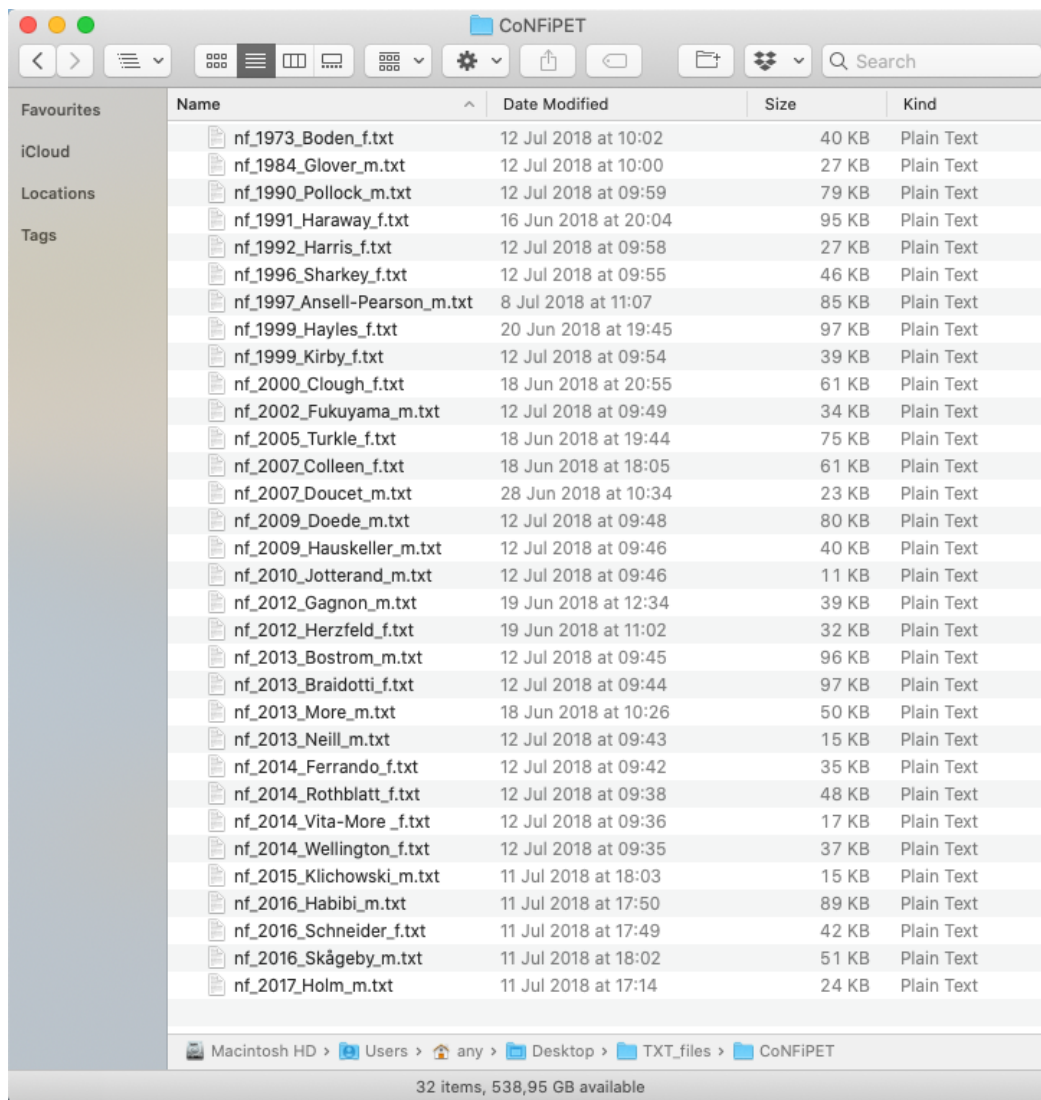


Figure 16. Sample of file storage system (CoNFIPET)

Once the electronic versions of the texts have been prepared and the corpus built, the common and useful following step consisted of adding metadata —i.e., the data about data. Thus, records of extra-linguistic information (of each sample) have been kept in a spreadsheet created with Excel (see Appendix 1), containing the following details about each text: file name ID, title of the work, author’s full name, storage format, author’s sex, date of publication, field (i.e., fiction and non-fiction), genre (i.e., article, novel and book chapter), number of word tokens, number of word types, original source and author’s nationality. Some of these parameters were inspired by the CC (see Moskowich et al. 2020: 34) and included to be considered in further research. In fact, the author’s nationality is irrelevant for the current study.

Generally, the process of digitisation of samples may vary depending on two main factors: the original format of the samples (i.e., physical or digital files), and the software or

concordancer used for the analysis. Regardless of that, and due to the fact that corpus tools can only process machine-readable files, one of the most relevant aspects of a corpus-based study is that samples are in plain text format¹⁸, which means that files must contain only text, without any additional formatting features embedded.

Thus, it is important to be aware that the process of converting the original corpus data into plain text files can be time-consuming and even problematic if the texts are not suitable for Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software. For instance, although most of the texts included in this corpus were extracted from texts in digital formats like machine-readable PDFs or even ebook formats (such as .epub, .mobi or .azw), some of them were PDF files containing scanned copies of texts that were not machine-readable and hence could not be converted automatically. In such situations, as well as if the copy was poor quality or contained figures, spellings or characters that the software did not recognise, manual work was required. Likewise, and even using specific software such as Anthony's (2017) *AntFileConverter*¹⁹, manual edition was needed in those cases where the resulting converted files contained corruptions, rare characters and spellings or line breaks. In addition, regardless of whether a sentence finishes or not, line breaks included in the original files were maintained after the conversion and edition of the final non-fiction txt files so that they were human-readable as well²⁰. However, in the case of fiction, and given the advantage of texts being machine-readable that only required to be converted into txt files and a final revision, the original structure of the text prevailed.

Although changes in general have been fairly quick and simple, extra information included in the files as for example chapter headings, page numbers, footnotes, biographies, references, or acknowledgements has been deleted. The reason for this removal justifies itself if we consider that this non-data content is not only irrelevant for the study per se, but its presence could also provoke a false, undesirable increase in the total number of words in the corpus.

¹⁸ "Plain text format" refers to the most basic and initial step in the process of digitisation of files to make them machine-readable. Obviously, there are other formats we can work with such as XML.

¹⁹ A freeware tool to convert PDF and Word (.docx) files into plain text for use in corpus tools like *AntConc*.

²⁰ Although text-only (i.e., plain text) editors such as Notepad (Microsoft Windows) or TextEdit (macOS) can adapt the display of the text when resizing the window, in some cases (and with certain word processors and/or texts) this does not happen automatically, making the reading of the text even more difficult.

3.2. The tool: AntConc

It was not until the development of computing that carrying out corpus-based research was made relatively easier. In fact, prior to the introduction of user-friendly software such as WordSmith Tools (Scott 1996-2020) and AntConc (Anthony 2002-2019), the storage and analysis of data was time-consuming, complex, and expensive.

As already mentioned, the samples included in PET have been processed and analysed by using the last updated version of the freeware corpus-analysis toolkit AntConc developed by Anthony (2019), currently available for Windows, Mac, and Linux. AntConc offers a variety of basic corpus query tools such as word list generation, keyword extraction and KWIC (key word in context) concordancing.

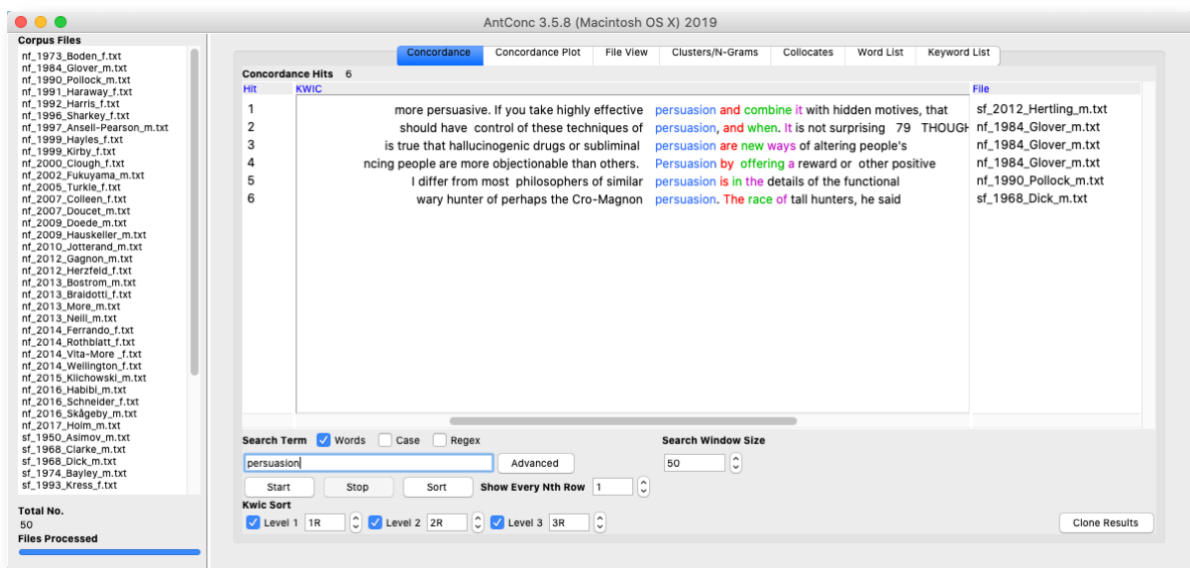


Figure 17. Extract from a KWIC display of the results of a query on the term *persuasion*

As Figure 17 above illustrates, AntConc does not only indicate the number of occurrences of a given word and its immediate context, but also the file where each hit is found and the total number of hits obtained. However, not all the work is automatically carried out since manual disambiguation of the terms under study may be required. But this will be further explained in Section 3.4.

3.3. Linguistic features (expressing persuasion)

As has been described in Section 2 of Chapter 1 and taking into account that a powerful or powerless style depends on the presence or absence of hedges, tag questions or even intensifiers

in order to be considered more or less persuasive, this subsection will describe and list the linguistic features chosen for the current study.

Having considered the varied classifications of intensifiers outlined in Section 3 of Chapter 1, the current study will use a combination of those of Quirk et al. (1985), Allerton (1987) and Paradis (1997) in terms of hierarchy, levels of distinction and terminology; as well as a selection of some of the lexical and grammatical elements provided by Bolinger (1972), Quirk et al. (1985), Biber (1988) and Plo-Alastrué (2015). Moreover, since some intensifiers have been originally classified into different categories, making the results obtained from the searches appear as repeated, and to avoid that search results are swollen and thus provide a more reliable analysis, the following list does not include the whole group of intensifiers.

VERBS				
Suasive verbs (35)	<i>agree, allow, arrange, ask, beg, command, concede, decide, decree, demand, desire, determine, enjoin, entreat, grant, insist, instruct, intend, move, ordain, order, pledge, pray, prefer, pronounce, propose, recommend, request, require, resolve, rule, stipulate, suggest, urge, vote</i> (Quirk et al. 1985: 1182-1183; Biber 1988: 242)			
INTENSIFIERS (INTENSIFYING ADJECTIVES)				
Emphasisers (28)	<i>actually, certain, certainly, clear, clearly, definite, definitely, for certain, for sure, frankly, honestly, indeed, just, literally, obviously, of course, outright, plain, plainly, pure, real, really, sheer, simple, simply, sure, surely, true</i> (Quirk et al. 1985: 429-583)			
Amplifiers (26/56)	<i>absolute, absurdly, amazingly, awfully, close, complete, deeply, downright, entire, entirely, extreme, extremely, great, highly, irretrievably, perfect, perfectly, sharply, strikingly, strong, terribly, too, total, totally, unbelievably, utter</i> (Quirk et al. 1985: 445; Biber 1988: 240)			
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Maximizers (8)</td> <td><i>absolutely, altogether, completely, fully, the intensifying use of most, quite, thoroughly, utterly; in all respects</i> (Quirk et al. 1985: 590; Biber 1988: 240; Plo-Alastrué 2015)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Boosters (22)</td> <td><i>a good deal, a great deal, a lot, badly, bitterly, by far, considerably, enormously, far, greatly, heartily, exclamatory how, intensely, more, much, severely, so, strongly, tremendously, very, violently, well</i> (Bolinger 1972: 18; Quirk et al. 1985: 591; Biber 1988: 240; Plo-Alastrué 2015)</td> </tr> </table>	Maximizers (8)	<i>absolutely, altogether, completely, fully, the intensifying use of most, quite, thoroughly, utterly; in all respects</i> (Quirk et al. 1985: 590; Biber 1988: 240; Plo-Alastrué 2015)	Boosters (22)
Maximizers (8)	<i>absolutely, altogether, completely, fully, the intensifying use of most, quite, thoroughly, utterly; in all respects</i> (Quirk et al. 1985: 590; Biber 1988: 240; Plo-Alastrué 2015)			
Boosters (22)	<i>a good deal, a great deal, a lot, badly, bitterly, by far, considerably, enormously, far, greatly, heartily, exclamatory how, intensely, more, much, severely, so, strongly, tremendously, very, violently, well</i> (Bolinger 1972: 18; Quirk et al. 1985: 591; Biber 1988: 240; Plo-Alastrué 2015)			
Downtoners (3/56)	<i>fairly, pretty, relatively</i> (Quirk et al. 1985: 430-602; Biber 1988: 240)			
	Approximators (6)	<i>all but, almost, as good as</i> (informal), <i>nearly, practically</i> (informal), <i>virtually</i> (Quirk et al. 1985: 597; Biber 1988: 240)		
	Compromisers (7)	<i>enough, kind of</i> (informal, esp AmE), <i>more or less, quite, rather, sort of</i> (informal), <i>sufficiently</i> (Quirk et al. 1985: 598)		
	Diminishers (34)	<i>feeble, indifferent, inferior, insignificant, laughable, least, less, lukewarm, mean, medium, middling, mild, moderate, partial, piddling, skimpy, slight, small, trifling, trivial; a bit, a little, in some respects, least (of all), mildly, partially, partly, slightly, somewhat, to some extent, in part</i> [expression]; <i>but</i> (formal and rather archaic), <i>merely, only</i> (Bolinger 1972: 152; Quirk et al. 1985: 598; Biber 1988: 240)		
Minimizers (6)	<i>barely, hardly, scarcely</i> [negatives]; <i>at all, in the least, in the slightest</i> [nonassertives] (Quirk et al. 1985: 598)			

Table 3. Linguistic features under study

As Table 3 above shows, there is a total of 175 types under study, of which 35 are suasive verbs and 140 are intensifiers. Intensifiers are, in turn, further subdivided so that 28 types are classified as *emphasisers*, 56 as *amplifiers*, and 56 as *downtoners*. The group of *amplifiers* has 26 *intensifiers* without a specific classification, but 8 are subclassified as *maximizers* and 22 as *boosters*. Likewise, there are 3 types corresponding to the category *downtoners*, 6 *approximators*, 7 *compromisers*, 34 *diminishers* and 6 *minimizers*.

Since the processing of suasive verbs does not have the categorisation problem, but others, the forthcoming section will explain the disambiguation process that has been applied to them.

3.4. Disambiguation process and frequency counting

In order to obtain the data to be analysed in Chapter 3, the linguistic features indicating persuasion listed above (in Section 3.3) have been retrieved by using the AntConc (Anthony 2019) tool. Suasive verbs have been searched by using the base and third person singular forms (-s), as well as the past simple (-ed) and the present and past participle (-ing) forms. However, not all such forms corresponded to the word class of interest to us here.

This is the case with *grant* and *decide*, for instance, and manual disambiguation was therefore carried out where necessary to distinguish the verbal form (examples (1) and (2)) from a proper noun (3):

- (1) In an increasingly technological, computerized world, information is a prime commodity, and when it is used in biological theorizing it is <granted> a kind of atomistic autonomy as it moves from place to place, is gathered, stored, imprinted and translated. (Kirby 1999)²¹
- (2) Owning a body gives the right to manage one's body and get rid of it in the name of existing in a robot or a system. Everyone can thus <decide> on their own if, and what, transhumanist treatment they will undergo. (Klichowski 2015)

²¹ All the examples taken from PET will follow the APA in-text citation format. For further details see Appendix 1 or the References section.

- (3) It is in this sense that it has been truthfully said: technology is the ontology of the age,' (<Grant> 1986 p. 32). (Doede 2009)

In a second step, aspects such as the syntactic functions and the meaning of the forms were also considered, and manual disambiguation was also required here. The following examples illustrate some of the forms that have been discarded:

- (4) They might <ask> about real-world physics, next." Durham closed his eyes, smiling. He said quietly, "Let them ask. We'll explain everything -right back to the Big Bang, if we have to." (Egan 1994)
- (5) That was a 'yes,' then—if only at first, as she'd said. But Clara suspected that it wasn't that she'd reassured Sal at all—she'd done nothing to make up for it but <ask> about tea. Rather, Sal was probably accustomed to personal questions out of nowhere. (Katz 2016)

As can be seen, the use of *ask* in examples (4) and (5) does not imply a direct request or a command to influence someone to do something. Instead, and although it is followed by the preposition *about*, which implies to '*ask about sb./sth.*', and hence an intention to obtain information about someone or something, *ask* works here as a reporting verb.

Similarly, certain forms have also been discarded. This is the case of verbs like *ask*, *insist*, and *suggest* that refer to direct speech either in dialogues or in quotes to reproduce the exact words a person used in his/her original statement (see examples (6), (7), (8) and (9)).

- (6) The man's breathing was shallow and laboured. 'Who is there?' he <asked> in a faint voice. (Bayley 1974)
- (7) "Feeling a little weak?" the doctor <asked> in a kind voice, like he wasn't the one who had done it to her. (Tintera 2013)
- (8) "Absolutely sure," <insisted> Black. "There's not been a word exchanged." (Asimov 1950)
- (9) "Is there anything you need?" Torin asked. "A glass of water? Food?" "An Escort5.3?" Kai <suggested>. (Meyer 2012)
- (10) Obviously meant to trick us in some way, the programme's guest for the week <asked> when the first stored program computer had appeared. (Kirby 1999)

- (11) When Elizabeth <asked> if his memories were back, he nodded and said of course. She didn't grill him on the details. (Egan 1994)

Reported speech forms such as the ones shown in examples (10) and (11) have also been discarded.

In the case of intensifiers, and although *least*, *least of all* and *in the least* have been considered as different types and hence the counting of resulting tokens can be said to be clear, the fact of sharing the same root (the word *least*) implies that the values can be inflated in the count. For this reason, from the 581 occurrences of *least*, the 6 occurrences of *least of all* and the 5 occurrences of *in the least* have been withdrawn. In this way, *least* appears 570 times in isolation, and 581 times in general (by considering the three types mentioned).

As part of the methodology followed, after each feature was searched for with AntConc, concordance, the results were exported and stored into spreadsheets created with Microsoft Excel. At a first stage, an Excel workbook was created for all the suasive verbs, and one for each intensifier category, thus making a total of 10 Excel files. Each file also contained its corresponding searched forms (see Table 3), and after these were disambiguated, another workbook was created for the total recount of hits. Figure 18 below displays a screenshot with two of the workbooks that contain some of the considered and discarded forms of the suasive verb *recommend* found in the different texts (see on the top), as well as the booster *highly* (see down).

The figure displays two screenshots of an Excel spreadsheet. The top screenshot, titled 'PHD_1_suasive.verbu.PET', shows a table with columns A through V. Column A contains text excerpts, and columns B through V contain linguistic features and their counts. A 'CONTADOR' column is visible, and the table is filtered to show results for 'NOUNS such as "recommendation" were discarded'. The bottom screenshot, titled 'PHD_6_boosters.PET', shows a similar table with columns A through R. Column A contains text excerpts, and columns B through R contain linguistic features and their counts. A 'CONTADOR' column is also present, and the table is filtered to show results for '=COUNTIF(I1:J175,TRUE)'. Both screenshots show the Excel interface with various toolbars and formulas visible.

Figure 18. Sample of Excel database of results

To obtain the raw frequencies of occurrence of each feature a combination of Excel logical functions such as IF, SUM or COUNTIF has been applied. Likewise, using macros to automate repetitive tasks associated with data manipulation also helped to find specific collocations and filter results.

Once the raw counts for each linguistic feature in each text were obtained, and since the texts in PET have different sizes, the data have been normalised to 10,000 words. Normalisation was applied only when necessary to compare results. Finally, two types of proportions were used to present the data: percentages and normalised figures.

Using all the findings obtained from the corpus presented in Section 2 and the methodology described in this section, the ensuing chapter will provide a comprehensive analysis of data.

Chapter 3: Analysis of data

1. Introduction

The two previous chapters have presented an overview of the most relevant concepts considered for the current dissertation, a description of the corpus used as the data source, and the methodology applied for its compilation and analysis. With all the theoretical background and contextualisation in mind, this chapter shows the results obtained from two main points of view: the field or subcorpora, which implies either fiction or non-fiction, and the period in which those texts were written. These, together with the sex of the authors, will be the most relevant variables applied to this study of suasive verbs and intensifiers. I would like to highlight that this is a corpus-based analysis of the use of suasive verbs and intensifiers as linguistic strategies of persuasion and their relationship to the author's viewpoint and style. As such, I will make use of corpus stylistics to quantify their frequency in both fiction and non-

fiction texts, and discourse analysis to examine the patterns related to context. Although I will consider the context for my interpretation of data, I will not resort to social or political aspects for my study. This means that I will not use Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) but Discourse Analysis (DA). The main reason of using DA instead of CDA is because the current study does not deal with aspects such as interdiscursivity, intertextuality, or socio-political and historical contexts per se to interpret or criticise texts or discourses. Instead, it will only describe and consider the data and results obtained to determine how persuasion manifests itself.

To offer a better description of results and provide a more detailed analysis of the uses, functions and combinations of suasive verbs and intensifiers, the chapter has been structured as follows. Section 2 will provide a general overview of the data according to the different variables described in Chapter 2. Section 3 will focus on the results regarding suasive verbs, and finally, Section 4 will examine the data concerning intensifiers. Each of these sections is also divided into a series of subsections with a recurring structure linked to the variables described. Thus, Section 2 below will start with the presentation of the general results from the whole corpus, and it will then analyse the data according to the field, the period, and the sex of the authors.

2. General results

As already mentioned in Chapter 2, the texts under study amount to a total of 1,786,754 words. Of these, 1,533,787 belong to the subcorpus of CoFiPET (fiction) and only 252,967 words to CoNFIPET (non-fiction). After finishing with the searches and the disambiguation process explained also in Chapter 2, the (raw) number of suasive verbs and intensifiers found in the material under scrutiny is 3,172 and 50,266, respectively. See Figure 19 below.

