

Appraisal Theory applied to the wine tasting sheet in English and Spanish

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Abstract

The main goal of this study is the application of Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005) developed in the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics to wine tasting sheets. Firstly, whether this text type meets the defining requirements specified by Swales (1990) for the discursive genre will be verified. 110 tasting sheets in Spanish and English extracted from the Internet have been grouped into four corpora corresponding to the country of origin of the wine: Spain, Australia, California and New Zealand. An analysis undertaken with WordSmith Tools has demonstrated the positive polarization of all the texts and the existence of cultural differences reflected in the use of fruit-related terms, adjectives oenological terms and “oenological culturemes” (Wislocka Breit, 2012). An unforeseen result of the study was the strong contrast observed between the free and literary manner of the English and the concise style of Spanish tasting sheets.

Keywords: genre, tasting sheet, Appraisal Theory, winespeak, cultureme.

Resumen

Ficha de cata de vino en español e inglés en el marco de la Teoría de la Valoración

El objetivo principal de este estudio es la aplicación a las fichas de cata de vino de la Teoría de la Valoración (Martin & White, 2005), desarrollada en el marco de la Lingüística Sistemática Funcional. En primer lugar, se verifica si este tipo textual cumple con los requisitos definitorios de género especificados por Swales (1990). 110 fichas de cata en español y en inglés extraídas de Internet han sido agrupadas en cuatro corpus, correspondientes al país de procedencia del vino: España, Australia, California y Nueva Zelanda. El análisis, realizado con el programa WordSmith Tools, ha demostrado la existencia de una polarización positiva de los textos y de marcadas diferencias culturales plasmadas en el

empleo de adjetivos, términos relacionadas con frutas y colores, términos enológicos y “culturemas” enológicos (Wislocka Breit, 2012). El estilo libre y literario presente en los textos anglófonos contrasta con el estilo contenido y sobrio de las fichas de cata españolas.

Palabras clave: género, ficha de cata, Teoría de la Valoración, lenguaje del vino, culturema.

1. Introduction

The remarkable increase in quality wine consumption observed in the Western World in the last three decades has triggered consumers' needs for a more in-depth knowledge about wine. The domain specific language used for the comments is referred to as “wine talk” or “winespeak”. Pervasive and ubiquitous in all types of media, this winespeak discourse shortly became an object of interest among linguists and wine writers alike.

The scale of the phenomenon, even limiting the scope of the research only to Spain, can be easily envisaged: popularizing books were published by Falcó, Marqués de Griñón (2004), Manel Barba (2002), D'Este (2002), Ratti (2000). Spanish wine tasting lexicon has become a subject of lexical and historical studies by Ibáñez Rodríguez and Sanchez Nieto (2006) or Pivot (2007); and Lerat (2006) analysed it as a case of a specialised language. The use of oenological terms in the press was examined by Armentia, Caminos Marcet and Marín Murillo (2005) and Capanaga (2004) dived into intricacies of wine advertising in the Spanish press. Caballero and Suárez-Toste, either individually or as co-authors, have published several articles on aspects such as winespeak's imagery (Caballero & Suárez-Toste, 2010); use of metaphors (Caballero & Suárez-Toste, 2008) or verbs of motion (Caballero, 2007). The use of wine lexicon in the ESP and ESL domains has been studied by Goded (2008) and also Labrador-Piquer and Morote Magán (2011). Negro Alousque (2011) has analysed the use of metaphor (2011). Three international congresses on wine culture and language were organised by the University of Valladolid in 2004, 2008 and 2011 (see Ibáñez Rodríguez, Sánchez Nieto & Gómez Martínez, 2006 & 2010).

Well ahead of Europe, Lehrer (1983/2009) was the first linguist to analyse this specialized language in United States; while Silverstein (2003 & 2004), who had coined the term “oinoglossia”, was interested mainly in the anthropological aspects subsumed in the American winespeak. Undeniably,

the contemporary wine specialized language cannot be understood without Parker's tasting notes, highly influential in Europe due to their financial consequences for the winemakers (Sage, 2007). They also became subjected to linguistic scrutiny by Caballero and Suárez-Toste (2008 & 2010), which results are embodied in the research mentioned above; other European scholars like Paradis (2009 & 2010) or Hommerberg (2011) also analysed in detail Parker's notes linguistic features.