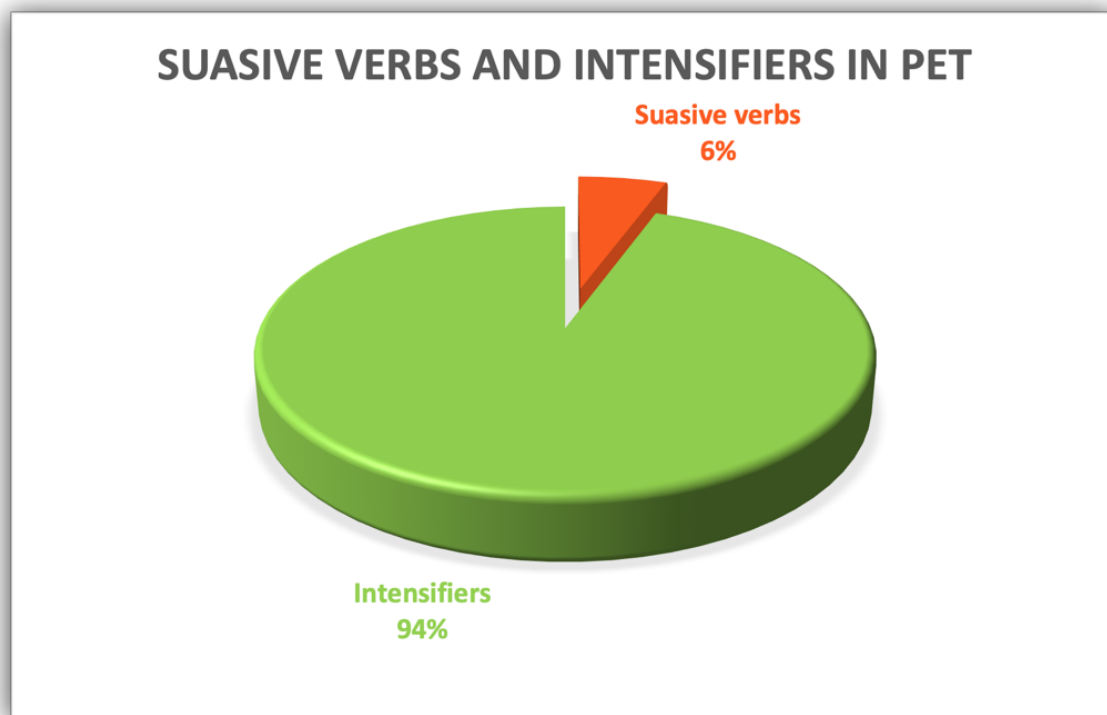


Figure 19. Suasive verbs and Intensifiers in PET

As it is clearly seen in the pie chart above, the use of intensifiers (94%) in PET is by far higher than that of suasive verbs (6%). Although the dataset is thus not especially large²², it can be of an adequate size for a study of the use of suasive verbs and intensifiers as persuasion markers, given the very specific nature of the form under scrutiny. Thus, it is expected that these data can indeed provide a picture of how writers influence readers in fiction and non-fiction texts. Since the number of words in fiction and non-fiction is not the same, the study will analyse each corpus (CoFiPET and CoNFIPET) separately and then compare the individual results of each to see which one has more persuasive features.

2.1. Results per subcorpora

Findings regarding the field show that there is an interesting difference between fiction and non-fiction texts in general terms. As can be seen in Table 4 below, the use of suasive verbs in CoNFIPET almost doubles that of CoFiPET, being their frequencies 28.86 and 15.92 per 10,000 words, respectively. In the case of intensifiers, samples present a slight difference, with

²² Specialised corpora are usually shorter than general corpora (See Nurmi 2002).

282.46 in CoFiPET and 274.46 uses per 10,000 words in CoNFIPET. In other words, and although the use of intensifiers is clearly higher than that of suasive verbs in the whole corpus, the difference in the frequency of use (in each subcorpus) is 12.94 in the case of suasive verbs, and 18.68, in the case of intensifiers.

Subcorpora	No. words	Suasive verbs	SV (nf)	Intensifiers	Int. (nf)
CoFiPET	1,533,787	2,442	15.92	46,671	282.46
CoNFIPET	252,967	730	28.86	7,225	274.46

Table 4. Uses of Suasive verbs and Intensifiers per subcorpora in PET

Thus, we can clearly see that suasive verbs are more often used in non-fiction than in fiction, whereas intensifiers are just used the other way round, showing a higher frequency in fiction than in non-fiction texts. These results lead us to think that this use might be due to the fact that non-fiction requires more involvement on the part of authors than fiction, and therefore the former makes more use of suasive verbs. On the other hand, intensifiers, with a lighter load of persuasion meaning, are more frequently found in fiction texts.

In the following subsections, both suasive verbs and intensifiers will be analysed, in relation to the other variables of interest here.

2.2. Diachronic analysis

The distribution of the results over the period under study reveals that the use both of suasive verbs and intensifiers decreases faintly over time. As shown in Figure 20 below, there are 20.46 (nf) suasive verbs in the set of twentieth-century samples, whilst there are only 16.35 (nf) in the twenty-first century. In the case of intensifiers, there are 301.21 and 271.06, respectively. This curious decrease of values might have to do with style, which, as we know, varies over time depending on the writing trend of the moment. Maybe authors are becoming less assertive by using mitigating expressions or hedges to appear humbler and hence they use less suasive verbs. Therefore, these findings show that, as Holmes (2001) and many others observed following Lakoff's (1975) theory, linguistic features such as intensifiers and hedges

characterise the so-called “powerless style” due to the lack of assertiveness or authoritativeness.

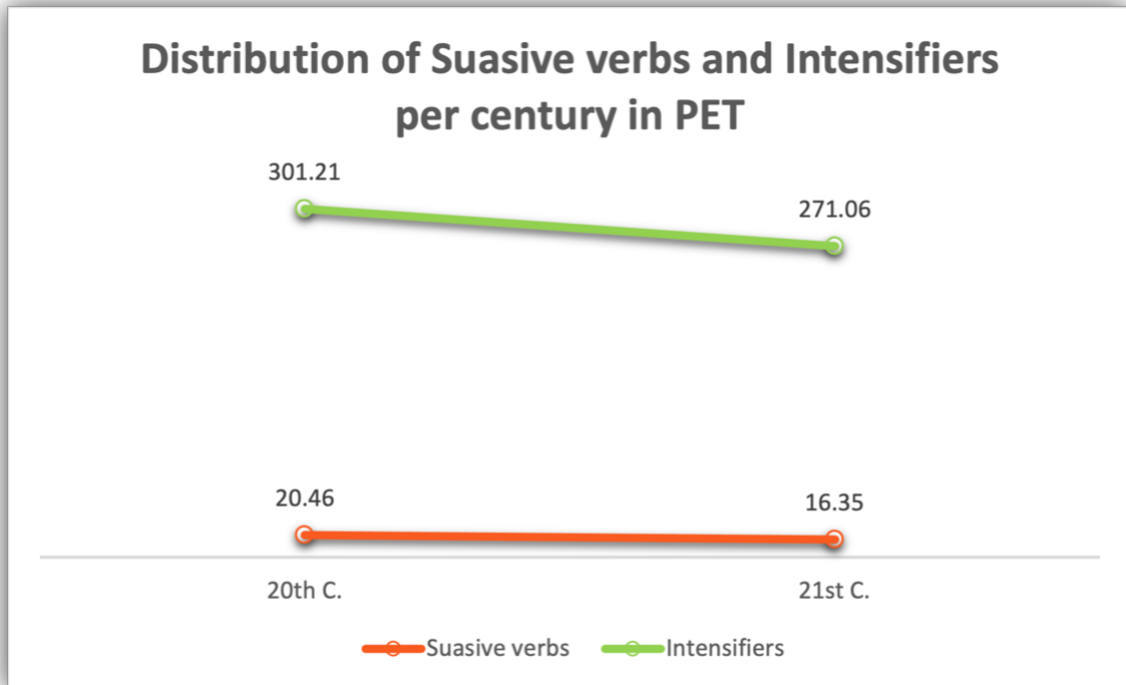


Figure 20. Distribution of Suasive verbs and Intensifiers per century (nf)

Still, the use of intensifiers continues to be greater than that of suasive verbs. If we compare the presence of suasive verbs and intensifiers in the whole corpus, authors use intensifiers very frequently regardless of the period. This could be an indicator that even though the use of suasive verbs and intensifiers tends to decrease over time, intensifiers are the preferred resource for writers to show emphasis and strengthen their arguments or the meaning of their expressions.

2.3. Results per sex of the author

The results obtained in relation to the sex variable show that female authors use a slightly higher number of suasive verbs than their male counterparts (18.60 vs. 17.00 uses per 10,000 words, respectively). This is shown in Figure 21 below.

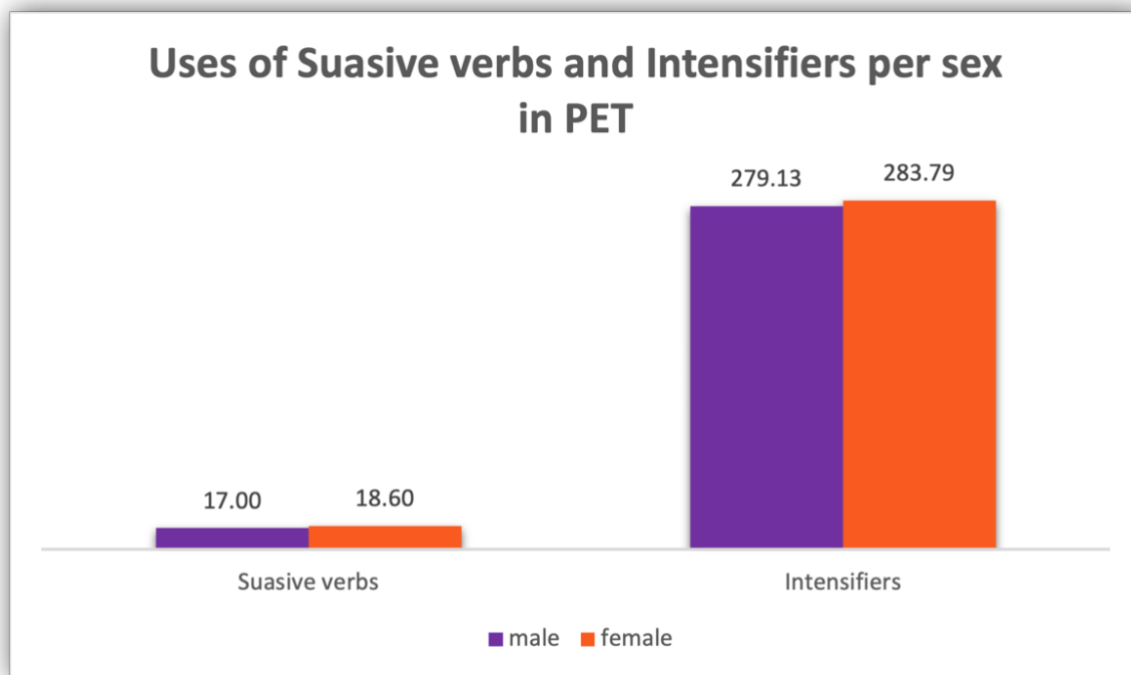


Figure 21. Uses of Suasive verbs and Intensifiers per sex of the author (nf)

The same happens with intensifiers, whose frequency ranges between 283.79 uses in the case of female writers, to 279.13 in the case of male writers. Again, and although the difference is very subtle, the data show that women tend to use more suasive verbs and intensifiers than men. This may be because they still need to rely on this kind of resources to convince their audience. Finally, it is clearly shown that authors use intensifiers very frequently regardless of the period (see Section 2.2 above) or even their sex, or even regardless of whether the text is fiction or non-fiction.

To get a closer picture of this irregular distribution, as well as to describe the use of suasive verbs by considering the three variables (field, period, and sex) in the current study, the following section will offer a more detailed analysis of results.

3. Suasive verbs

Searches in PET revealed that not all the types of suasive verbs in my initial inventory (see Table 3) were found. Moreover, because of the disambiguation process, only 3,172 tokens with argumentative and persuasive shades of meaning remained from the initial 8,506 that had been

retrieved automatically. Table 5 lists the raw number of occurrences corresponding to the different types, plus their percentages in the whole corpus.

Suasive verb	No. of tokens	Percentage
agree	229	7%
allow	557	18%
arrange	60	2%
ask	373	12%
beg	106	3%
command	10	0%
concede	13	0%
decide	300	9%
decree	3	0%
demand	38	1%
desire	12	0%
determine	86	3%
enjoin	0	0%
entreat	0	0%
grant	55	2%
insist	115	4%
instruct	34	1%
intend	134	4%
move	130	4%
ordain	2	0%
order	27	1%
pledge	2	0%
pray	44	1%
prefer	88	3%
pronounce	10	0%
propose	68	2%
recommend	34	1%
request	11	0%
require	243	8%
resolve	41	1%
rule	36	1%
stipulate	4	0%
suggest	249	8%
urge	46	1%
vote	12	0%
TOTAL	3,172	100%

Table 5. Presence of Suasive verbs in PET

Of the 35 suasive verbs included in the search, *allow* (557), *ask* (373), *decide* (300), *suggest* (249), and *require* (243) were the most frequently used, and *ordain* (2), *pledge* (2), *decree* (3), and *stipulate* (4) the least used; meanwhile, types included in the initial list such as *enjoin* and *entreat* did not have any occurrence in PET. Furthermore, if we compare the percentages obtained in the search, it is clearly seen that the use of suasive verbs is not very noteworthy, in general terms. Especially if we consider that the highest percentage does not reach 20% of use and that the lowest above zero is only 1% in terms of frequency.

3.1. Use of suasive verbs in fiction and non-fiction texts

The examination of the results according to the field draws a picture in which, as shown in Figure 22 below, there is a noticeable contrast between the two subcorpora. Non-fiction samples present a clearly more frequent use of suasive verbs than fiction texts, with 28.86 and 15.92 occurrences (nf), respectively.

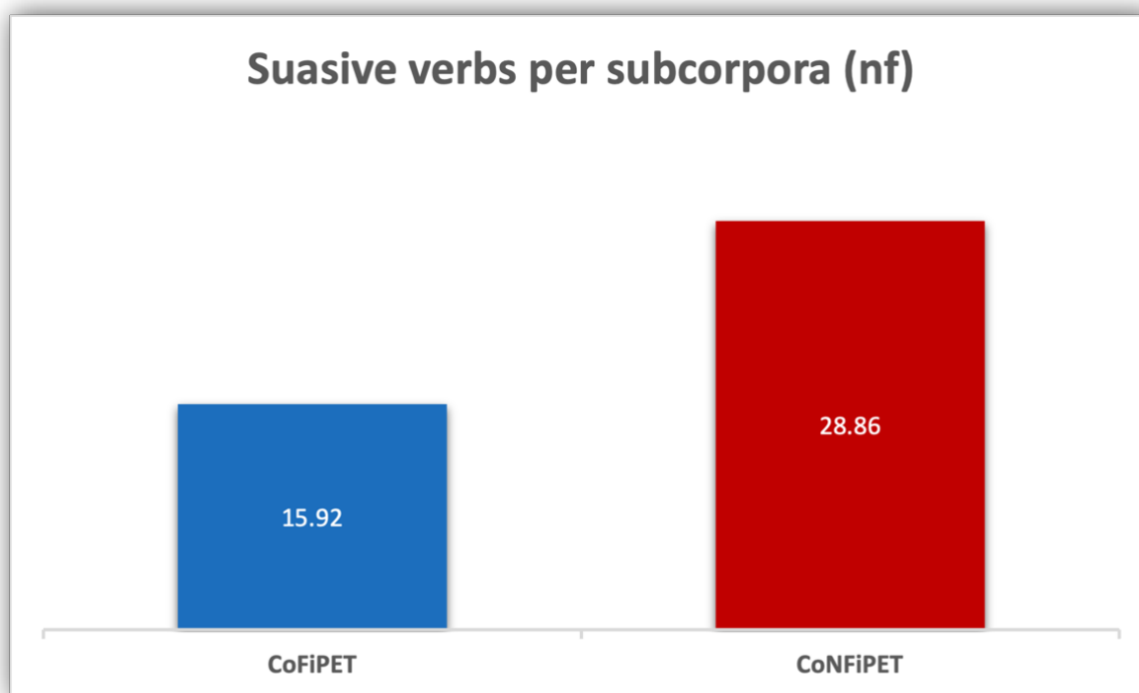


Figure 22. Suasive verbs per subcorpora (nf)

These findings could be an indicator that fiction texts do not require as much authorial presence, commitment, and responsibility towards the reader (see Sokól 2006) as non-fiction texts do. This makes sense if we consider that the most important elements to engage the reader in fiction are the combination of a good theme, the setting, some characters (or narrator/s) with their

corresponding point of view, the plot (with a conflict) and especially the style. Although style is one of the most subjective components since it depends on the author’s direct use of language, diction, and syntax, it does not necessarily have to make an intense use of suasive verbs as a method of persuasion but may involve other linguistic features.

Figure 23 below shows the distribution of tokens in CoFiPET and CoNFIPET. As can be seen, some types had very low frequencies.

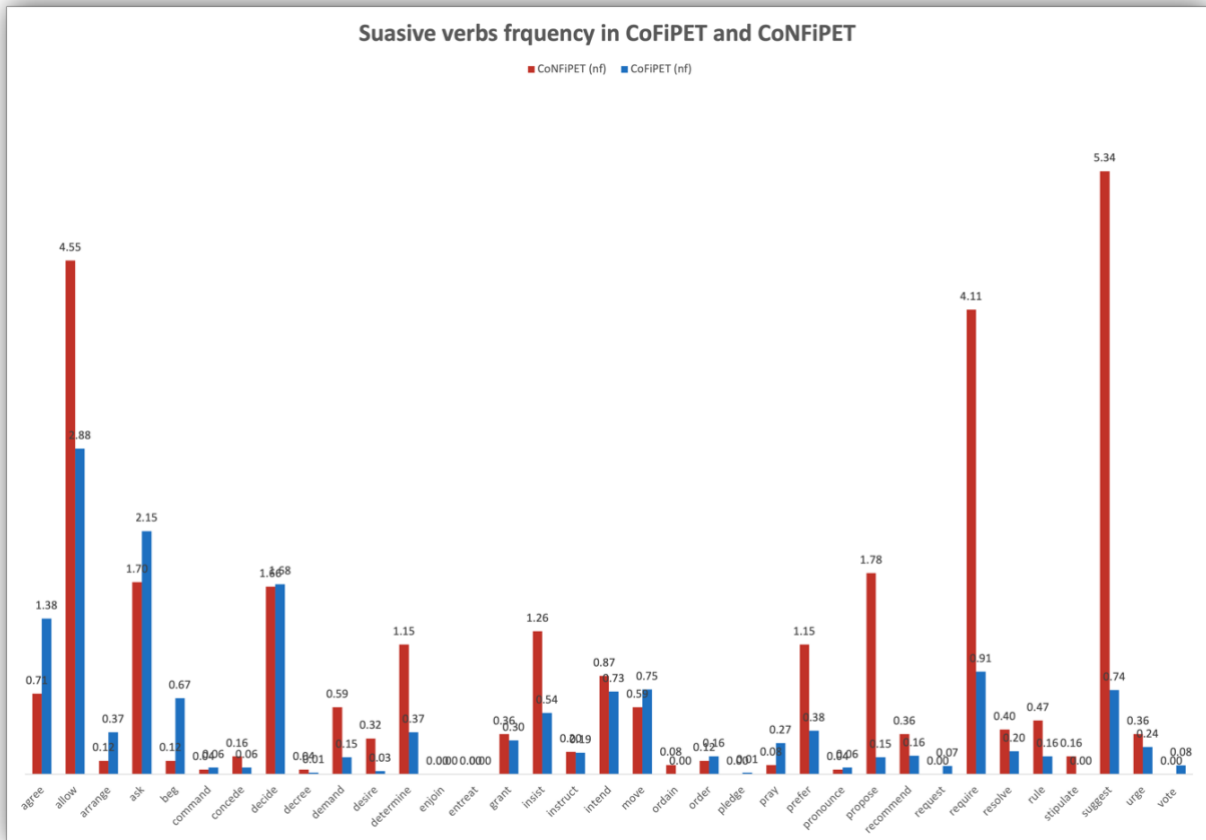


Figure 23. Suasive verbs frequency in CoFiPET and CoNFIPET (nf)

CoNFIPET yielded no tokens for *pledge*, *request*, or *vote*, and the same was the case for *ordain* and *stipulate* in CoFiPET. This might reflect different rhetorical fashions over time, thus explaining the different absences here. As for the remaining verbs, they seem to have a relatively moderate use in both corpora, although clearly higher in non-fiction texts. For instance, *allow*, *require*, and *suggest* are attested with a (normalised) frequency of 4.55, 4.11 and 5.34, respectively, in CoNFIPET, but 2.88, 0.91, and 0.74 in CoFiPET. On the contrary, suasive verbs such as *agree* and *ask* are the most significant items in terms of a higher number

of occurrences in CoFiPET (1.38 and 2.15) than in CoNFIPET (0.71 and 1.70), with a frequency difference of 0.67 and 0.45, respectively. A couple of examples are shown below.

- (12) “Leisha made a brief, impatient noise. ‘Don’t be evasive with me, Jennifer. If we can’t <agree> on anything else, let’s at least <agree> to be honest.’” (Kress 1993)
- (13) “Benjamin Libet conducted a series of experiments in which the subject was <asked> to make the simple decision to move a finger and to record the moment this decision was made.” (Herzfeld 2012)

As can be seen in example (12), which has been extracted from the corpus of fiction texts (CoFiPET), the suasive verb *agree* appears twice. The first time it appears in a conditional structure (with *if*), and the second time with the expression *let's* (contracted form of *let us*), commonly used for suggestions, offers, and imperatives. Example (13), which belongs to the non-fiction subcorpus (CoNFIPET), shows a clear use of the suasive verb *ask* with the *to*-infinitive form to request something.

3.2. Diachronic analysis of suasive verbs

The distribution of results over the two centuries, shown in Figure 24 below, reveals that the use of suasive verbs decreases over time. There are 20.46 (nf) suasive verbs in the set of twentieth-century samples, whereas there are only 16.35 (nf) in the twenty-first century.

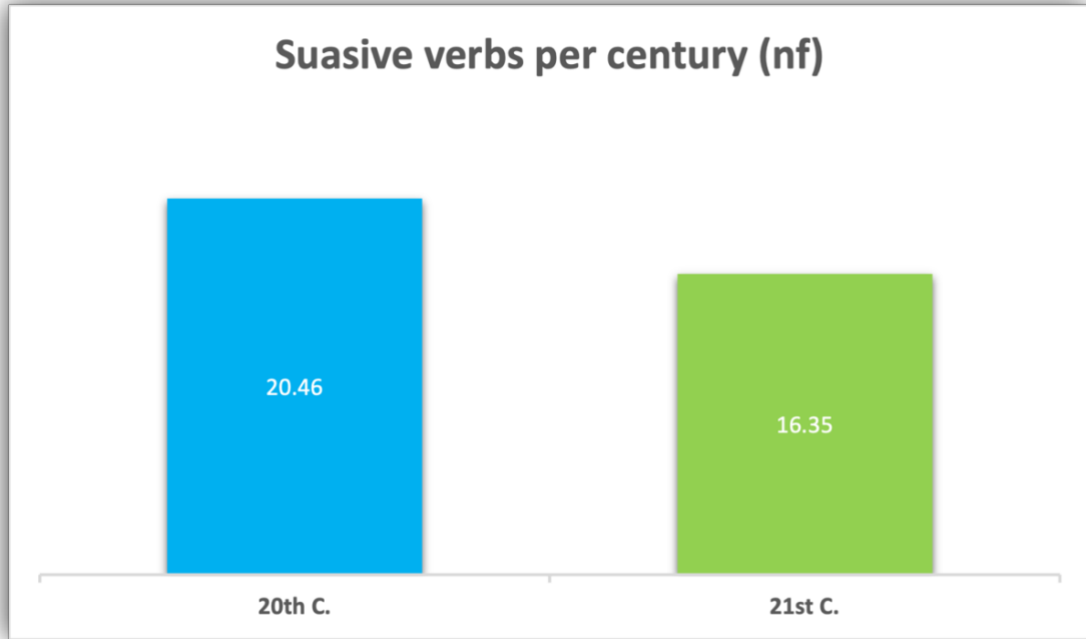


Figure 24. Use of Suasive verbs per century (nf)

Although the difference between the two centuries is not very big, and if, as Hughes argues, one of the aims of the political correctness is to “establish a new polite public discourse” (2010: 59) by removing or attempting to suppress “semantically impacted aspects of cultural difference which have become objects of prejudice or hurtful language” (2010: 45) and by inculcating “a sense of obligation or conformity in areas which should be (or are) matters of choice” (2010: 4), then the decrease in the use of suasive verbs might be caused by the so-called political correctness when it comes to expressing what is meant. This is especially so if we consider that it is precisely the choice of linguistic features that directly affects the meaning of a message and its effect.

Suasive verb	20th C.	21st C.
agree	1.22	1.32
allow	2.60	3.39
arrange	0.61	0.20
ask	2.19	2.04
beg	0.31	0.74
command	0.13	0.02
concede	0.15	0.03
decide	1.87	1.58
decree	0.03	0.01
demand	0.20	0.22
desire	0.02	0.09
determine	0.59	0.42
enjoin	0.00	0.00
entreat	0.00	0.00
grant	0.56	0.18
insist	0.97	0.48
instruct	0.23	0.17
intend	1.00	0.62
move	0.49	0.85
ordain	0.00	0.02
order	0.25	0.10
pledge	0.03	0.00
pray	0.05	0.35
prefer	0.62	0.42
pronounce	0.12	0.03
propose	0.69	0.22
recommend	0.20	0.19
request	0.02	0.08
require	2.02	1.02
resolve	0.36	0.16
rule	0.30	0.15
stipulate	0.02	0.03
suggest	2.22	0.97
urge	0.26	0.25
vote	0.15	0.03
TOTAL	20.46	16.35

Table 6. Most frequently used suasive verbs per century (nf)

However, if we analyse the frequency that each verb has in both centuries instead of studying the use of suasive verbs in general, new analytical nuances appear. For instance, although the results still show a decreasing use of suasive verbs in most of the verbs between the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, 10 out of the 35 verbs under study increase their frequency in the twenty-first century. Some examples are *allow* (from 2.60 to 3.39), *agree* (from 1.22 to 1.32), *beg* (from 0.31 to 0.74), and *pray* (from 0.05 to 0.35), as shown in Table 6 above. Since *allow* is the most common of all of them, example (14) from CoFiPET, and examples (15) and (16) from CoNFIPET show how this suasive verb is used in different contexts. Suasive verbs are indicated between angle brackets $\langle \rangle$, and secondary suasive verbs, if any, between curled brackets $\{ \}$.

- (14) “There was nothing I could do for the boy. What was the saying? You can’t help someone who refuses to be helped. And plus, I didn’t have the time to $\{ \text{beg} \}$ him to $\langle \text{allow} \rangle$ me to help him.” (Sobon 2011)
- (15) “One might argue that interaction with the environment is needed for the kind of intelligence that $\langle \text{allows} \rangle$ us to do things, but that there are other forms of intelligence – making plans or decisions, ruminating over events and ideas – that are ruled by the conscious mind alone.” (Herzfeld 2012)
- (16) “The core of the transhumanist idea of (quasi)perfection is the assumption that it is possible to use technology in a way that $\langle \text{allows} \rangle$ human biology to be Transhumanism and the idea of education in the world of cyborgs.” (Klichowski 2015)

As can be seen in example (14), the combination of the suasive verbs *beg* and *allow* reinforce the intention described of ‘helping’ the other by making the subject let himself be helped. In examples (15) and (16), *allow* ‘to do’ and *allow* ‘to be’, respectively, show the possibilities that intelligence and technology bring to us.

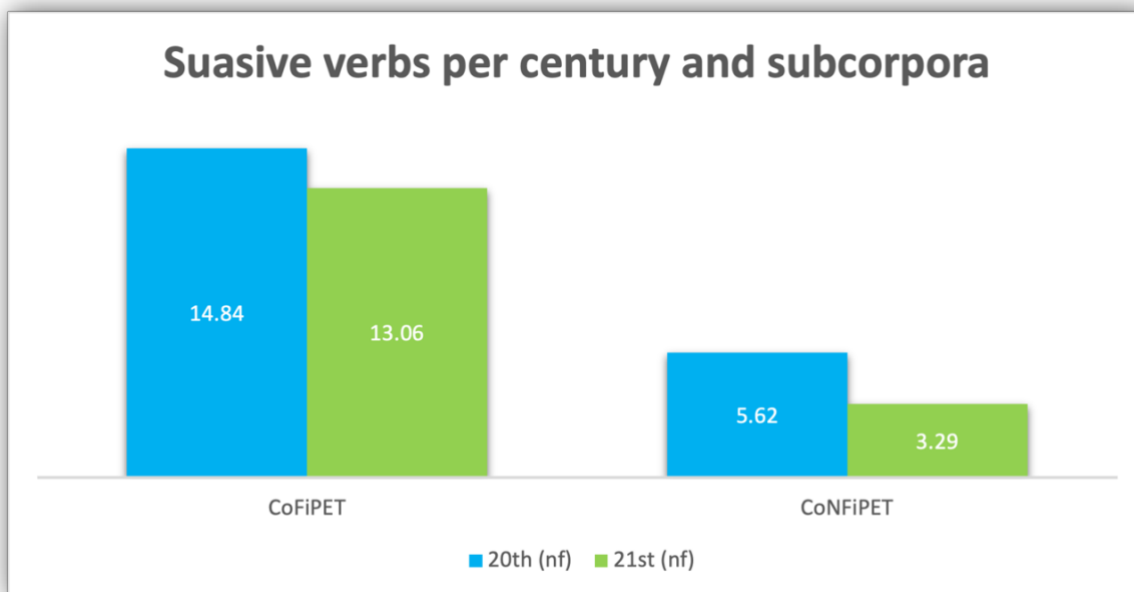


Figure 25. Suasive verbs per century and subcorpora (nf)

By considering not only the period, but also the field (i.e., CoFiPET or CoNFIPET), we see that the reduction in frequency is slightly higher in non-fiction texts than in fiction texts (see Figure 25 above). Thus, the use of suasive verbs decreases from 5.62 to 3.29 in non-fiction texts, and from 14.84 to 13.06 in fiction texts, making a difference of 2.33 and 1.78 occurrences, respectively. These values seem to indicate that the use of suasive verbs is not only lower in relation to the period, but also to the field. Contrary to what might be expected by normalising raw frequencies to 10,000 words, and even though their frequency is declining, both twentieth and twenty-first century writers use more suasive verbs in fiction than in non-fiction texts. This could be indicating that the use of suasive verbs may no longer be a trend or necessity in non-fiction texts.

3.3. Use of suasive verbs per sex of the author

The findings according to the sex variable reveal that the linguistic behaviour of male and female writers varies when they try to persuade their readership. Thus, the distribution of results denotes that women make a greater but not very significant use of suasive verbs when compared to men. As shown in Figure 26 below, there are 18.60 (nf) suasive verbs in the set of female samples, whereas there are only 17.00 (nf) in the male set, making a difference of 1.60.

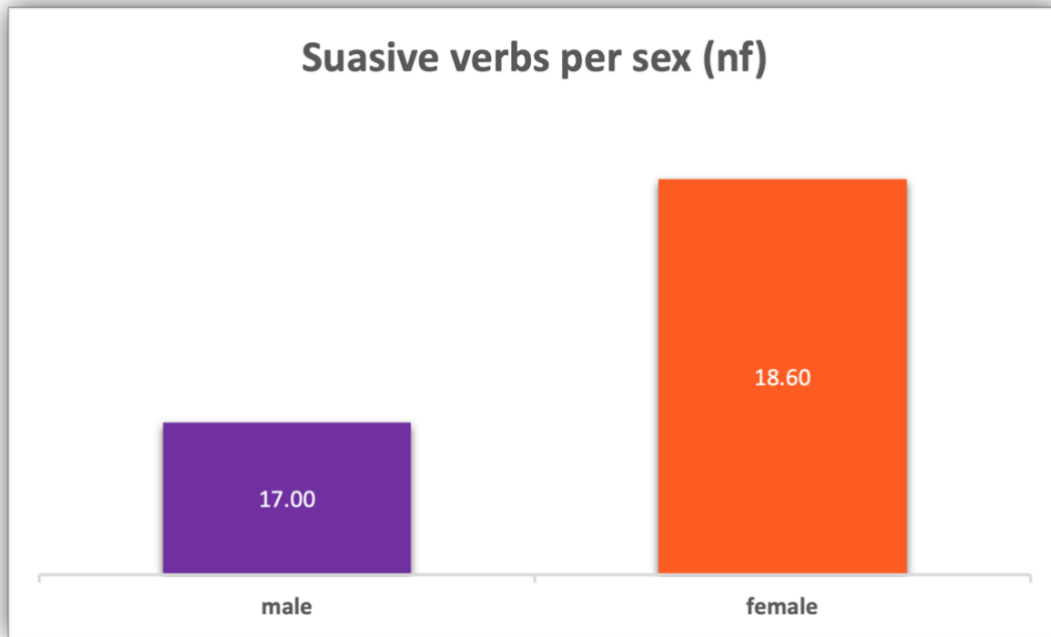


Figure 26. Use of suasive verbs per sex (nf)

When not only the sex of the author but also the field is considered, the results vary. Female writers use more suasive verbs than male writers in general and specially in non-fiction texts (5.02 nf vs. 3.25 nf), as can be seen in Figure 27 below. On the other hand, the use of suasive verbs in fiction texts does not differ much between men and women (13.75 vs. 13.57), although it is less frequent in the latter case. This phenomenon might be indicating that argumentation is more typically found in female writers, which, as argued by Argamon et al. (2003), could be due to their greater involvement and subjectivity when it comes to expressing themselves. Moreover, it also reinforces what linguists such as Flynn (1988), Rubin and Green (1992), and Leaper and Ayres (2007) have categorised as gender divergence in language use by associating female language with an affiliative approach, and male language with an assertive approach.

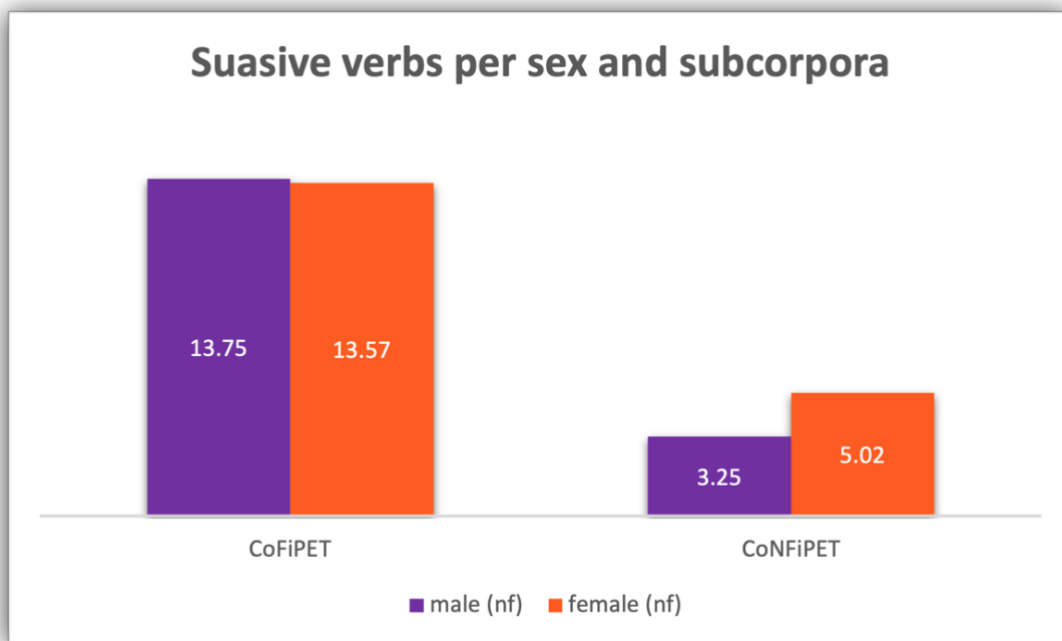


Figure 27. Suasive verbs per sex and subcorpora (nf)

Moreover, if we compare both sexes in both subcorpora, we can see that the use of suasive verbs by male authors in CoFiPET quadruples that in CoNFIPET. Something similar, though the other way round, happens with female authors, whose use of suasive verbs in non-fiction texts is nearly three times less than in fiction texts.

The slightly greater use of suasive verbs by women in non-fiction texts could denote the need to try to be more convincing in their arguments when compared to men, which does not seem to be a concern when dealing with creative writing. In the case of fiction texts, there is not much difference in the use that both sexes make, which suggests that perhaps the plot, the topic or the style are the most significant elements for persuasive writing.

4. An analysis of intensifiers

As with suasive verbs, once the process of search and disambiguation was completed, the number of the remaining intensifiers in PET is 50,266 out of 62,587. The raw numbers of tokens corresponding to the different categories and subcategories together with their corresponding percentages are shown Figure 28 below.

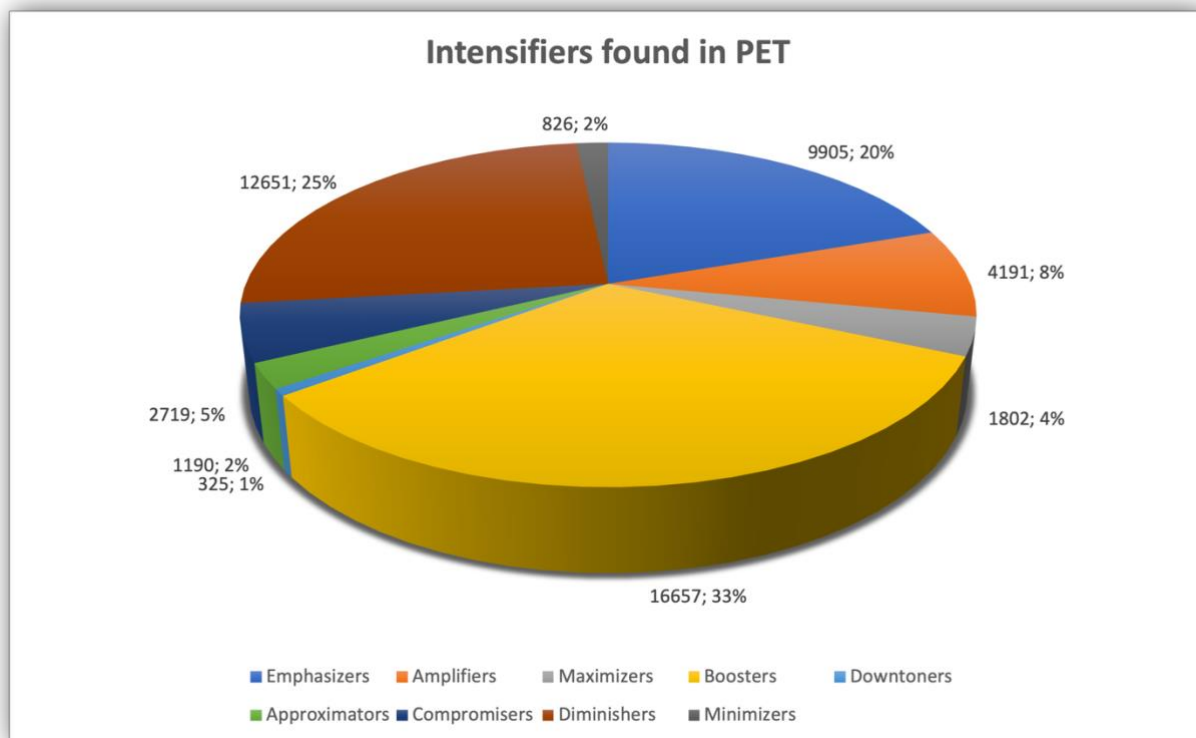


Figure 28. Use of intensifiers per (sub)category in PET

As can be seen, boosters (16,657) and diminishers (12,651) have been, by far, the (sub)categories that contain the highest number of intensifiers, in contrast to minimizers (826) and downtoners (325), whose values do not even reach a thousand tokens.

The following examples show some of the boosters ((17) and (18)) and diminishers (19) taken from the corpus of fiction texts (CoFiPET) and their co-occurrences with suasive verbs. Again, and to keep the symbology used in the current study, suasive verbs are indicated between angle brackets $\langle \rangle$, and intensifiers between square brackets [].

- (17) “Everyone so busy, [so] \langle determined \rangle in their search for an antidote.” (Meyer 2012)
- (18) “How did he know Emile, and why was he [so] \langle determined \rangle to save her?” (Sobon 2011)
- (19) ““How will you tell him? He stopped talking. Apparently that means we’re [only] \langle allowed \rangle to talk to one another again.” (Tintera 2013)

Among the other (sub)categories of intensifiers, emphasisers (see examples²³ (20) and (21) below) are the next most frequently used representing a 20% of the uses in the whole corpus. Amplifiers (see example (22)), excluding maximizers (see example (23)) and boosters, account for 8% of the uses. Finally, the 2,719 and 1,190 cases of compromisers and approximators (see example (24)) are 5% and 2% of the uses.

- (20) “‘He [just] <asked> me to fix his android.’ She peeled away the spiderwebs from what had once been the hover’s solar generator but was now little more than a plastic shell.” (Meyer 2012)
- (21) “This is that belief is not under voluntary control, and we do not [literally] <decide> what to believe. That is not what epistemic justification is all about.” (Pollock 1990)
- (22) “Out of this group, John’s the only one I don’t know personally, although he came [highly] <recommended> by Rankin.” (Stone 2016)
- (23) “Jasperodus waved him aside. ‘Later.’ He [fully] <intended> to sample the experience, but he wanted to enlarge his observations first.” (Bayley 1974)
- (24) “Insomniamaniacs write the texts that their alters mouth in a highly abbreviated prose bristling with creative spelling. So cryptic is this phonetic pseudo-English that reading it successfully [almost] <requires> subvocalization. It makes sense, then, to imagine that the users, especially when they are tired (remember, they are insomniacs), subvocalize and begin to hear voices from the screen as they project subconscious anxieties, desires, and even alternate personalities onto their alters.” (Hayles 1999)

The examination of emphasisers in more detail reveals that the most frequently used intensifier in this category, as shown in Figure 29 below, is *just*, with 3,313 occurrences. The next most frequent emphasisers are *sure* (1,073 occurrences), *really* (836) and *real* (663). *Definite*,

²³ Examples (20), (22) and (23) belong to the corpus of fiction texts (CoFiPET), and (21) and (24) to CoNFIPET.

outright, and *plainly* appeared 16, 10 and 8 times in the whole corpus, respectively. Here follow some examples, which have been taken from CoFiPET.

- (25) “I agree there’s a [definite] fear of loss of control. A loss of control to government, to technology, to corporate intrusions.” (Wolf 2015)
- (26) “Its snarls ran the gamut from pain to alarm, from alarm to [outright] terror. The implacable hunter was now the victim, and was desperately trying to retreat.” (Clarke 1968)
- (27) “She [plainly] enjoyed the task, getting some degree of arousal from it.” (Bayley 1974)

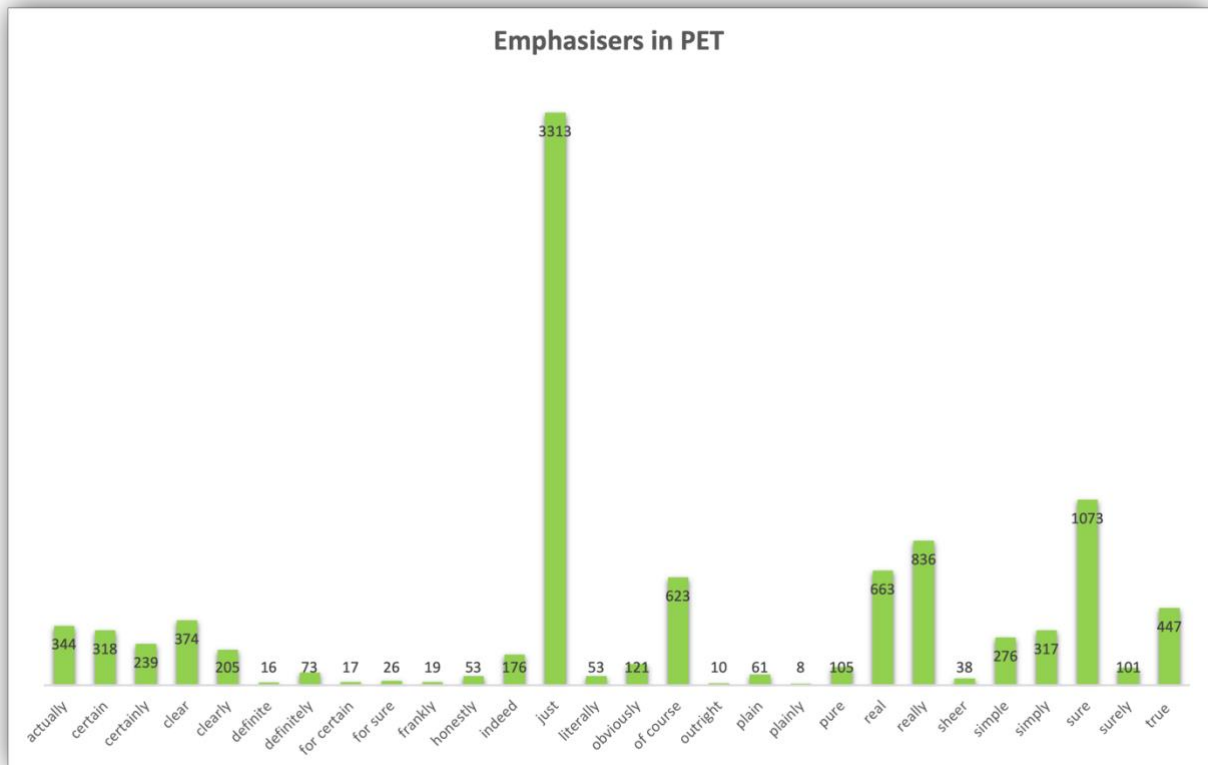


Figure 29. No. of Emphasisers in PET

Since emphasisers have a reinforcing effect themselves, and as previously stated in Chapter 2, the analysis of results will focus on amplifiers and downtoners. Among amplifiers, which also include the subcategories of maximizers and boosters, and as shown in Figures 30, 31 and 32 below, the most frequent intensifiers have been *too*, *most*, and *so*, with 1,311, 1,128 and 4,499 occurrences, respectively.

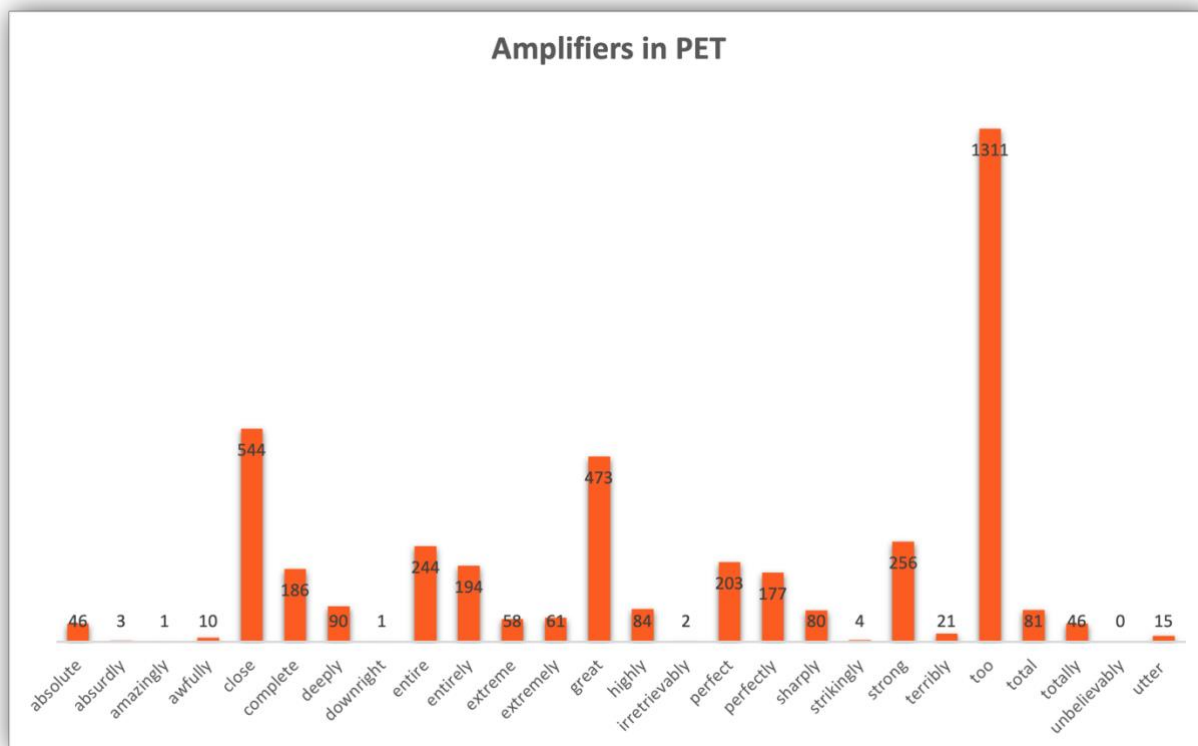


Figure 30. No. of Amplifiers in PET

The next most frequent amplifiers are *close* (544 tokens), *great* (473) and *strong* (256). *Irretrievably*, *amazingly*, and *downright* appear only two times and once in PET, respectively. Finally, no cases of *unbelievably* have been found.

Although we might expect that intensifiers like *absurdly* (3), *strikingly* (4), or especially *utter* (15) are not the most frequent, one of the most striking findings about amplifiers is that intensifiers such as *deeply* (90), *entirely* (194), *extremely* (61), *highly* (84), or *perfectly* (177), which seem to be the most commonly used when it comes to emphasising or reinforcing what is expressed, are not precisely among the first on the list of results. See some examples²⁴ below.

- (28) “Unlike the image who steps out of the mirror to comfort Suzy in Blood Music, here the trope of replication is [deeply] threatening.”
(Hayles 1999)
- (29) “The facts are no doubt true, but the explanation [entirely] illogical.” (Asimov 1950)

²⁴ Examples (28) and (31-34) have been taken from the corpus of non-fiction texts (CoNFIPET), whereas (29) and (30) belong to CoFiPET.

- (30) “Not [entirely] true, but not [entirely] false, either.” (Stone 2016)
- (31) “What dialectical constraints are there on what I am allowed to stipulate about the posthuman context? The main cost to making such stipulations is that if I end up defining a gerrymandered ‘posthuman context,’ which is also [extremely] unlikely ever to materialize, then the significance of any claims about what would normally be valuable in that context would tend to wane.” (Bostrom 2013)
- (32) “Since it seems very unlikely that we will either permit everything or ban research that is [highly] promising, we need to find a middle ground.” (Fukuyama 2002)
- (33) “The attempt to ‘save’ activity from the ‘contamination’ of morality results in a [highly] idealistic, quasi-apocalyptic reading of Nietzsche and his figuration of the beyond of man.” (Ansell-Pearson 1997)
- (34) “The people currently best placed to judge the desirability for an individual of enhancement of her general central capacities are neither [perfectly] rational, nor [perfectly] well-informed, nor [perfectly] acquainted with the full meaning of such enhancements.” (Bostrom 2013)

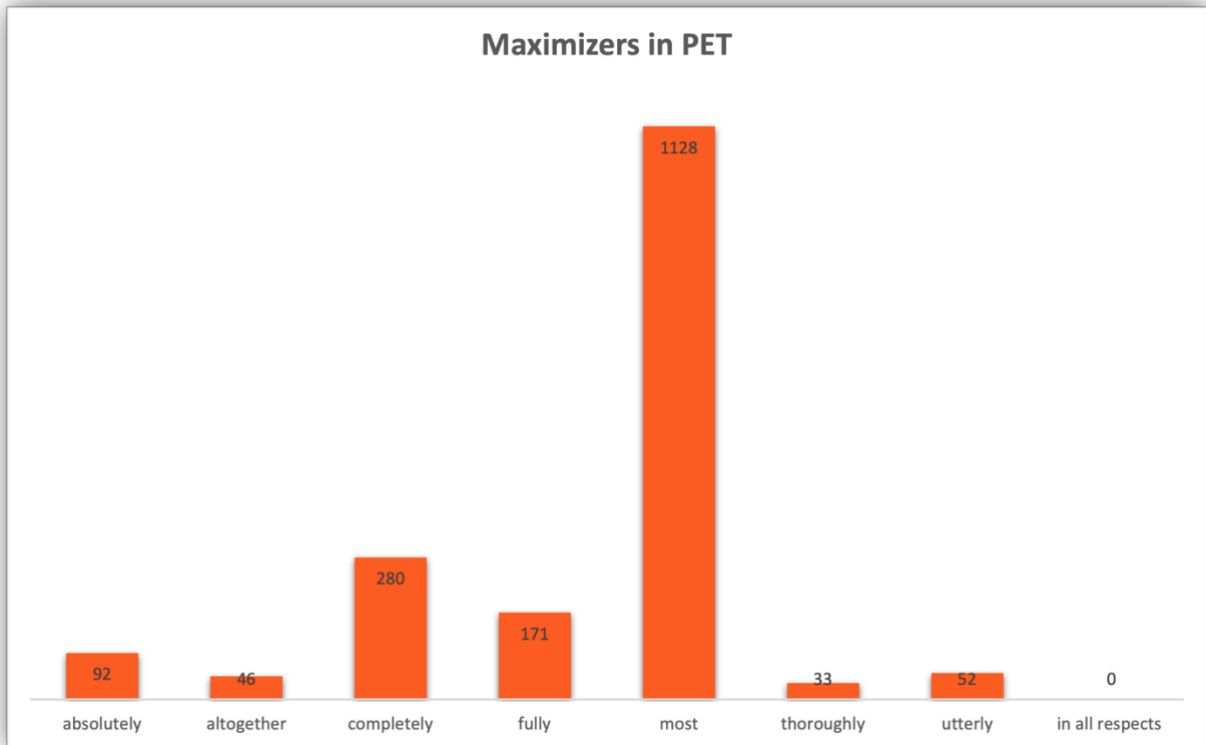


Figure 31. No. of Maximizers in PET

Following Paradis (1997) in the sense that both maximizers and boosters reinforce the gradability they express, it seems logical to expect that one of the most frequent intensifiers in the group of maximizers has been precisely *most*, with 1,128 occurrences (see Figure 31 above). Followed by intensifiers such as *completely* (280), *fully* (171), and *absolutely* (92), this category can be said to meet expectations, even though it is obviously not one of the most abundant, considering its positive and ascending degree manifestation on the gradability scale. Finally, no cases of *in all respects* have been found.

As for boosters, shown in Figure 32 below, the most frequent intensifiers are *so*, with 4,499 occurrences, *more* (3,695), *exclamatory how* (2,676), *well* (1,530) and *very* (1,103). *Heartly*, *enormously* and *tremendously*, however, appear only four times, three times, and once in the corpus, respectively.

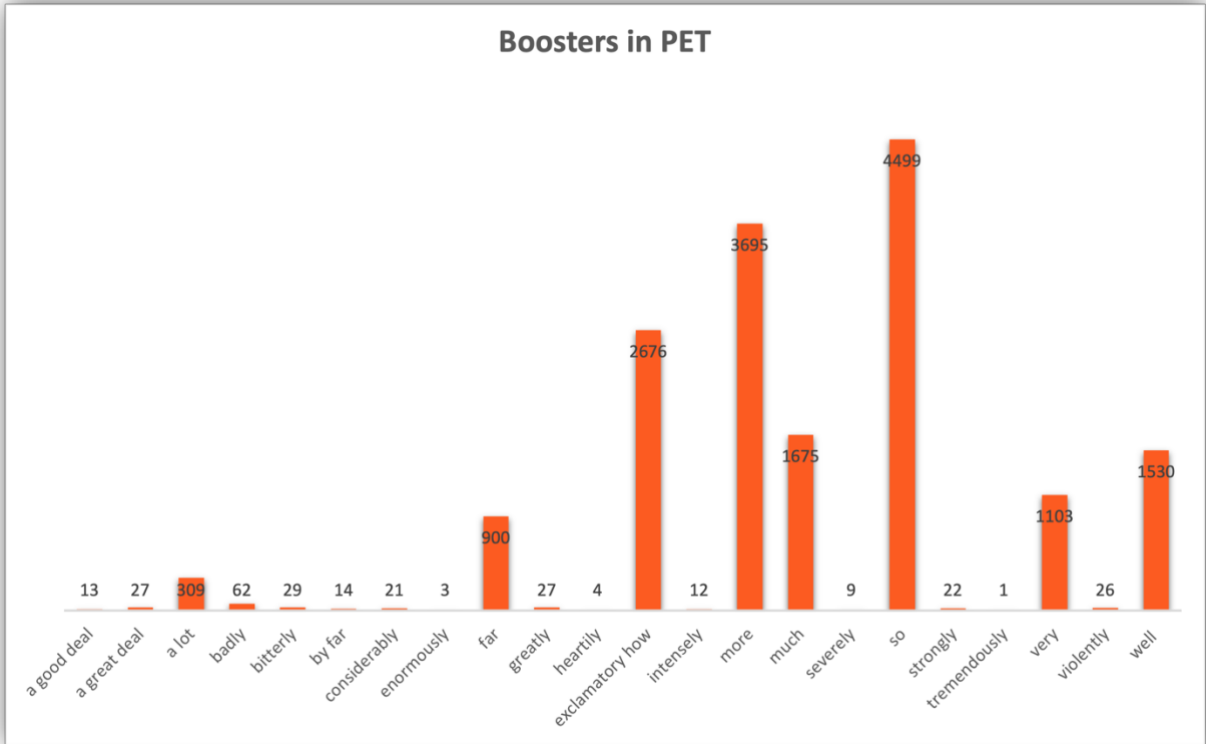


Figure 32. No. of Boosters in PET

If we compare the most frequent intensifiers within the category of amplifiers, it is obvious that the subcategory of boosters is the one with the highest frequency rate, with 16,657 occurrences, followed by unclassified amplifiers (4,191) and maximizers (1,802), respectively. Likewise, if we compare all the subcategories found in the group of downtoners, we see that the most frequent is that of diminishers, with 12,651 occurrences (see Table 7 below).

Intensifiers	No. of tokens	Percentage
Emphasisers	9,905	20%
Amplifiers	4,191	8%
<i>Maximizers</i>	1,802	4%
<i>Boosters</i>	16,657	33%
Downtoners	325	1%
<i>Approximators</i>	1190	2%
<i>Compromisers</i>	2,719	5%
<i>Diminishers</i>	12,651	25%
<i>Minimizers</i>	826	2%
TOTAL	50,266	100%

Table 7. No. of Intensifiers in PET

These values show that, regardless of the field, period, and sex of the author, the intensifiers classified as the most positive and upwards reinforcers on the gradability scale are much more used than those of a negative or downwards nature.

In the category of downtoners, made up of the subcategories approximators, compromisers, diminishers and minimizers, the most frequent intensifier has been *pretty*, with 223 occurrences (see Figure 33 below).

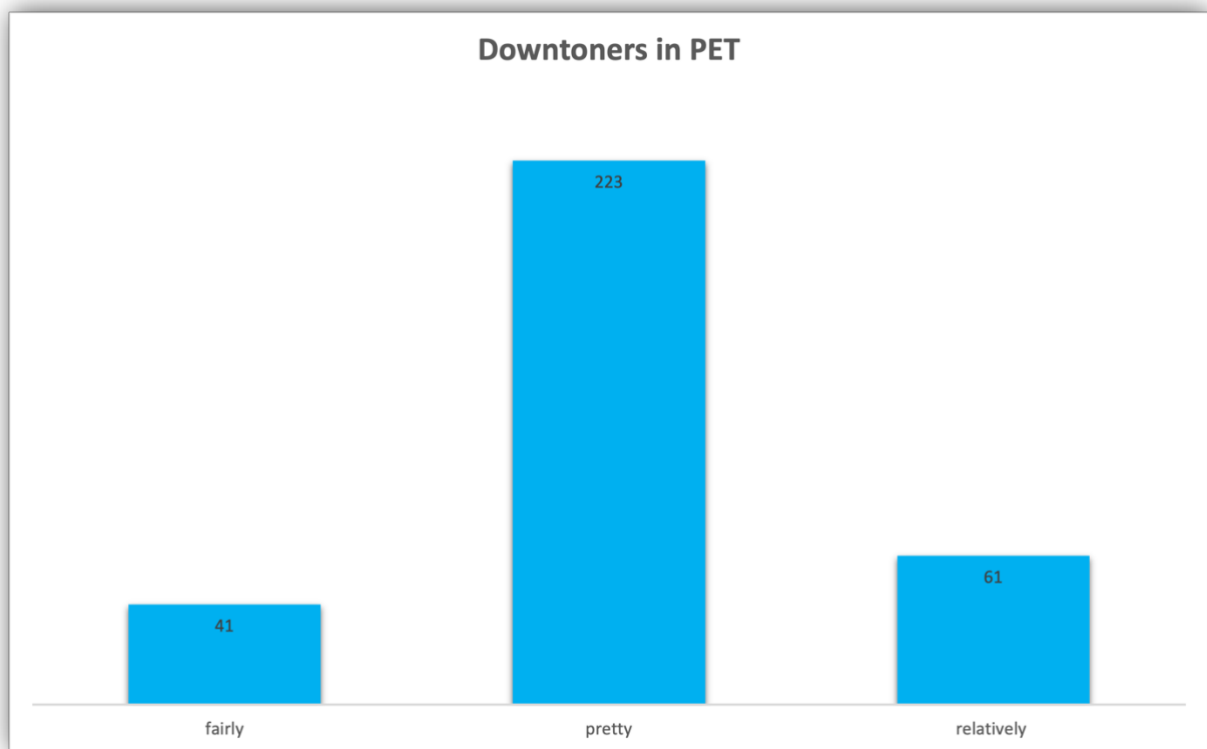


Figure 33. No. of Downtoners in PET

Examples (35) and (36), show how does the intensifier *pretty* perform in CoNFIPET and CoFiPET, respectively.

- (35) “For instance, chimps and dolphins might turn out to be ‘<pretty> person-like’, and Alpha Centaurians even more so, without their states exactly mimicking human rational architecture.” (Pollock 1990)

- (36) “Do you really think you could kill me? I have two weapons. You have none. I’m <pretty> sure that I have the advantage here.” (Sobon 2011)

As can be seen in the examples, the use of *pretty* tends to limit or weaken the adjective thus softening the expression. Otherwise, the message would be much stronger. This typical characteristic of downtoners such as *pretty* (the most common and frequently used) or even *fairly* (more formal and less frequent) confirms that both are examples of hedging, when writers do not want to state how they feel or think directly for whatever reason might be. For instance, a clear example of this is precisely *fairly*, whose use not only “depends on the effect an author is seeking to have on readers” (Álvarez-Gil 2017: 98), which highlights the concept of *implicature*, but also shows “possibility or a lack of complete commitment to the truth of a specific proposition” (2017: 98) by presenting information with a certain insecurity or hesitance.

Among approximators, shown in Figure 34 below, the first subcategory in the group of downtoners, the most frequent intensifiers have been *almost* and *nearly*, with 848 and 210 occurrences, respectively.

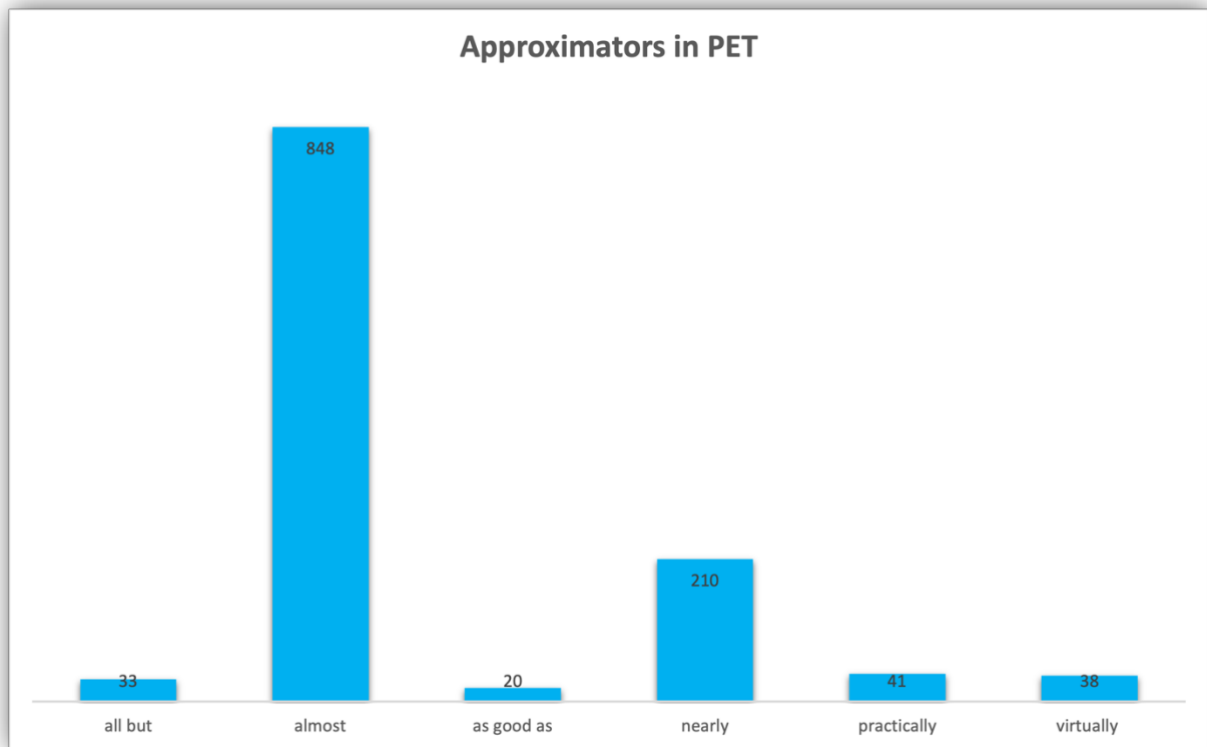


Figure 34. No. of Approximators in PET

Although there is already a great contrast regarding their raw values, the difference in the use of *almost* and *nearly* compared to *practically*, *virtually*, and *all but* is quite remarkable. Here follow a couple of examples taken from CoFiPET.

- (37) “It was <almost> certain that originally the shuttle had been built with a cockpit, which probably was still there.” (Bayley 1974)
- (38) “To be embedded in the grid meant being <all but> blind to its contents; reaching out and painstakingly probing what lay ahead -- sometimes destructively -- was the only way to discover anything.” (Egan 1994)

The following examples, extracted from the corpus of non-fiction texts (CoNFIPET), also illustrate how some of these intensifiers work in context.

- (39) “This quote effectively illustrates on the first hand a very vague idea, <almost> imaginary, about what digitization actually is.” (Skågeby 2016)

- (40) “That Man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; that all the labours of ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of Man’s achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins—all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so <nearly> certain, that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand.” (Doede 2009)
- (41) “It is a further question to what extent it is <practically> feasible to work towards realizing posthuman capacities in ways that avoid such taint. This question lies outside the scope of the present essay.” (Bostrom 2013)
- (42) “I argue that Transhumanism combines the values of the developed world’s consumer capitalism with the late 20th century realization that technology can be used to re-design the human form of life to fund its vision of technological advancement bringing us to a <virtually> immortal posthuman future.” (Doede 2009)

The number of occurrences of compromisers in PET is set out in Figure 35.

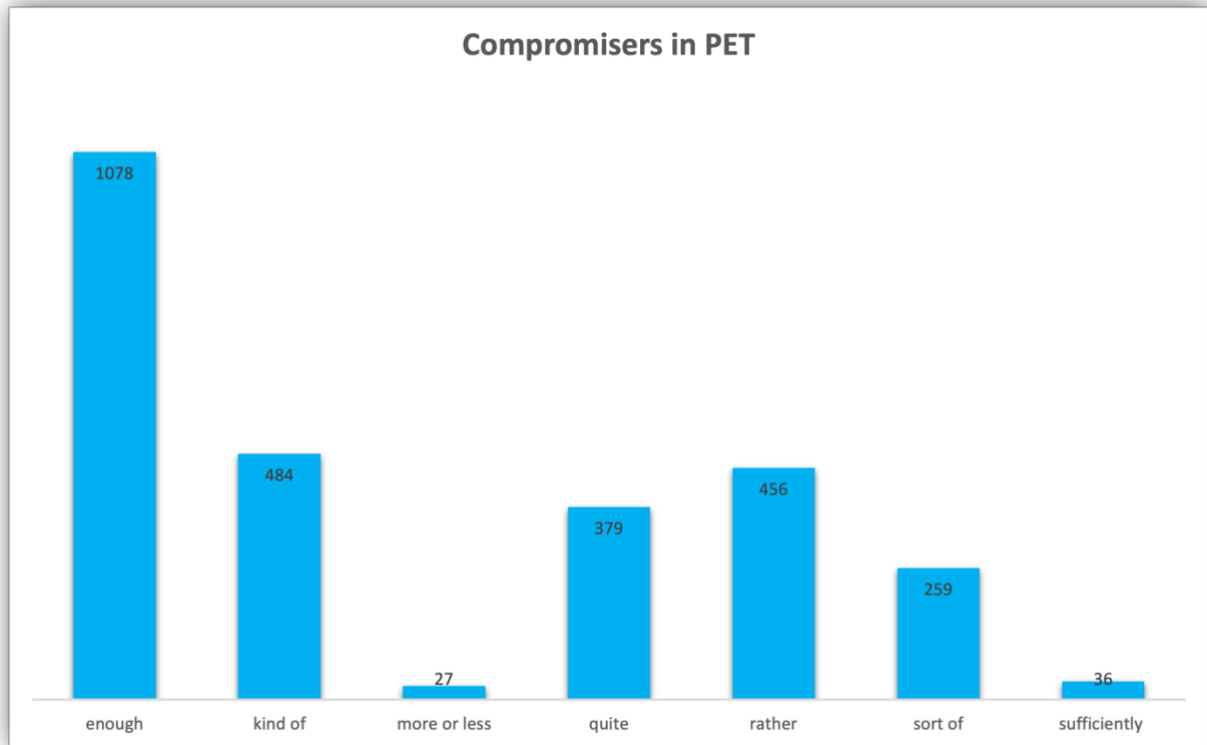


Figure 35. No. of Compromisers in PET

As can be seen in Figure 35 above, the most frequent intensifier within the group of compromisers have been *enough* with 1,078 tokens. *Kind of*, *rather*, *quite* and *sort of* have a very similar frequency, with 484, 456, 379 and 259 occurrences, respectively. Finally, the two intensifiers whose frequencies differ considerably when compared to the rest, especially with *enough*, are *sufficiently* (36 occurrences) and *more or less* (27) in the following examples²⁵.

- (43) “Her face, though nearly-human, had <enough> uncanny features to make it impossible to base any understanding off expression alone.” (Katz 2016)
- (44) “The potential is there for a glorious future. But are we <sufficiently> wise to make such fateful moves? I am hardly optimistic.” (Habibi 2016)

²⁵ Example (43) belongs to CoFiPET.

- (45) “The idiosyncratic and personal nature of FM-2030’s transhumanism was displayed in his book, which contained extensive questionnaires, then rated the reader as <more or less> transhuman.”
(More 2013)

Of the 34 intensifiers that the subcategory of diminishers has, *but* (with 6,411 occurrences) and *only* (2,499) are, by far, the ones that show the highest frequency from the rest (see Table 8 below). The next most frequent, exceeding five hundred occurrences although not reaching a thousand of them, are *small*, *mean* and *least* with 797, 627 and 570 occurrences, respectively. The rest, whose frequency oscillates between 2 and 50 occurrences, mostly, denote that the diminishers are not exactly the most frequent category. Finally, the only intensifier with no occurrences at all has been *piddling*.

<i>Diminishers</i>	No. of tokens
a bit	128
a little	328
but (formal and rather archaic)	6,411
feeble	19
in part [expression]	27
in some respects	2
indifferent	9
inferior	21
insignificant	21
laughable	5
least	570
least of all	6
less	423
lukewarm	2
mean	627
medium	32
merely	176
middling	2
mild	26
mildly	20
moderate	12
only	2,499

partial	29
partially	27
partly	43
piddling	0
skimpy	2
slight	72
slightly	221
small	797
somewhat	64
to some extent	5
trifling	5
trivial	20
TOTAL	12,651

Table 8. No. of Diminishers in PET

As for minimizers, which is the last subcategory of the group of downtoners, shown in Figure 36 below, *at all* (419 occurrences), *barely* (228) and *hardly* (141) are the three most frequent intensifiers, whereas *scarcely* (31), *in the least* (5) and *in the slightest* (2) the three least frequent in my material.

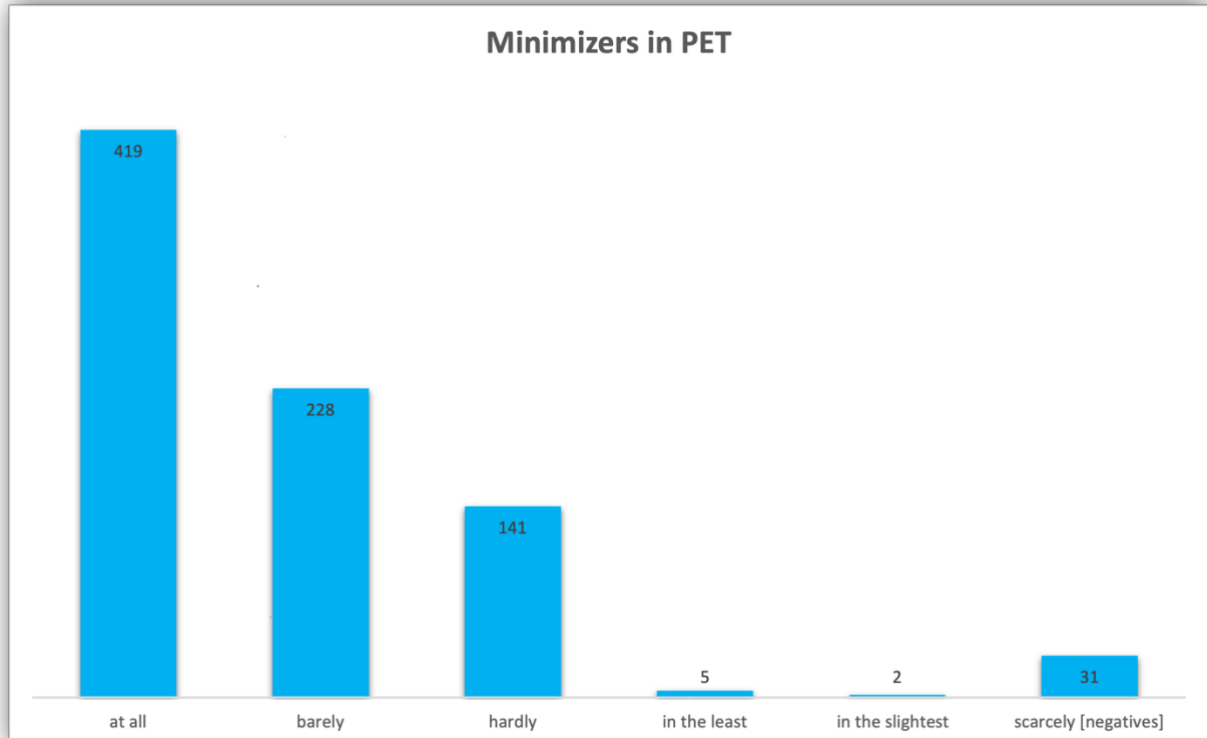


Figure 36. No. of Minimizers in PET

Some examples are the following, where 47 belongs to CoNFIPET.

- (46) “Instead, I’d tried to lie as still as possible. To disappear. To not exist <at all>. Existence was painful.” (Truitt 2012)
- (47) “Cyborg unities are monstrous and illegitimate; in our present political circumstances, we could <hardly> hope for more potent myths for resistance and recoupling.” (Haraway 1991)
- (48) “What mattered was the fact that his genes were <scarcely> different from those of his hunter-gatherer ancestors of ten thousand years before; that air was still breathable, and free; that sunshine still flooded the planet, still drove the food chain, still maintained a climate in which he could survive.” (Egan 1994)
- (49) “Somehow, he was not <in the least> surprised, nor was he alarmed.” (Clarke 1968)

Given the results obtained, it is very interesting to observe how one of the subcategories with the greatest variety of intensifiers is precisely the one with the lowest number of tokens. Likewise, and perhaps because it is one of the most common expressions, *but* is not only the most frequent intensifier of the group of diminishers, but also the most frequently used in the entire category of downtoners.

4.1. Distribution of intensifiers per subcorpora

The findings according to the field, shown in Figure 37 below, reveal that there is not much difference between the two subcorpora, even though the total number of words in each one contrasts considerably. Fiction samples present a more frequent use of intensifiers than non-fiction texts, with 282.46 and 274.46 occurrences per 10,000 words.

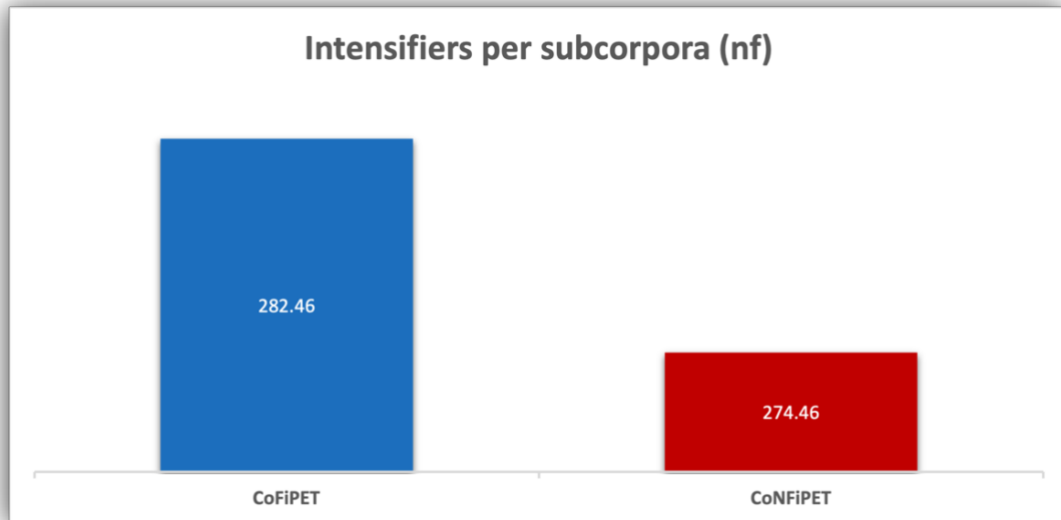


Figure 37. Use of intensifiers per subcorpora (nf)

These results seem to indicate that authorial presence in CoFiPET and CoNFIPET does not differ much when it comes to the use of intensifiers. In fact, their higher frequency of use compared to that of *suasive verbs* shows that, as Huddleston and Pullum (2002, 2016) claimed, intensifiers might act as semantically vacuous fillers that just allow authors to express their subjectivity. This subjectivity could be part of the persuasive character of the texts, and therefore indicate that the use of intensifiers is an argumentative strategy in both fiction and non-fiction.

The examination of results in more detail reveals that preferences for the use of intensifiers in fiction and non-fiction texts vary depending on the category or subcategory to which they belong (see Figure 38 below).

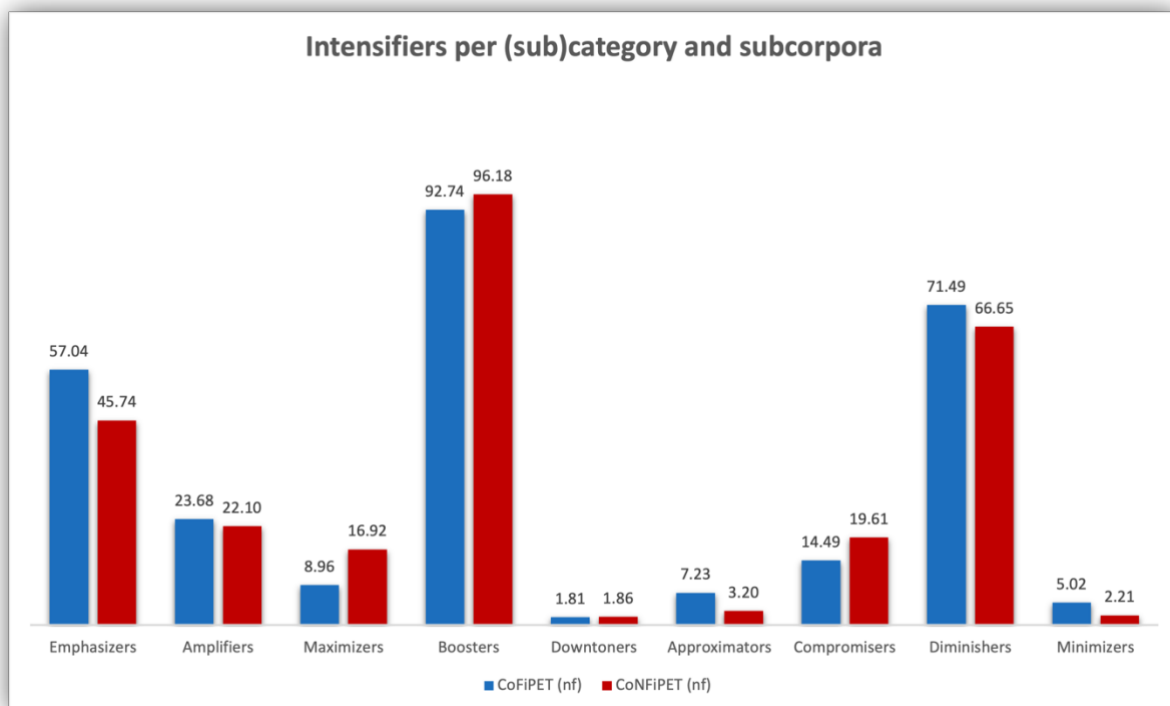


Figure 38. Use of intensifiers per (sub)category and subcorpora (nf)

Thus, the distribution of the different (sub)categories of intensifiers according to the field indicates that five out of nine types of intensifiers have a higher number of uses in fiction texts, whilst non-fiction texts show the lowest figures, except for the remaining four groups. In the case of CoFiPET, the most frequently used intensifiers are diminishers (71.49), emphasisers (57.04), and amplifiers (23.68), whereas in CoNFiPET boosters (96.18), compromisers (19.61) and maximizers (16.92) have the highest number of occurrences.

As a general summary, it could be said that regarding the (sub)category-subcorpus correlation, the most frequently used intensifiers are boosters, diminishers and emphasizers. This indicates that there is a certain balance in their use even though there is a greater preference for the ascending scale intensifiers.

4.2. Diachronic analysis of intensifiers

The analysis of the results according to the period under study draws a picture in which, as shown in Figure 39 below, the use of intensifiers, as we saw in section 2, decreases over time.

Thus, there are 301.21 (nf) intensifiers in the set of twentieth-century samples, whereas there are only 271.06 (nf) in the twenty-first century. As already mentioned, this could be due to the tendency to avoid certain expressions depending on style tendencies.

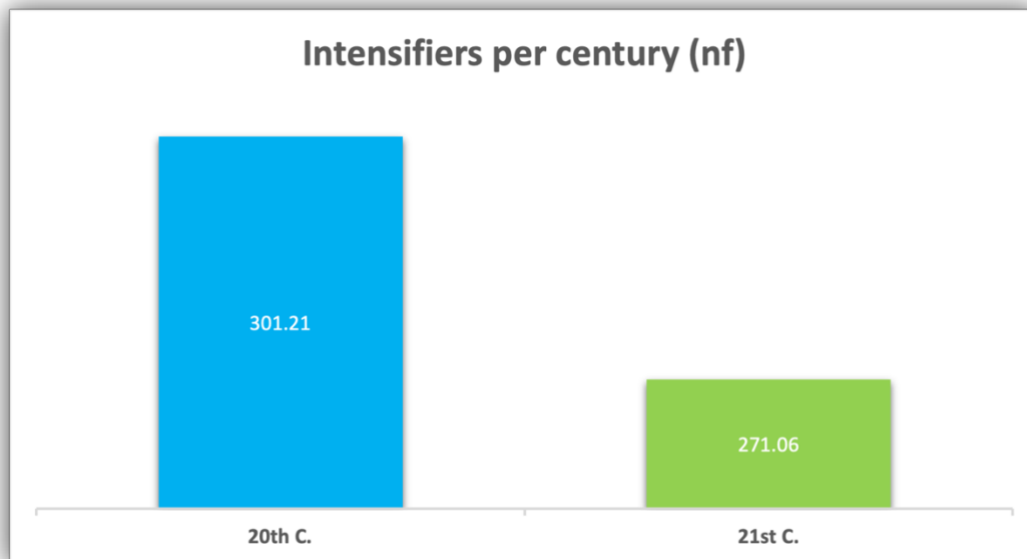


Figure 39. Use of intensifiers per century (nf)

Although the use of intensifiers between the twentieth and twenty-first centuries does not make a huge difference since it only differs in 30.15 occurrences per 10,000 words, the results continue to indicate a greater preference for the use of intensifiers (in comparison to suasive verbs), and therefore the use of different persuasion strategies.

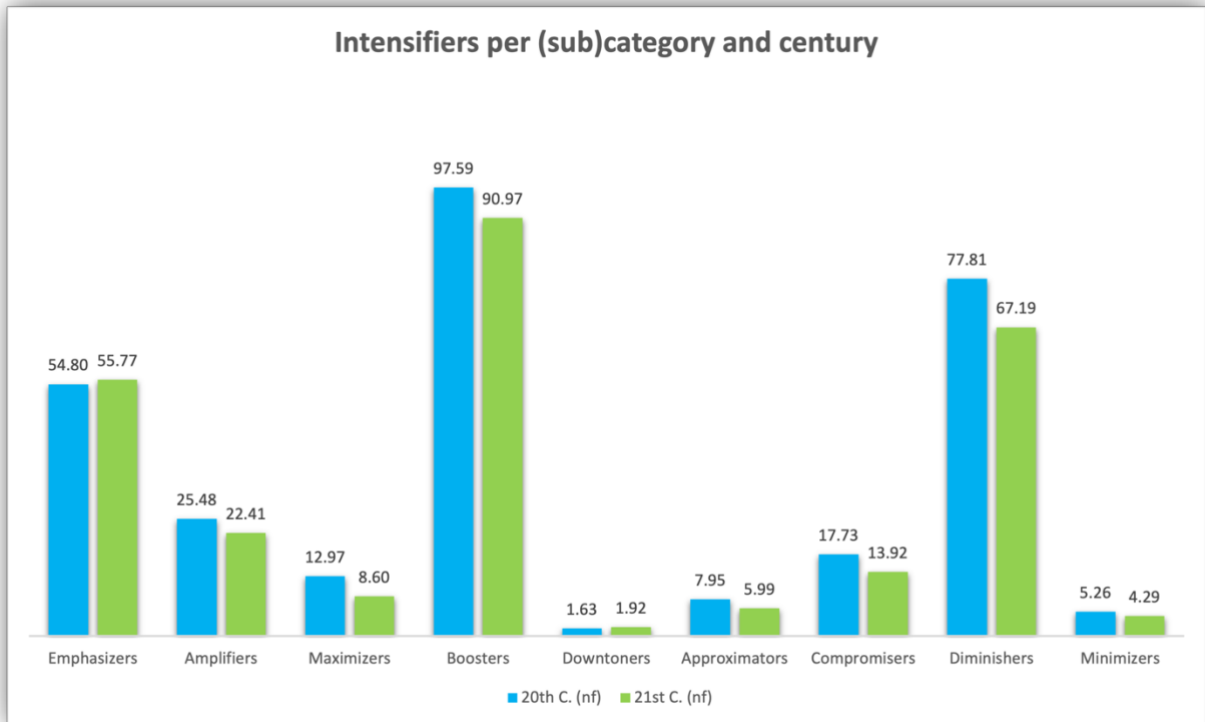


Figure 40. Use of intensifiers per (sub)category and century (nf)

If we analyse the frequency that each (sub)category has in both centuries (see Figure 40 above), we confirm that the results still show a decreasing use of intensifiers between the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in many of them, except that of *emphasizers* and *downtoners*, which increase from 54.80 to 55.77 and from 1.63 to 1.92, respectively. A couple of examples are *emphasizer just* (50) and *downtoner pretty* (51), which increase their frequency from 828 to 2,485 and from 49 to 174, respectively.

- (50) “Kaitlyn slammed a fresh magazine into the Browning MK III. Legs planted firmly, she leaned forward [just] a little, arms locked, and lined up the red dot.” (Crane 2013)
- (51) “I mean, it would be [pretty] useful then. They pair you with someone, someone you can feel close to, and you would know if he were in trouble.” (Truitt 2012)

Again, there is a general balance in the use of upgrading intensifiers such as *emphasizers* and *amplifiers*, as well as downgrading intensifiers like *approximators* and *minimizers*. This might imply that regardless of the field or period, as well as whether it is a utopia or dystopia, in the

case of fiction, or a more optimistic or pessimistic argument, in the case of non-fiction texts, the tone used to be more persuasive is often more positive than negative, or even neutral.

4.3. Distribution of intensifiers per sex of the author

The distribution of results in relation to sex, shown in Figure 41 below, reveals that female writers use more intensifiers than male writers, which might be indicating that subjectivity is more present in their texts when trying to convince their readership. Moreover, if we consider Burgoon and Stewart's (1974) observation on the gender-intensifier relation, we find a kind of little contradiction between the theory and practice in the use of amplifiers: the more convincing women attempt to be, the more amplifiers they use and the less persuasive they might be. Similarly, the low use of amplifiers by men could also make them less persuasive.

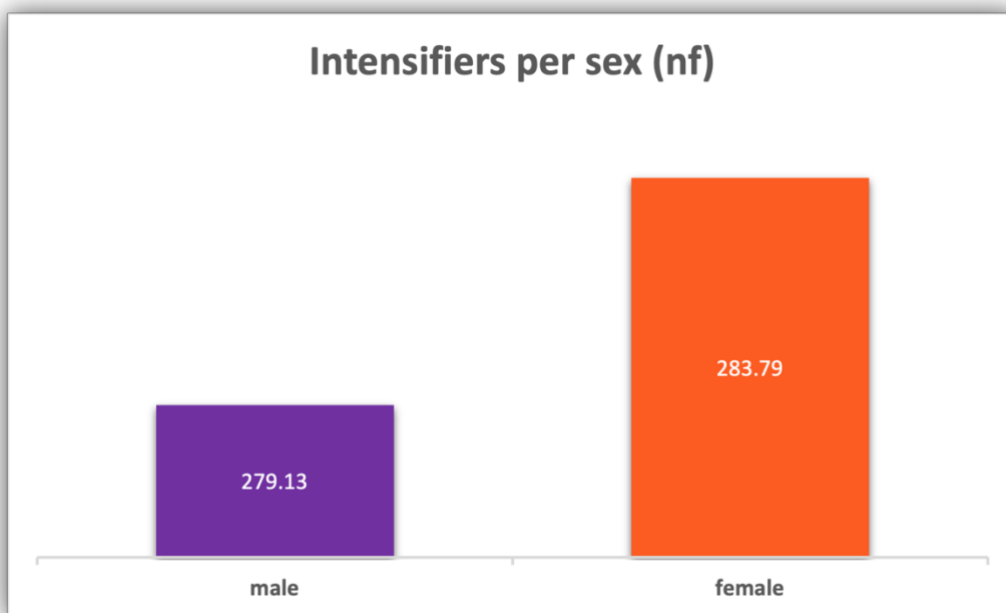


Figure 41. Use of Intensifiers per sex (nf)

The distribution of results denotes that, once more, women make a higher although not very significant use of intensifiers in contrast to men. As shown in Figure 41 above, there are 283.79 (nf) intensifiers in the set of female samples, whereas there are only 279.13 (nf) in the male set, making a difference of 4.66. Given that the difference itself is not very big, and that there is somewhat of a balance in the use of intensifiers, we could say that, as Janssen and Murachver (2004) and Guiller and Durndell (2006) pointed out, this use of intensifiers has to

do with a “socio-emotional” aspect of communication or even style. For instance, this makes sense if we consider that style might not only refer to writers’ use of language or idiosyncrasies but also “to the effectiveness of a mode of expression” (Crystal and Davy (1969). Moreover, if that style is motivated by a specific purpose, it becomes a choice, as Halliday (1994) highlighted (see section 2.2 in Chapter 1).

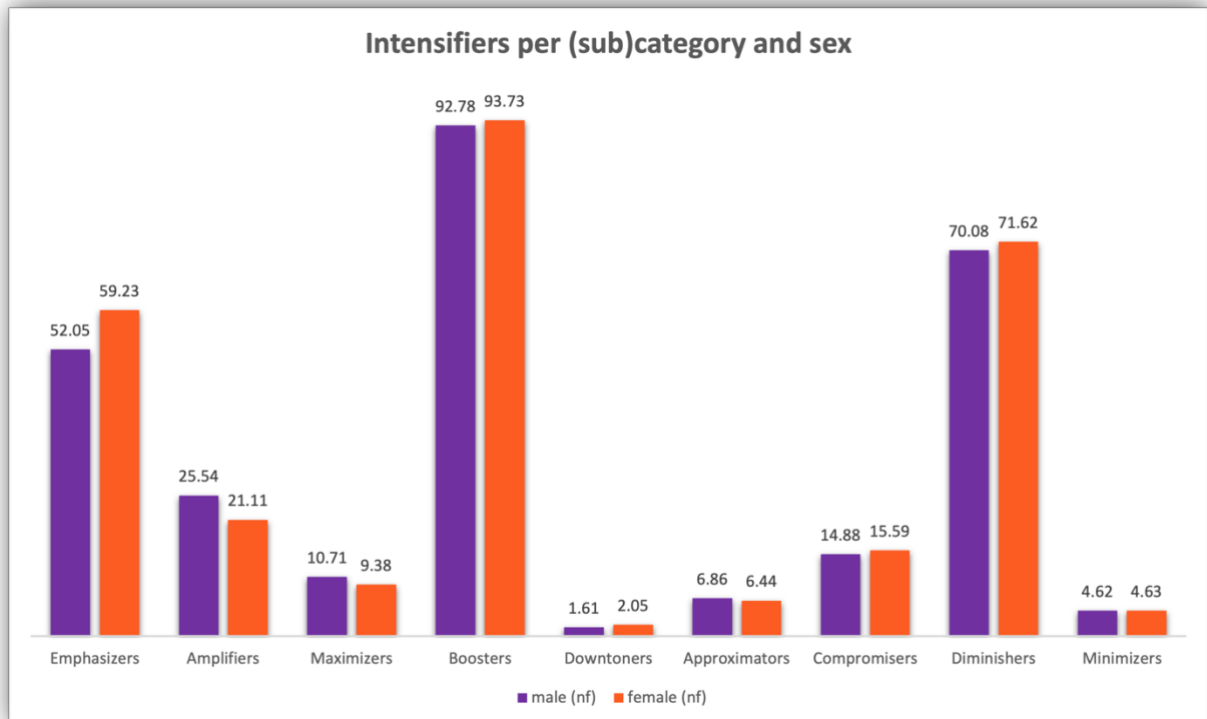


Figure 42. Use of intensifiers per (sub)category and sex (nf)

Moreover, if we compare both sexes and the corresponding (sub)categories (see Figure 42 above), we can see that the most frequently used intensifiers by female writers are boosters (93.73), such as *how*, *more*, and *so*; diminishers (71.52), like *but*, *mean*, and *only*; emphasizees (59.23), for example *just*, *sure*, and *really*; and compromisers (15.59) such as *enough*, *kind of* and *rather*. On the other hand, male writers seem to prefer amplifiers (25.54), maximizers (10.71) and approximators (6.86). Some examples are *true*, *great*, and *close*, in the case of amplifiers; *most*, *completely*, and *fully*, in the case of maximizers; and *almost*, *nearly*, and *virtually*, in the case of approximators.

By comparing these results with those highlighted in figures 30 and 41 of the previous sections, boosters, diminishers, emphasizees and amplifiers are, in general terms, the categories most often used in twentieth century fiction texts written by women. Compromisers,

maximizers and approximators, however, present a greater frequency of use in the twentieth century non-fiction texts written by men, except for approximators, whose use is greater in fiction texts; and compromisers, which are more used by female writers.

A noticeable aspect with respect to the two less frequent categories, that is, minimizers and downtoners, is that they only coincide in the sex variable. That is, the highest frequency of use is made by women. Thus, maximizers are more frequently used in twentieth century fiction texts, while downtoners are more frequently used in twenty-first century non-fiction texts. These results reinforce the idea that both sexes use upgrading and downgrading intensifiers combining them in a balanced way in their texts, although women tend to use more in 5 out of the 9 categories under study. In other words, women's subjectivity, involvement, and commitment within their writings confirm not only Holtgraves and Lasky's (1999: 196) concept of 'powerless style', but also to Lakoff's (1973, 1975, 1990) study on language, gender, and power, according to which women's use of hedges and intensifiers is more frequent than that of men.

Conclusions

The main goal of this study, as stated in the Introduction of this dissertation, has been to analyse the use of suasive verbs and intensifiers as linguistic strategies of persuasion as well as their relationship to the author's stance and style. Likewise, other aims were to ascertain how does persuasion manifest itself in fiction and non-fiction texts related to posthumanism, and if that manifestation is related to or affected by other variables such as the field (fiction or non-fiction), the period in which the texts were written, and the sex of the author, or not. To achieve this aim, this dissertation has followed Quirk et al. (1985) in what regards the classification of the types of intensifiers (as shown in Table 3), as well as Paradis (1997) and Huddleston and Pullum (2002, 2016) regarding the analysis of results. Data has been drawn from a purpose-built corpus of science fiction and non-fiction texts published by male and female authors between 1950 and 2017 and relating to transhumanism and posthumanism. This final chapter summarises the main findings of the dissertation and provides some possible further lines of research to improve the results and to contribute to a better understanding of the way in which

the explicit and implicit material of fiction and non-fiction texts provokes the persuasion of the reader about particular questions.

As can be seen in the general results section in Chapter 3, the use of intensifiers in the whole corpus is, by far, higher than that of suasive verbs. If we take a deeper look at the results by considering the variable that I have termed field, we can clearly see that suasive verbs are more often used in non-fiction than in fiction texts, whereas intensifiers, on the contrary, show a higher frequency in fiction than in non-fiction texts. If we consider that suasive verbs are linguistic elements whose meaning is perhaps more clearly perceived by writers and readers as an evident means of persuasion, these results lead us to think that non-fiction texts require a more explicit involvement on the part of authors than fiction ones, maybe because in fiction authors may resort to other devices not present in the academic and scientific register. The analysis of the use of suasive verbs and intensifiers between the twentieth and twenty-first centuries showed that both decrease faintly over time, which might have to do with style and the writing trend of the moment. The fact that the use of intensifiers is more frequent than that of suasive verbs regardless of the period could be also an indicator that intensifiers are the preferred tool for authors to strengthen their arguments and show emphasis, and hence, persuade their audience. As regards the third factor considered here, the results obtained in relation to the sex variable showed that, although the difference is very subtle, women use a slightly higher number of both suasive verbs and intensifiers than men. In the case of intensifiers, it could be said that these findings regarding PET confirm, like many other previous studies (see Bradac, Mulac and Thompson 1995; Stenström 1999; Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005), Lakoff's claim according to which women's frequent use of certain linguistic features such as intensifiers (e.g., *so*) compared to that of men can be qualified as a prominent feature of 'powerless language' due to their semantic vagueness. Besides, these results indicate that writers use intensifiers very frequently regardless of whether the text is fiction or non-fiction, or even regardless of the variables of period and sex.

When dealing with suasive verbs specifically, the analysis of the results according to the variable of field has drawn a picture in which non-fiction texts showed a clearly more frequent use of suasive verbs than fiction ones. Again, this leads us to think that fiction texts might not require as much authorial presence as non-fiction texts, and that fiction texts are endowed with other linguistic features or different kinds of resources through which engage readers. The distribution of results regarding the variable of time revealed that, although the

difference between the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries is not very big, and it does not occur with all the cases, the use of suasive verbs decreases over time. This frequency reduction seems to be affected by the so-called political correctness (see Hughes 2010) if we consider that the way of conveying a message depends on the choice of linguistic features for a specific purpose. When considering the sex of the author in terms of persuading the reader, the distribution of results has shown that female writers make a greater though not very significant use of suasive verbs than their male counterparts, especially in non-fiction texts. In that sense, results suggest not only the need to be more convincing in their arguments, but also that regardless of whether it is a fiction or non-fiction text, women tend to be more involved with what they express, which implies more subjectivity or even a more affiliative approach and hence less assertiveness. This is what Holmes (2001) and many others also characterised as the “powerless language style” due to its lack of authoritativeness.

As it has been seen in the case of the intensifiers, boosters and diminishers have been, by far, the (sub)categories with the highest frequencies in contrast to minimizers and downtoners. When examining these results in the light of the three variables under study, the data have shown that the intensifiers scaling upwards were much more often used than those scaling downwards, regardless of the field, period, and sex of the author. One of the most striking findings about amplifiers has been that those intensifiers that one might recognise as the most common when it comes to emphasising or reinforcing an expression, for example *entirely*, *highly*, or *perfectly*, were not at the top of the frequency list. Findings according to the field have revealed that there is not much difference between CoFiPET and CoNFIPET, even though the total number of words in each subcorpus contrasts considerably. For instance, the distribution of the different (sub)categories of intensifiers has indicated that five out of nine types of intensifiers have a higher number of uses in fiction texts, in contrast to that of non-fiction, which have shown the lowest figures. In the subcorpus of fiction, diminishers, emphasisers, and amplifiers have had the highest number of occurrences, whereas in the corpus of non-fiction, the most frequently used intensifiers have been boosters, followed by compromisers and maximizers. Fiction samples have shown a more frequent use of intensifiers than that of non-fiction, thus indicating that authorial presence in both subcorpora does not differ much when it comes to the use of intensifiers. As previously stated in Chapter 3, the high frequency of use shown by intensifiers compared to suasive verbs confirms, in a way, Huddleston and Pullum’s (2002, 2016) claim, according to which intensifiers might act as semantically vacuous fillers that allow authors to express their subjectivity and hence become

or act as agents of persuasion. This is so, especially if we consider that the repetition of intensifiers, and therefore their increase in frequency, seems to be almost replacing the use of suasive verbs. Finally, it could be said that in the subcorpus-(sub)category binomial, the most frequently used intensifiers have revealed that there is a greater preference for the ones scaling upwards (according to the classification of degree modifiers shown in Chapter 1) despite the balance of use that boosters, diminishers and emphasizeers shown in Figure 38. The distribution of results in relation to the variable of period, however, has revealed that the use of intensifiers, decreases over time, contrary to what might be expected. As already mentioned, this might be indicating that there is a tendency to avoid certain expressions depending on style and trends. The analysis of the results according to the sex of the author has drawn a picture in which women seem to make a higher although not very significant use of intensifiers in comparison to men. This data leads us to believe that subjectivity is more present in texts by female authors when trying to convince their readership and, therefore, this use of intensifiers has to do with a “socio-emotional” aspect of communication or even style, as Burgoon and Stewart’s (1974) have observed.

Having attempted to answer to my initial research questions, as well as to verify my hypothesis, we have seen that the use of suasive verbs is considerably lower than that of intensifiers. It seems then that since the presence of suasive verbs in the texts is more noticeable than that of intensifiers, writers choose to reduce the use of suasive verbs, making a conscious or unconscious greater use of intensifiers. This is what is reflected in the results we have obtained and discussed and highlights the fact that, although they are more subtle, intensifiers have a very relevant role in reinforcing the meaning conveyed. Besides, as has also been seen, the texts aimed at highlighting the benefits or qualities of technology by providing a more positive perspective, tend to make a greater use of upgrading intensifiers. On the contrary, fiction and non-fiction texts that aim to highlight the most negative, worrying, or dangerous aspects of technology or artificial intelligence, tend to use downgrading intensifiers. In any case, positive and negative (or even neutral) viewpoints can be equally persuasive and rely on metadiscourse (Hyland and Tse, 2004). After all, it is its purpose, together with the context and the choices of specific linguistic features such as suasive verbs, intensifiers, and the combination of both, among other features, what makes a text persuasive.

We can then point out that findings regarding the field have shown that there is an interesting difference between fiction and non-fiction texts. For instance, suasive verbs are

more often used in CoNFIPET than in CoFiPET, whereas intensifiers show a higher frequency in CoFiPET than in CoNFIPET. These results lead us to think that maybe fiction texts require less involvement on the part of authors than non-fiction, thus making the latter make more use of suasive verbs. Likewise, and since intensifiers seem to reinforce the meaning of what is expressed in the most subtle way, they appear more times in fiction texts. By comparing the distribution of results according to the variable of period, that is, twentieth and twenty-first centuries, we have found that both suasive verbs and intensifiers have decreased their frequency over time. Although this reduction is not very noteworthy, results suggest that the reason might be related to style as means of choice and even the fashions of the moment thus implying a minor use of suasive verbs. According to the sex of the author, findings indicate that women use a slightly higher number of suasive verbs and intensifiers in comparison to men, which suggests their need to be more persuasive. Finally, it has been clearly shown that authors use intensifiers very frequently regardless of the period (see Section 2.2 in Chapter 3), their sex, or even regardless of whether the text they produce is fiction or non-fiction. This may be so because intensifiers are the trending (and hence preferred) resource for writers to strengthen their arguments or the meaning of their expressions and show emphasis, as well as possibly one of the most effective in terms of increasing the emotional content of a sentence.

All in all, the results of my study, then, suggest that the reduction in the use of suasive verbs occurs because they seem to be more appealing or striking than intensifiers, which, on the contrary, are more subtle or discreet. Moreover, my analysis shows that suasive verbs and intensifiers tend to co-occur on certain occasions, as well as to be accompanied by other features such as conditionals or modals that help to make the argument more eloquent and hence persuasive. As this was not one of the aims of this dissertation, it has not been dealt with here. However, in this light, this analysis intends to be the starting point for further research, in the hope that it might contribute to a better understanding of how, the explicit and implicit material of the texts constitute an act of persuasion in science fiction literature as well as in non-fiction works related to posthumanism.

These possibilities for further research could take several possible avenues. Regarding the linguistic context, the study could include some other variables, parameters and approaches which have not been considered here. Such is the case of what I have labelled *tone* which has been mentioned just in passing but which deserves a more in-depth study. Also, the combination of suasive verbs with intensifiers and a CDA approach to this same material could

provide some unexpected findings. Thus, further analysis of the results obtained by considering aspects such as interdiscursivity, intertextuality, or socio-political and historical contexts could benefit and enrich the study considerably. Considering the examination of the extra-linguistic data contained in Appendix 1, new variables such as the genre of the texts or even the nationalities of the authors could be of particular interest to further identify the influence of patterns associated with the genre, narrative, as well as culture or idiosyncrasies that might influence the precise wording of the texts. Another obvious line of research to exploit PET would involve the examination of suasive verbs and intensifiers in other corpora, as already done with suasive verbs in the Corpus of English Life Sciences Texts (CELiST), a subcorpus of the CC (Barsaglini-Castro 2021), so that further differences could be found. Outside the domain of linguistic persuasion there are many other research questions to be asked and, although compiled for this doctoral dissertation, PET has yet many possibilities of exploitation in the future.

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Appendices

1. Appendix 1: PET metadata

Sample of Excel including extra-linguistic information about PET

File name (ID)	Title	Author	Format	Sex	Date	Field	Genre	No. Tokens	Source	Nationality
sf_1950_Asimov_m	<i>I Robot</i>	Isaac Asimov	txt	male	1950	fiction	novel	72,561	iBooks	American
sf_1968_Clarke_m	<i>2001: A Space Odyssey</i>	Arthur C. Clarke	txt	male	1968	fiction	novel	62,523	Amazon	British
sf_1968_Dick_m	<i>Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?</i>	Philip K. Dick	txt	male	1968	fiction	novel	65,658	iBooks	American
nf_1973_Boden_f	<i>How Artificial Is Artificial Intelligence?</i>	Margaret A. Boden	txt	female	1973	non fiction	article	6,250	JSTOR	English
sf_1974_Bayley_m	<i>The Soul of the Robot</i>	Barrington J. Bayley	txt	male	1974	fiction	novel	72,857	iBooks	British
nf_1984_Glover_m	<i>"Control" in What Sort of People Should There Be?</i>	Jonathan Glover	txt	male	1984	non fiction	book chapter	4,523	What Sort of People Should There Be? (Ch.6)	British
nf_1990_Pollock_m	<i>Philosophy and Artificial Intelligence</i>	John Pollock	txt	male	1990	non fiction	article	12,683	JSTOR	American
nf_1991_Haraway_f	<i>"A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth</i>	Donna Haraway	txt	female	1991	non fiction	book chapter	14,538	Simians, cyborgs and women: The reinvention of nature (Ch.8)	American

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	<i>Century" in Simians, cyborgs and women: The reinvention of nature</i>									
nf_1992_Harris_f	<i>Artificial Intelligence & the Law - Innovation in a Laggard Market?</i>	Vicky Harris	txt	female	1992	non fiction	article	4,249	Journal of Law, Information and Science	Unknown
sf_1993_Kress_f	<i>Beggars in Spain</i>	Nancy Kress	txt	female	1993	fiction	novel	128,223	Amazon	American
sf_1994_Egan_m	<i>Permutation City</i>	Greg Egan	txt	male	1994	fiction	novel	112,803	Amazon	Australian
nf_1996_Sharkey_f	<i>On Combining Artificial Neural Nets</i>	Amanda J. C Sharkey	txt	female	1996	non fiction	article	7,333	Connection Science	British
nf_1997_Ansell-Pearson_m	<i>"Loving the Poison: The memory of the human and the promise of the overhuman" in Viroid Life: Perspectives on Nietzsche and the Transhuman Condition</i>	Keith Ansell-Pearson	txt	male	1997	non fiction	book chapter	13,161	Viroid Life (Ch.1)	British
nf_1999_Hayles_f	<i>"The semiotics of virtuality: mapping the posthuman" in How We Became Posthuman</i>	N. Katherine Hayles	txt	female	1999	non fiction	book chapter	15,602	How We Became Posthuman (Ch.10)	American
nf_1999_Kirby_f	<i>Human Nature</i>	Vicki Kirby	txt	female	1999	non fiction	article	5,925	Australian Feminist Studies	English

nf_2000_Clough_f	<i>The Technical Substrates of Unconscious Memory: Rereading Derrida's Freud in the Age of Teletechnology</i>	Patricia Ticineto Clough	txt	female	2000	non fiction	article	9,549	JSTOR	American
nf_2002_Fukuyama_m	<i>"A Tale of Two Dystopias" in Our posthuman future: Consequences of the biotechnology revolution</i>	Francis Fukuyama	txt	male	2002	non fiction	book chapter	5,512	Our Posthuman Nature (Ch.1)	American
nf_2005_Turkle_f	<i>"Personal Computers with Personal Meanings" in The second self: Computers and the human spirit</i>	Sherry Turkle	txt	female	2005	non fiction	book chapter	12,453	The second self: computers and the human spirit (Ch.5)	American
nf_2007_Stvenson_f	<i>Trying to Plug In: Posthuman Cyborgs and the Search for Connection</i>	Melissa Colleen Stevenson	txt	female	2007	non fiction	article	10,002	JSTOR	American
nf_2007_Doucet_m	<i>Anthropological Challenges Raised by Neuroscience: Some Ethical Reflections</i>	Hubert Doucet	txt	male	2007	non fiction	article	3,437	Cambridge Core	French
nf_2009_Doede_m	<i>Transhumanism, technology, and the future: Posthumanity</i>	Bob Doede	txt	male	2009	non fiction	article	11,957	Research Gate	American/Canadian

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	<i>emerging or sub-humanity descending?</i>									
nf_2009_Hauskeller_m	<i>Prometheus unbound: Transhumanist arguments from (human) nature</i>	Michael Hauskeller	txt	male	2009	non fiction	article	6,635	Research Gate	German-British
sf_2009_Bacigalupi_m	<i>The Windup Girl</i>	Paolo Bacigalupi	txt	male	2009	fiction	novel	147,612	Amazon	American
nf_2010_Jotterand_m	<i>At the Roots of Transhumanism: From the Enlightenment to a Post-Human Future</i>	Fabrice Jotterand	txt	male	2010	non fiction	article	1,630	Journal of Medicine and Philosophy	Swede/american?
sf_2011_Sobon_f	<i>Program 13</i>	Nicole Sobon	txt	female	2011	fiction	novel	69,520	Amazon	American
sf_2011_Wilson_m	<i>Robopocalypse</i>	Daniel H. Wilson	txt	male	2011	fiction	novel	105,497	iBooks	American
nf_2012_Gagnon_m	<i>"The Problem of Transhumanism in the Light of Philosophy and Theology" in The Blackwell Companion to Science and Christianity</i>	Philippe Gagnon	txt	male	2012	non fiction	book chapter	6,357	The Blackwell Companion to Science and Christianity (Ch.34)	Canadian
nf_2012_Herzfeld_f	<i>"In Whose Image? Artificial Intelligence and the Imago Dei" in The Blackwell Companion to Science and Christianity</i>	Noreen Herzfeld	txt	female	2012	non fiction	book chapter	5,174	The Blackwell Companion to Science and Christianity (Ch.43)	American

sf_2012_Hertling_m	<i>A.I. Apocalypse</i>	William Hertling	txt	male	2012	fiction	novel	71,531	iBooks	American
sf_2012_Meyer_f	<i>Cinder</i>	Marissa Meyer	txt	female	2012	fiction	novel	90,850	Amazon	American
sf_2012_Truitt_f	<i>Chosen Ones</i>	Tiffany Truitt	txt	female	2012	fiction	novel	79,637	Amazon	American
nf_2013_Bostrom_m	<i>"Why I Want to be a Posthuman When I Grow Up" in The Transhumanist Reader: Classical and Contemporary Essays on the Science, Technology, and Philosophy of the Human Future</i>	Nick Bostrom	txt	male	2013	non fiction	book chapter	15,817	The Transhumanist Reader_Classical and Contemporary Essays on the Science, Technology, and Philosophy of the Human Future (Ch.3)	Swedish
nf_2013_Braidotti_f	<i>"Post-Humanism: Life beyond the Self" in The posthuman</i>	Rosi Braidotti	txt	female	2013	non fiction	book chapter	14,570	The posthuman (Ch.1)	Italian-Australian
nf_2013_More_m	<i>"The Philosophy of Transhumanism" in The Transhumanist Reader: Classical and Contemporary Essays on the Science, Technology, and Philosophy of</i>	Max More	txt	male	2013	non fiction	book chapter	7,358	The Transhumanist Reader_Classical and Contemporary Essays on the Science, Technology, and Philosophy of the Human Future (Ch.1)	English

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	<i>the Human Future</i>									
nf_2013_Neill_m	<i>Using Artificial Intelligence to Improve Hospital Inpatient Care</i>	Daniel B. Neill	txt	male	2013	non fiction	article	2,192	IEEE_Intelligent Systems	American
sf_2013_Crane_f	<i>Freak of Nature</i>	Julia Crane	txt	female	2013	fiction	novel	54,769	Amazon	American
sf_2013_Tintera_f	<i>Reboot</i>	Amy Tintera	txt	female	2013	fiction	novel	83,635	Amazon	American
nf_2014_Ferrando_f	<i>Posthumanism, Transhumanism, Antihumanism, Metahumanism, and New Materialisms: Differences and Relations</i>	Francesca Ferrando	txt	female	2014	non fiction	article	4,961	Research Gate	American
nf_2014_Rothblatt_f	<i>"The future of forever" in Virtually human: The promise - and the peril - of digital immortality</i>	Martine Rothblatt	txt	female	2014	non fiction	book chapter	7,914	Virtually human: The promise - and the peril - of digital immortality (Ch. 10)	American
nf_2014_Vita-More_f	<i>"Design of Life Expansion and the Human Mind" in The Intelligence Unbound: Future of Uploaded and Machine Minds</i>	Natasha Vita-More	txt	female	2014	non fiction	book chapter	2,554	The Intelligence Unbound: Future of Uploaded and Machine Minds (Ch.17)	American
nf_2014_Wellington_f	<i>"Whole Brain Emulation: Invasive vs.</i>	Naomi Wellington	txt	female	2014	non fiction	book chapter	5,936	The Intelligence Unbound: Future of Uploaded and	Unknown

	<i>Non-Invasive Methods" in The Intelligence Unbound: Future of Uploaded and Machine Minds</i>								Machine Minds (Ch.11)	
sf_2014_Kawaii_f	<i>Adaline</i>	Denise Kawaii	txt	female	2014	fiction	novel	61,307	Amazon	American
nf_2015_Klichowski_m	<i>Transhumanism and the idea of education in the world of cyborgs</i>	Michal Klichowski	txt	male	2015	non fiction	book chapter	2,361	Research Gate	Polish
sf_2015_Wolf_m	<i>After Mind</i>	Spencer Wolf	txt	male	2015	fiction	novel	114,160	Amazon	American
nf_2016_Habibi_m	<i>The Indispensability of the Humanities for the 21st Century</i>	Don Habibi	txt	male	2016	non fiction	article	13,956	Humanities — Open Access Journal	American
nf_2016_Schneider_f	<i>"Mindscan: Transcending and Enhancing the Human Brain" in Science Fiction and Philosophy: From Time Travel to Superintelligence</i>	Susan Schneider	txt	female	2016	non fiction	book chapter	6,515	Science Fiction and Philosophy: From Time Travel to Superintelligence (Ch.19)	American*
nf_2016_Skågeby_m	<i>Im/possible desires: media temporalities and (post)human technology relationships</i>	Jörgen Skågeby	txt	male	2016	non fiction	article	7,952	Confero: Essays on Education, Philosophy and Politics	Swedish

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sf_2016_Katz_f	<i>The Cybernetic Tea Shop</i>	Meredith Katz	txt	female	2016	fiction	novel	23,616	iBooks	Canadian
sf_2016_Stone_f	<i>Machinations</i>	Hayley Stone	txt	female	2016	fiction	novel	117,028	iBooks	American
nf_2017_Holm_m	<i>Evaluating the posthuman future - Some philosophical problems</i>	Søren Holm	txt	male	2017	non fiction	article	3,911	Cambridge Core	English/DANISH

Full access to the whole table is available in the following [link](#).

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2. Appendix 2: Resumen de la Tesis doctoral

Conocida como literatura de anticipación, una de las principales características de la ciencia ficción es su conexión con la investigación científica y las nuevas tecnologías. Tomando como referencia la realidad, las historias de ciencia ficción se construyen extrapolando hechos creíbles y/o leyes físicas para especular sobre un futuro distópico o utópico incierto que podría trascender (o no) la ficción. Dotada de temas que reflexionan sobre el desarrollo tecnológico, la inteligencia artificial y la evolución humana, así como el transhumanismo y el posthumanismo, además de personajes específicos como robots, androides, cyborgs y humanoides, la ciencia ficción amplía el alcance de lo que las personas ven como posible, facilitando la comprensión y asimilación de realidades alternativas. La única herramienta que utilizan estos textos para hacerlo es el lenguaje y es precisamente por ello que una de las principales fuentes de interés respecto a su estudio radica en su uso del lenguaje, debido a sus características estilísticas, que difieren de las de otros tipos de manifestaciones textuales como el discurso científico.

Según Biber (1998: 1), el estudio del lenguaje se puede dividir en el ‘estudio de la estructura’ o análisis lingüístico, y el ‘estudio del uso’, que, al menos para este estudio, se puede relacionar con la pragmática. Yule (2010: 128), por su parte, destaca que la pragmática es el estudio del significado ‘invisible’ o de cómo reconocemos e inferimos lo que se quiere decir, incluso cuando no se dice o escribe directamente, lo que nos lleva a plantearnos si lo que se comunica es realmente lo que el destinatario interpreta, o lo que el emisor quería transmitir. De esto, podemos inferir que el uso del lenguaje se ve afectado no sólo por el contexto en el que se usa, sino también por un propósito. En este sentido, la intencionalidad parece jugar un papel importante en la escritura ya que cualquier texto (por ejemplo, expositivo, descriptivo o narrativo) que pretenda obtener un resultado debe ser persuasivo. Una de mis preguntas generales de investigación sobre este tema es si la persuasión del lector tiene que ver con el lenguaje (por medio del estilo, la gramática y/o el léxico) o incluso con otras variables como el campo (es decir, ficción o no ficción), el sexo del autor, el período o fecha en que se escribió la obra, el tema y el tono (es decir, utopía o distopía), entre otros. Así, una hipótesis inicial respecto a los textos de ficción es que las novelas de ciencia ficción tienden a ser distopías o tramas postapocalípticas para enganchar al lector desde el principio. Además, si consideramos la variable sexo, podemos encontrar que muchas de las novelas escritas por mujeres tienden a

ser románticas, lo que nos lleva a pensar que el atractivo en la ficción tiene que ver con la trama más que con el tema en sí. No obstante, es igualmente válido para hacer el contenido más atractivo y emocionante, y, por tanto, persuasivo. En ese sentido, y dado que la ficción permite que los lectores se involucren en la historia y regresen a sus mundos “reales” o realidad, parece fácil contrastar pros y contras, aludir a distopías y concluir con finales optimistas y prometedores como: “felices para siempre”.

En términos de mejora, trascendencia y evolución, los textos de ficción tienden a ser más positivos y creíbles a pesar de los aspectos negativos destacados. Los textos de no ficción, por otro lado, parecen ser más realistas y directos al proporcionar argumentos positivos, negativos o incluso neutrales que pueden basarse en aspectos como el metadiscurso o el lenguaje. En ese sentido, el metadiscurso se puede definir como “la gama de dispositivos que utilizan los escritores para organizar explícitamente sus textos, captar la atención de los lectores y señalar sus actitudes hacia el material y la audiencia” (Hyland y Tse 2004). Cuando usamos el metadiscurso, estamos estructurando una relación a tres bandas entre el texto, el lector y el escritor, lo que creo que no se aleja demasiado del concepto de postura (*stance*). Esto es así, especialmente si, como mencioné en un trabajo anterior, se considera que la postura está “estrechamente relacionada con las estrategias persuasivas” ya que se refiere a “la forma en que los escritores se comunican con los lectores a través de sus textos” (véase Moskowich 2017: 74 y Barsaglini-Castro 2021:171). La postura también se manifiesta como la expresión abierta de la actitud o el compromiso de un autor con el mensaje y, por lo tanto, su análisis cubre las elecciones lingüísticas que incluyen aquellas formas en que los autores se mencionan a sí mismos al dar sus opiniones. Tal presencia autoral se ha convertido en un aspecto crucial en el estudio del lenguaje por los diversos tipos de valoraciones o juicios que puede transmitir, y por la forma en que estos se transmiten a los destinatarios. Siguiendo la teoría de Landert (2017: 489), según la cual la postura influye en la percepción de las historias, y considerando que los lectores son de alguna manera ‘guiados’ por la redacción precisa del texto (Hyland 2005; Toolan 2010), parece lógico pensar que la presencia autoral es un aspecto significativo de la persuasión. Después de todo, es el escritor quien decide qué marcadores del discurso utilizar, y cuándo y cómo pueden emplearse mejor para influir en el lector. También debemos señalar aquí que a pesar de la diferencia que pueda existir entre el compromiso y la postura, el compromiso de los autores con sus ideas, la confianza que muestran y la identidad que proyectan sirven para reforzar su credibilidad (Hyland 2002: 1091, 2005: 173). Con todas estas ideas en mente, parece que existe una relación directa entre la persuasión y el estilo,

especialmente si consideramos cómo los escritores logran sus propósitos a través del lenguaje que utilizan en sus trabajos.

Una de las principales razones por las cuales se ha elegido el transhumanismo y el posthumanismo para el estudio de la persuasión es que, como afirma Harbridge, “la influencia es el comienzo de casi todo lo que creamos” (2017). Por tanto, parece lógico relacionar el concepto de “creatividad” principalmente (aunque no exclusivamente) con la ficción, y el de “influencia” con el de persuasión. Por ejemplo, si consideramos que las novelas de ciencia ficción anteriores se han convertido en nuestra realidad (por ejemplo, los viajes espaciales), da la impresión de que, de algún modo, estas novelas nos han influenciado o inspirado para materializar lo escrito. En términos de influencia, la terminología específica no tiene por qué ser un tema relevante para aludir al posthumanismo y cambiar de opinión. El *engagement*²⁶ también puede ocurrir gracias a la repetición, la originalidad, la novedad, la creatividad o el humor y, por lo tanto, hacernos creer o hacer algo. En palabras de Toolan: “Es difícil ver cómo una narración, en sí misma, puede constituir un acto de persuasión, un intento de lograr que el lector u oyente haga algo o vea las cosas de cierta manera. No directamente.” (véase Toolan 2011: 18).

El objetivo principal de este estudio, tal como se indica en la Introducción de esta tesis, ha sido analizar el uso de los verbos persuasivos y los intensificadores como estrategias lingüísticas de persuasión, así como su relación con el *stance* y el estilo del autor. Asimismo, conocer cómo se manifiesta la persuasión en los textos de ficción y no ficción relacionados con el posthumanismo, y si esa manifestación está relacionada o se ve afectada o no por otras variables como el campo (ficción o no ficción), el período en el que los textos fueron escritos, y el sexo del autor. Para lograr este objetivo, esta tesis doctoral ha seguido a Quirk et al. (1985) en lo que respecta a la clasificación de los tipos de intensificadores (como se muestra en la Tabla 3), así como a Paradis (1997) y Huddleston y Pullum (2002, 2016) en cuanto al análisis de resultados. Los datos se han extraído de una selección de textos de ciencia ficción y no ficción publicados por autores y autoras entre 1950 y 2017 y relacionados con el transhumanismo y el posthumanismo. Este capítulo final resume los principales hallazgos de la tesis y proporciona algunas posibles líneas de investigación adicionales para mejorar los resultados y contribuir a una mejor comprensión de cómo el material explícito e implícito de los textos de ficción y no ficción provoca la persuasión del lector sobre determinadas cuestiones.

²⁶ La terminología de origen anglosajón aparecerá en la lengua original e indicada en cursiva.

Como se puede observar en el apartado de resultados generales del Capítulo 3, el uso de intensificadores en todo el corpus es, con diferencia, superior al de verbos persuasivos. Si profundizamos en los resultados considerando la variable que he denominado como campo (*field*), podemos ver claramente que los verbos persuasivos se utilizan más en los textos de no ficción que en los de ficción, mientras que los intensificadores, por el contrario, muestran una mayor frecuencia en los textos de ficción que en los de no ficción. Si consideramos que los verbos persuasivos son elementos lingüísticos cuyo significado es quizás más claramente percibido por escritores y lectores como un medio evidente de persuasión, estos resultados nos llevan a pensar que los textos de no ficción requieren más implicación por parte de los autores que los de ficción, y por tanto hacen un uso más frecuente de los verbos persuasivos en comparación a los intensificadores. El análisis del uso de los verbos persuasivos y los intensificadores entre los siglos XX y XXI mostró que ambos disminuyen levemente con el tiempo, lo que puede tener que ver con el estilo y la corriente de escritura del momento. El hecho de que el uso de intensificadores sea más frecuente que el de verbos persuasivos, independientemente del período, podría ser también un indicador de que los intensificadores son la herramienta preferida por los autores para fortalecer sus argumentos y mostrar énfasis y, por lo tanto, persuadir a su audiencia. En cuanto al tercer factor aquí considerado, los resultados obtenidos en relación con la variable sexo muestran que, aunque la diferencia es muy sutil, las mujeres utilizan un número ligeramente superior tanto de verbos persuasivos como de intensificadores que los hombres. En el caso de los intensificadores, podría decirse que estos hallazgos en PET confirman, al igual que muchos otros estudios previos (véase Bradac, Mulac y Thompson 1995; Stenström 1999; Tagliamonte y Roberts 2005), la afirmación de Lakoff según la cual el uso frecuente por parte de las mujeres de ciertas características lingüísticas como los intensificadores (por ejemplo, *so*) en comparación con las de los hombres pueden calificarse como una característica destacada del “lenguaje débil” (*powerless language*) debido a su *semantic vagueness*. Además, estos resultados indican que los escritores utilizan intensificadores con mucha frecuencia independientemente de si el texto es ficción o no ficción, o incluso independientemente de las variables como la época y el sexo.

Tratando específicamente con verbos persuasivos, el análisis de los resultados, según la variable de campo, ha expuesto que los textos de no ficción muestran un uso claramente más frecuente de verbos persuasivos que los de ficción, lo que lleva a pensar que los textos de ficción podrían no requerir tanta presencia del autor como los textos de no ficción, y que los textos de ficción están dotados de otras características lingüísticas o diferentes tipos de recursos a través de los cuales atraen a los lectores. La distribución de resultados con respecto a la

variable de tiempo reveló que, si bien la diferencia entre el siglo XX y el XXI no es muy grande, y aunque no ocurre en todos los casos, el uso de verbos persuasivos decrece con el tiempo. Esta reducción de frecuencia parece verse afectada por la llamada corrección política si consideramos que la forma de transmitir un mensaje depende de la elección de rasgos lingüísticos para un propósito específico. Al considerar el sexo del autor en términos de persuasión del lector, la distribución de los resultados ha mostrado que las escritoras hacen un uso mayor, aunque no muy significativo, de los verbos persuasivos que sus homólogos masculinos, especialmente en textos de no ficción. En ese sentido, los resultados sugieren no sólo la necesidad de ser más convincentes en sus argumentos, sino también que independientemente de si se trata de un texto de ficción o de no ficción, las mujeres tienden a involucrarse más con lo que expresan, lo que implica más subjetividad o incluso un enfoque más afiliativo y por lo tanto menos asertivo. Esto es lo que Holmes (2001) y muchos otros también caracterizaron como el “estilo de lenguaje débil” (*powerless language style*) debido a la falta de autoridad.

Como se ha visto en el caso de los intensificadores, los *boosters* y los *diminishers* han sido, con diferencia, las (sub)categorías con mayores frecuencias frente a los *minimizers* y los *downtoners*. Al comparar estos resultados con las tres variables en estudio, los datos han mostrado que los intensificadores de escala ascendente han sido mucho más utilizados que los de escala descendente, independientemente del campo, período y sexo del autor. Uno de los hallazgos más llamativos sobre los amplificadores ha sido que aquellos intensificadores que uno podría reconocer como los más utilizados cuando se trata de enfatizar o reforzar una expresión, por ejemplo, *entirely*, *highly*, o *perfectly*, no estaban en la parte superior de la lista de frecuencias. Los hallazgos con respecto al campo han revelado que no hay mucha diferencia entre CoFiPET y CoNFiPET, aunque el número total de palabras en cada subcorpus contrasta considerablemente. Por ejemplo, la distribución de las diferentes (sub)categorías de intensificadores ha indicado que cinco de los nueve tipos de intensificadores tienen un mayor número de usos en los textos de ficción, en contraste con los de no ficción, que han mostrado las cifras más bajas. En el subcorpus de ficción, los *diminishers*, *emphasizers* y *amplifiers* han tenido el mayor número de ocurrencias, mientras que, en el corpus de no ficción, por el contrario, los intensificadores más utilizados han sido los *boosters*, seguidos de los *compromisers* y los *maximizers*. Las muestras de ficción han mostrado un uso más frecuente de intensificadores que los de no ficción, lo que indica que la presencia autoral en ambos subcorpus no difiere mucho en cuanto al uso de intensificadores. Como se indicó anteriormente en el Capítulo 3, la alta frecuencia de uso que muestran los intensificadores en comparación

con los verbos persuasivos confirma, en cierto modo, la afirmación de Huddleston y Pullum (2002, 2016), según la cual los intensificadores podrían actuar como rellenos semánticamente vacíos (*semantically vacuous fillers*) que permiten a los autores expresar su subjetividad y, por lo tanto, se convierten o actúan como agentes de persuasión. Esto es así, sobre todo si tenemos en cuenta que la repetición de los intensificadores, y por tanto su aumento de frecuencia, parece estar casi sustituyendo al uso de los verbos persuasivos. Finalmente, podría decirse que en el binomio subcorpus-(sub)categoría, los intensificadores más utilizados han revelado que existe una mayor preferencia por los de escala ascendente (según la clasificación de modificadores de grado que se muestra en el Capítulo 1) a pesar del equilibrio de uso que *boosters*, *diminishers* y *emphasizers* se muestra en la Figura 38. La distribución de resultados en relación con la variable de período, sin embargo, ha mostrado que el uso de intensificadores decrece en el tiempo, al contrario de lo que cabría esperar. Como ya se mencionó, esto podría estar indicando que existe una tendencia a evitar ciertas expresiones según el estilo y las tendencias del momento. El análisis de los resultados según el sexo del autor ha reflejado que las mujeres parecen hacer un uso mayor, aunque poco significativo de los intensificadores en comparación con los hombres. Este dato nos lleva a pensar que la subjetividad está más presente en sus textos a la hora de convencer a sus lectores y, por tanto, este uso de intensificadores tiene que ver con un aspecto “socioemocional” de la comunicación o incluso de estilo, como dicen Burgoon y Stewart (1974).

En el intento de dar respuesta a mis preguntas iniciales de investigación, así como verificar mi hipótesis, hemos visto que el uso de verbos persuasivos es considerablemente menor que el de intensificadores. Parece entonces que, dado que la presencia de verbos persuasivos en los textos es más notoria que la de los intensificadores, los escritores optan por reducir el uso de verbos persuasivos, haciendo un uso consciente o incluso inconscientemente mayor de los intensificadores. Eso es lo que se refleja en los resultados que hemos visto y destaca el hecho de que, aunque sean más sutiles, los intensificadores tienen mucho que hacer a la hora de reforzar lo que se quiere decir. Además, como también se ha visto, los textos apuntan a resaltar los beneficios o cualidades que tiene la tecnología proporcionando una perspectiva más positiva, haciendo un mayor uso de los *upgrading intensifiers*. Por el contrario, los textos de ficción y no ficción que pretenden resaltar los aspectos más negativos, preocupantes o peligrosos de la tecnología o la inteligencia artificial suelen utilizar *downgrading intensifiers*. En cualquier caso, los puntos de vista positivos y negativos (o incluso neutrales) pueden ser igualmente persuasivos y depender del metadiscurso (véase Hyland y Tse, 2004). Después de todo, es el propósito, junto con el contexto y la elección de

características lingüísticas específicas como los verbos persuasivos, los intensificadores, así como la combinación de ambos, entre otras características, lo que hace que un texto sea persuasivo.

Podemos, entonces, señalar que los hallazgos relacionados con el campo han demostrado que existe una diferencia interesante entre los textos de ficción y no ficción. Por ejemplo, los verbos persuasivos se usan con más frecuencia en CoNFIPET que en CoFiPET, mientras que los intensificadores muestran una frecuencia más alta en CoFiPET que en CoNFIPET. Estos resultados nos llevan a pensar que quizás los textos de ficción requieren menos implicación por parte de los autores que los de no ficción, haciendo que estos últimos hagan un mayor uso de los verbos persuasivos. Asimismo, y dado que los intensificadores parecen reforzar el significado de lo que se expresa de la forma más sutil, aparecen más veces en los textos de ficción. Al comparar la distribución de los resultados según la variable de período, es decir, siglos XX y XXI, hemos encontrado que tanto los verbos persuasivos como los intensificadores han disminuido su frecuencia a lo largo del tiempo. Aunque la reducción no es muy destacable, los resultados sugieren que la razón podría estar relacionada con el estilo como medio de elección e incluso con las modas del momento, lo que implicaría un menor uso de verbos persuasivos. Según el sexo del autor, los hallazgos indican que las mujeres utilizan un número ligeramente mayor de verbos persuasivos e intensificadores en comparación con los hombres, lo que sugiere su necesidad de ser más persuasivos. Finalmente, se ha demostrado claramente que los autores utilizan intensificadores con mucha frecuencia independientemente de la época (véase Sección 2.2 anterior), de su sexo, o incluso de si el texto que producen es ficción o no ficción. Esto puede deberse a que los intensificadores son el recurso de moda (y por lo tanto el preferido) de los escritores para fortalecer sus argumentos o el significado de sus expresiones y mostrar énfasis, así como posiblemente uno de los más efectivos en términos de aumentar el contenido emocional de una oración.

Con todo ello, los resultados sugieren que la reducción en el uso de los verbos persuasivos se produce porque parecen más atractivos o llamativos que los intensificadores, que, por el contrario, son más sutiles o discretos. Además, que tanto los verbos persuasivos como los intensificadores tienden a coincidir, es decir, a aparecer juntos en determinadas ocasiones, además de verse reforzados por otra serie de características como los condicionales o los modales que ayudan a que el argumento sea más elocuente y por tanto persuasivo. Dado que este no era uno de los objetivos de esta tesis, no se ha tratado aquí. Sin embargo, en este sentido, este análisis pretende ser el punto de partida para futuras investigaciones, con la esperanza de que pueda contribuir a una mejor comprensión de cómo en la literatura de ciencia

ficción, así como en las obras de no ficción relacionadas con el posthumanismo, el material explícito e implícito de los textos constituye un acto de persuasión.

Estas posibilidades para futuras investigaciones podrían tomar varias vías posibles. En cuanto al contexto lingüístico, el estudio podría incluir algunas otras variables, parámetros y enfoques que no se han considerado aquí. Tal es el caso de lo que he denominado tono, que se ha mencionado de pasada pero que merece un estudio más profundo. Además, la combinación de verbos persuasivos con intensificadores y un enfoque de análisis crítico del discurso (CDA) de este mismo material podría proporcionar algunos hallazgos inesperados. Así, un análisis más profundo de los resultados obtenidos considerando aspectos como la inter-discursividad, la intertextualidad o los contextos sociopolíticos e históricos podría beneficiar y enriquecer considerablemente el estudio. Teniendo en cuenta el examen de los datos extralingüísticos contenidos en el Apéndice 1, nuevas variables como el género de los textos o incluso la nacionalidad de los autores podrían ser de especial interés para seguir identificando la influencia de patrones asociados al género narrativo, así como la cultura o la idiosincrasia que puedan influir en la redacción precisa de los textos. Otra línea de investigación obvia para explotar PET implicaría el examen de verbos persuasivos e intensificadores en otros corpus, como ya se ha hecho con verbos persuasivos en el *Corpus of English Life Sciences Texts (CELiST)*, un subcorpus del CC (Barsaglini-Castro 2021), de modo que se pudieran encontrar más diferencias. Fuera del dominio de la persuasión lingüística, hay muchas otras preguntas de investigación por hacer y, aunque compilado para esta tesis doctoral, PET tiene todavía muchas posibilidades de explotación en el futuro.

3. Appendix 3: Resumo da Tese de doutoramento

Coñecida como literatura de anticipación, unha das principais características da ciencia ficción é a súa conexión coa investigación científica e as novas tecnoloxías. Tomando como referencia a realidade, as historias de ciencia ficción se constrúen extrapolando feitos cribles e/ou leis físicas para especular sobre un futuro distópico ou utópico incerto que podería transcender (ou non) a ficción. Dotada de temas que reflexionan sobre o desenvolvemento tecnolóxico, a intelixencia artificial e a evolución humana, así como o transhumanismo e o posthumanismo, ademais de personaxes específicos como robots, androides, cyborgs e humanoides, a ciencia ficción amplía o alcance do que as persoas ven como posible, facilitando a comprensión e asimilación de realidades alternativas. A única ferramenta que utilizan estes textos para facelo é a linguaxe e é precisamente por iso que unha das principais fontes de interese respecto ao seu estudo radica no seu uso da linguaxe, debido ás súas características estilísticas, que difiren dos outros tipos de manifestacións textuais como o discurso científico.

Segundo Biber (1998: 1), o estudo da linguaxe pode dividirse en ‘estudo da estrutura’ ou análise lingüística, e ‘estudo do uso’, que, polo menos para este estudo, pode relacionarse coa pragmática. Yule (2010: 128), pola súa parte, destaca que a pragmática é o estudo do significado 'invisible' ou de cómo recoñecemos e inferimos o que se quere dicir, incluso cando non se di ou escribe directamente, o que nos leva a pensar se o que se comunica é realmente o que o destinatario interpreta, ou o que o emisor quería transmitir. De isto, podemos inferir que o uso da linguaxe está afectado non só polo contexto no que se usa, senón tamén por un propósito. Neste sentido, a intencionalidade parece xogar un papel importante na escritura xa que calquera texto (por exemplo, expositivo, descritivo ou narrativo) que pretende obter un resultado debe ser persuasivo. Unha sa miñas preguntas xerais de investigación sobre este tema é si a persuasión do lector ten que ver coa linguaxe (por medio do estilo, a gramática e/o léxico) ou incluso con outras variables como o campo (é dicir, ficción ou non ficción), o sexo do autor, o período ou data na que se escribiu a obra, o tema e o ton (é dicir, utopía o distopía), entre outros. Así, unha hipótese inicial respecto aos textos de ficción é que as novelas de ciencia ficción tenden a ser distopías ou tramas postapocalípticas para enganchar ao lector desde o principio. Ademais, si consideramos a variable de sexo, podemos atopar que moitas das novelas escritas por mulleres teñen tendencia a ser románticas, o que nos leva a pensar que o atractivo na ficción ten que ver coa trama máis que co tema en sí. Non obstante, é igualmente válido para facer o contido máis atractivo e emocionante, e, por tanto, persuasivo. Nese sentido, e

dado que a ficción permite que os lectores se involucren na historia e regresen aos seus mundos “reais” ou realidade, parece fácil contrastar pros e contras, aludir a distopías e concluír con finais optimistas e prometedores como: “felices para sempre”.

En términos de mellora, transcendencia e evolución, os textos de ficción teñen tendencia a ser máis positivos e cribles a pesar dos aspectos negativos destacados. Os textos de non ficción, por outro lado, parecen ser máis realistas e directos ao proporcionar argumentos positivos, negativos ou incluso neutros que poden basearse en aspectos como o metadiscorso ou a linguaxe. Nese sentido, o metadiscorso pode definirse como “a gama de dispositivos que utilizan os escritores para organizar explícitamente os seus textos, captar a atención dos lectores e sinalar as súas actitudes cara ao material e á audiencia” (Hyland y Tse, 2004). Cando usamos o metadiscorso, estamos estruturando unha relación a tres bandas entre o texto, o lector e o escritor, o que creo que non está moi lonxe do concepto de postura (*stance*). Isto é así, especialmente si, como mencionei nun traballo anterior, consideramos que a postura está “estritamente relacionada coas estratexias persuasivas” xa que se refire á “forma en que os escritores se comunican cos lectores a través dos seus textos” (véxase Moskowich 2017: 74 e Barsaglini-Castro 2021: 171). A postura tamén se manifesta como a expresión aberta da actitude ou o compromiso dun autor coa mensaxe e, polo tanto, o seu análise cubre as eleccións lingüísticas que inclúen aquelas formas en que os autores se mencionan a si mesmos nas súas opinións. Tal presenza autoral converteuse nun aspecto crucial no estudo da linguaxe polos diversos tipos de valoracións ou xugos que pode transmitir, e pola forma en que estes se transmiten aos destinatarios. Seguindo a teoría de Landert (2017: 489), segundo a cal a postura inflúe na percepción das historias, e considerando que os lectores son dalgunha maneira 'guiados' pola redacción precisa do texto (Hyland 2005; Toolan 2010), parece lóxico pensar que a presenza autoral é un aspecto significativo da persuasión. Despois de todo, é o escritor quen decide qué marcadores do discurso utilizar, e cando e cómo poden empregarse mellor para influír no lector. Tamén debemos sinalar aquí que a pesar da diferenza que poda existir entre o compromiso e a postura, o compromiso dos autores coas ideas, a confianza que amosan e a identidade que proxectan serven para reforzar a súa credibilidade (Hyland 2002: 1091, 2005). : 173). Con todas estas ideas en mente, parece que existe unha relación directa entre a persuasión e o estilo, especialmente si consideramos como os escritores logran os seus propósitos a través da linguaxe que utilizan nos seus traballos.

Unha das principais razóns polas cales se elixiu o transhumanismo e o posthumanismo para o estudo da persuasión é que, como afirma Harbridge, “a influencia é o comezo de case todo o que creamos” (2017). Por tanto, parece lóxico relacionar o concepto de “creatividade”

principalmente (aínda que non exclusivamente) coa ficción, e o de “influencia” coa persuasión. Por exemplo, si consideramos que as novelas de ciencia ficción anteriores se converteron na nosa realidade (por exemplo, as viaxes espaciais), da impresión de que, de algún modo, estas novelas nos influíron ou inspiraron para materializar o escrito. En termos de influencia, a terminoloxía específica non ten por que ser un tema relevante para aludir ao posthumanismo e cambiar de opinión. O *engagement* tamén pode ocorrer grazas á repetición, á orixinalidade, á novidade, á creatividade ou ao humor e, polo tanto, facernos crer ou facer algo. En palabras de Toolan: “É difícil ver cómo unha narración, en sí mesma, pode constituír un acto de persuasión, un intento de lograr que o lector ou quere facer algo ou vea as cousas de certa maneira. Non directamente”. (véxase Toolan 2011: 18).

O obxectivo principal deste estudo, tal como se indica na Introducción desta tese, foi analizar o uso dos verbos persuasivos e os intensificadores como estratexias lingüísticas de persuasión, así como a súa relación coa postura e o estilo do autor. Así mesmo, coñecer cómo se manifesta a persuasión nos textos de ficción e non ficción relacionados co posthumanismo, e se esa manifestación está relacionada ou se ve afectada por outras variables como o campo (ficción ou non ficción), o período no que os textos foron escritos, e o sexo do autor. Para lograr este obxectivo, esta tese doutoral seguiu a Quirk et al. (1985) no que respecta á clasificación dos tipos de intensificadores (como se amosa na Táboa 3), así como a Paradis (1997) e Huddleston e Pullum (2002, 2016) en canto á análise de resultados. Os datos extraídos dunha selección de textos de ciencia ficción e non ficción publicados por autores e autores entre 1950 e 2017 e relacionados co transhumanismo e o posthumanismo. Este capítulo final resume os principais descubrimentos da tese e proporciona algunhas posibles liñas de investigación adicionais para mellorar os resultados e contribuír a unha mellor comprensión de como o material explícito e implícito dos textos de ficción e non ficción provoca a persuasión do lector sobre determinadas cuestións.

Como se pode observar no apartado de resultados xerais do Capítulo 3, o uso de intensificadores en todo o corpus é, con diferenza, superior ao de verbos persuasivos. Si afondamos nos resultados considerando a variable que o denominado como campo (*field*), podemos ver claramente que os verbos persuasivos se utilizan máis nos textos de non ficción que nos de ficción, mentres que os intensificadores, polo contrario, amosan unha maior frecuencia nos textos de ficción que nos de non ficción. Si consideramos que os verbos persuasivos son elementos lingüísticos cuxo significado é quizás máis claramente percibido por escritores e lectores como un medio evidente de persuasión, estes resultados nos levan a pensar que os textos de non ficción requiren máis implicación pola parte dos autores que os de

ficción, e por tanto fan un uso máis frecuente dos verbos persuasivos en comparación cos intensificadores. A análise do uso dos verbos persuasivos e os intensificadores entre os séculos XX y XXI amosou que ambos diminúen levemente co tempo, o que pode ter que ver co estilo e a corrente de escritura del momento. O feito de que o uso de intensificadores sexa máis frecuente que el de verbos persuasivos, independentemente do período, podería ser tamén un indicador de que os intensificadores son a ferramenta preferida por los autores para fortalecer os seus argumentos e amosar énfase e, polo tanto, persuadir a súa audiencia. En canto ao terceiro factor aquí considerado, os resultados obtidos en relación coa variable sexo amosan que, aínda que a diferenza é moi sutil, as mulleres empregan un número lixeiramente superior tanto de verbos persuasivos como de intensificadores que os homes. No caso dos intensificadores, podería dicirse que estes descubrimentos en PET confirman, ao igual que moitos outros estudos anteriores (véxase Bradac, Mulac e Thompson 1995; Stenström 1999; Tagliamonte y Roberts 2005), a afirmación de Lakoff segundo o cal o uso frecuente por parte das mulleres de certas características lingüísticas como os intensificadores (por exemplo, así) en comparación cos homes poden cualificarse como unha característica destacada da “linguaxe débil” debido á súa *semantic vagueness*. Ademais, estes resultados indican que os escritores utilizan intensificadores con moita frecuencia independentemente do texto é ficción ou non ficción, ou incluso independentemente das variables como a época e o sexo.

Tratando especificamente con verbos persuasivos, a análise dos resultados, segundo a variable de campo, sinalou que os textos de non ficción amosan un uso claramente máis frecuente de verbos persuasivos que os de ficción, o que leva a pensar que os textos de ficción poderían non requirir tanta presenza do autor como os textos de non ficción, e que os textos de ficción están dotados doutras características lingüísticas ou diferentes tipos de recursos a través dos cales atraen aos lectores. A distribución de resultados con respecto á variable de tempo revelou que, si ben a diferenza entre o século XX e o XXI non é moi grande, e aínda que non ocorre en todos os casos, o uso de verbos persuasivos decrece co tempo. Esta redución de frecuencia parece verso afectada pola chamada corrección política si consideramos que a forma de transmitir unha mensaxe depende da elección de características lingüísticas para un propósito específico. Ao considerar o sexo do autor en termos de persuasión do lector, a distribución dos resultados ten amosado que as escritoras fan un uso maior, aínda que non sexa moi significativo, dos verbos persuasivos que os seus homólogos masculinos, especialmente en textos de ficción. Nese sentido, os resultados suxiren non só a necesidade de ser máis convincentes nos seus argumentos, senón tamén que de forma independente se trata dun texto de ficción ou de non ficción, as mulleres teñen tendencia a involucrarse máis co que expresan,

o que implica máis subxectividade ou incluso un enfoque máis afiliado e polo tanto menos asertivo. Isto é o que Holmes (2001) e moitos outros tamén caracterizaron como o “estilo de linguaxe débil” debido á falta de autoridade.

Como se viu no caso dos intensificadores, os *boosters* e os *diminishers* foron, con diferenza, as (sub)categorías con maiores frecuencias fronte aos *minimizers* e os *downtoners*. Ao comparar estes resultados coas tres variables no estudo, os datos amosaron que os intensificadores de escala ascendente foron moito máis empregados que os de escala descendente, independentemente do campo, período e sexo do autor. Un dos descubrimentos máis curiosos sobre os amplificadores foi que aqueles intensificadores que poderían recoñecer como os máis utilizados cando se trata de dar énfase ou reforzar unha expresión, por exemplo, *entirely*, *highly*, ou *perfectly*, non estaban na parte superior da lista de frecuencias. Os descubrimentos con respecto ao campo amosaron que non hai moita diferenza entre CoFiPET e ConNFiPET, aínda que o número total de palabras en cada subcorpus contrasta considerablemente. Por exemplo, a distribución das diferentes (sub)categorías de intensificadores ten indicado que cinco dos novos tipos de intensificadores teñen un maior número de usos nos textos de ficción, en contraste cos de non ficción, que mostraron as cifras máis baixas. No subcorpus de ficción, os *diminishers*, *emphasizers* e *amplifiers* tiveron o maior número de ocorrencias, mentres que, no corpus de non ficción, polo contrario, os intensificadores máis empregados foron os *boosters*, seguidos dos *compromisers* e os *maximizers*. As mostras de ficción amosaron un uso máis frecuente de intensificadores que os de non ficción, o que indica que a presenza autoral en ambos subcorpus non difire moito en canto ao uso de intensificadores. Como se indicou anteriormente no Capítulo 3, a alta frecuencia de uso que amosan os intensificadores en comparación cos verbos persuasivos confirmados, en certo modo, a afirmación de Huddleston e Pullum (2002, 2016), segundo o cal os intensificadores poderían actuar como recheos semánticamente valeiros (*semantically vacuous fillers*) que permiten aos autores expresar a súa subxectividade e, polo tanto, convértense ou actúan como axentes de persuasión. Isto é así, sobre todo si temos en conta que a repetición dos intensificadores, e por tanto o seu aumento de frecuencia, parece estar case substituindo ao uso dos verbos persuasivos. Finalmente, podería dicirse que no binomio subcorpus-(sub)categoría, os intensificadores máis utilizados indicaron que existe unha maior preferencia polos de escala ascendente (segundo a clasificación de modificadores de grado que se amosa no Capítulo 1) a pesar do equilibrio de uso que *boosters*, *diminishers* e *emphasizers* se amosa na Figura 38. A distribución de resultados en relación coa variable de período, sen embargo, ten mostrado que o uso de intensificadores decrece no tempo, ao contrario do que

cabería esperar. Como xa se mencionou, isto podería estar indicando que existe unha tendencia para evitar algunhas expresións segundo o estilo e as tendencias do momento. A análise dos resultados segundo o sexo do autor reflectiu que as mulleres parecen facer un uso maior, aínda que pouco significativo dos intensificadores en comparación cos homes. Este dato nos leva a pensar que a subxectividade está máis presente nos seus textos á hora de convocar aos seus lectores e, por tanto, este uso de intensificadores ten que ver cun aspecto “socioemocional” da comunicación ou incluso de estilo, como din Burgoon y Stewart (1974).

No intento de dar resposta ás miñas preguntas iniciais de investigación, así como verificar a miña hipótese, xa vimos que o uso de verbos persuasivos é considerablemente menor que o dos intensificadores. Parece entón que, dado que a presenza de verbos persuasivos nos textos é máis notoria que a dos intensificadores, os escritores optan por reducir o uso de verbos persuasivos, facendo un uso consciente ou incluso inconscientemente maior dos intensificadores. Isto é o que se reflicte nos resultados que obtivemos e destaca o feito de que, aínda que sexan máis sutís, os intensificadores teñen moito que facer á hora de reforzar o que se quere dicir. Ademais, como tamén se ten visto, os textos apuntan a resaltar os beneficios ou calidades que ten a tecnoloxía proporcionando unha perspectiva máis positiva, facendo un maior uso dos intensificadores de actualización. Pola contra, os textos de ficción e non ficción que pretenden resaltar os aspectos máis negativos, preocupantes ou perigosos da tecnoloxía ou da intelixencia artificial adoitan utilizar *downgrading intensifiers*. En calquera caso, os puntos de vista positivos e negativos (ou incluso neutrais) poden ser igualmente persuasivos e depender do metadiscurso (véxase Hyland e Tse 2004). Despois de todo, é o propósito, xunto co contexto e a elección de características lingüísticas específicas como os verbos persuasivos, os intensificadores, así como a combinación de ambos, entre outras características, o que fai que un texto sexa persuasivo.

Podemos, entón, sinalar que os descubrimentos relacionados co campo demostraron que existe unha diferenza interesante entre os textos de ficción e non ficción. Por exemplo, os verbos persuasivos se usan con máis frecuencia en CoFiPET que en CoFiPET, mentres que os intensificadores amosan unha frecuencia máis alta en CoFiPET que en CoFiPET. Estes resultados nos levan a pensar que quizás os textos de ficción requiren menos implicación por parte de los autores que os de non ficción, facendo que estes últimos fagan un maior uso dos verbos persuasivos. Así mesmo, e dado que os intensificadores parecen reforzar o significado do que se expresa da forma máis sutil, aparecen máis veces nos textos de ficción. Ao comparar a distribución dos resultados segundo a variable de período, é dicir, séculos XX e XXI, atopamos que tanto os verbos persuasivos como os intensificadores diminuíron a súa frecuencia

ao longo do tempo. Aínda que a redución non é moi destacable, os resultados suxiren que a razón podería estar relacionada co estilo como medio de elección e incluso coas modas do momento, o que implicaría un menor uso de verbos persuasivos. Segundo o sexo do autor, os descubrimentos indican que as mulleres utilizan un número lixeiramente maior de verbos persuasivos e intensificadores en comparación cos homes, o que suxire a súa necesidade de ser máis persuasivos. Finalmente, quedou demostrado que os autores empregan intensificadores con moita frecuencia independentemente da época (véxase Sección 2.2 anterior), do seu sexo, ou incluso do texto que producen ficción ou ficción. Isto pode deberse a que os intensificadores son o recurso de moda (e polo tanto o preferido) dos escritores para fortalecer os seus argumentos ou o significado das súas expresións e amosar énfase, así como posiblemente un dos máis efectivos en termos de aumentar o contido emocional dunha oración.

Con todo isto, os resultados suxiren que a redución no uso dos verbos persuasivos se produce porque parecen máis atractivos ou curiosos que os intensificadores, que, polo contrario, son máis sutís ou discretos. Ademais, que tanto os verbos persuasivos como os intensificadores teñen tendencia a coincidir, é dicir, a aparecer xuntos en determinadas ocasións, ademais de versos reforzados por outra serie de características como os condicionais ou os modais que axudan a que o argumento sexa máis elocuente e por tanto persuasivo. Dado que este non era un dos obxectivos desta tese, non se trataba aquí. Sen embargo, neste sentido, esta análise pretende ser o punto de partida para futuras investigacións, coa esperanza de que poida contribuír a unha mellor comprensión de como na literatura de ciencia ficción, así como nas obras de non ficción relacionadas co posthumanismo, o material explícito e implícito dos textos constitúen un acto de persuasión.

Estas posibilidades para futuras investigacións poderían tomar varias vías posibles. En canto ao contexto lingüístico, o estudo podería incluír algunhas outras variables, parámetros e enfoques que non se consideran aquí. Tal é o caso do que el denominado ton, que se mencionou de pasada pero que merece un estudio máis profundo. Ademais, a combinación de verbos persuasivos con intensificadores e un enfoque de análise crítico do discurso (CDA) deste mesmo material podería proporcionar algúns descubrimentos inesperados. Así, unha análise máis profunda dos resultados obtidos considerando aspectos como a inter-discursividade, a intertextualidade ou os contextos socio políticos e históricos podería beneficiarse e enriquecer considerablemente o estudo. Tendo en conta a exame dos datos extra lingüísticos contidos no Apéndice 1, novas variables como o xénero dos textos ou incluso a nacionalidade dos autores poderían ser de especial interese para seguir identificando a influencia dos patróns asociados ao xénero narrativo, así como a cultura ou a idiosincrasia que poida influír na redacción precisa

dos textos. Outra liña de investigación obvia para explotar PET implicaría o exame de verbos persuasivos e intensificadores noutros corpus, como xa se fixo con verbos persuasivos no *Corpus of English Life Sciences Texts (CELiST)*, un subcorpus del CC (Barsaglini-Castro 2021), de modo que se puideran atopar máis diferenzas. Fora do dominio da persuasión lingüística, hai moitas outras preguntas de investigación por facer e, aínda que compilado para esta tese de doutoramento, o PET aínda ten moitas posibilidades de explotación no futuro.