In this paper our aim is, in the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics and more precisely, within the Appraisal Theory as developed by Martin and White (2005), to show some of the specific features and linguistic and intercultural differences in wine tasting sheets (also known as "wine tasting notes") written in English and Spanish.

2. Methodology

Six red wines namely: Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Tempranillo, Pinot Noir, Shiraz/Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon blended with Merlot were tasted and the results reflected in 110 wine tasting sheets drafted by their winemakers in English and Spanish. All texts were extracted from the Internet and distributed into four corpora created *ad hoc* corresponding to the following winegrowing regions: Spanish D.O Somontano (24 sheets), California (30 sheets), Australia (30 sheets) and New Zealand (26 sheets). Tasting comments – that is, the verbalization of wine tasting process' results performed by the cellar's winemaker or oenologist – were subsequently analysed with the WordSmith Tools programme, and also manually, producing measurable data reflecting: (i) use and frequency of specific oenological lexemes; (ii) presence of terms related to fruits and colours; and (iii) certain number of scholarly, or unexpected in such contexts, expressions. That data has been subsequently examined in the frame of Appraisal Theory.

3. Core features of wine tasting sheets

Since the standard technical tasting sheet recommended by the International Organisation of Vine and Wine (OIV)¹ is not mandatory, each winery/cellar tends to design one of its own, resulting in a number of fairly free variants. However, over the span of the last decade, Internet's unavoidable influence has produced an increasingly assimilating tendency both in their content and

layout. The information offered both compulsory and/or discretionary, includes the following data:

- name of the cellar/winery;
- vintage;
- grape variety/varietal;
- date of the harvest;
- vineyard's main characteristics;
- description of the vinification process;
- acidity (Ph), sugar contents (Brix) and alcohol;
- proper tasting comments;
- food pairing;
- serving temperature; and,
- peak drinking/storing period.

Tasting comments used to be the core element, always included in the technical sheet, regardless of the medium; however, the follow-up research carried out subsequently has shown that numerous Spanish wineries, following the New World style, have started to obviate this section.²

The two most essential features of the “tasting comments” which are the object of the present study are, on the one hand, their virtual existence (that is, Internet medium) and, on the other, the fact that their evaluation has always been performed by a taster personally invested in the winemaking process: be it an in-house or external oenologist, a winemaker owner of the winery, its commercial representative, or a copywriter; all of them aiming at the maximisation of the wine sales. This clarification is crucial as an assessment performed by a professional wine critic is to be immune from any personal involvement or financial interest in the tasted wine.

Table 1 provides a selection of tasting sheet variants I have encountered in the Spanish, Californian, Australian and New Zealand wineries' websites. The row corresponding to the above defined class of tasting notes writers has been shaded. It should be borne in mind that these types cannot be considered exhaustive, or mutually exclusive, since constraints affecting the genre “tasting sheet” are not very strict.

Author	Channel / Medium	Goal	Sections	Credibility	Milieu
Cellar's / winery's winemaker	Professional Publications and / or statistical	Strictly professional information	Purely technical	Very high	Health and Food authorities; winemakers' professional circles
Cellar's / winery's winemaker	Winery's internal tasting sheets; Internet	Information provided to the clients	Information about the vineyard, harvest & vinification; details of tasting phases: colour, nose and palate	Medium / High	Professional circles, possible buyers and wine enthusiasts
Professional & traditional wine critics / gurus	Specialized magazines, general press, web pages	Professional & general public information	Details of tasting: Colour, nose, palate, food matching	Medium / High	Directly proportional to the critic's local or universal authority
Modern critics using new technologies	Internet including video recordings	Non-standard information provided through a non standard channel	Colour, nose, palate; everything is optional	As granted by the audience	Significant in their habitual <i>milieu</i> , limited or nonexistent in the rest
Wine enthusiasts	Internet's forums, web pages, individual's blogs	Sharing information & achieving certain celebrity & prestige	Colour, nose, palate	Low / Medium	Usually limited to the Internet

Table 1. Tasting sheet genre and its variations.

4. The wine tasting sheet as “genre”

According to Swales' (1990) typology, the genre “tasting sheet” fulfils the definition of a communicative event, whose format is structured but flexible, is used in the context of a particular discourse community and whose full control, including transgressions, is reserved to experts. Its complementary features, as based on Lakoff's (1990) criteria, can be described as follows:

- Formal - it has to meet certain characteristics predetermined by the community it is written for.
- Non reciprocal, hence monologic - as it is a one-way discourse whose author remains anonymous or, even if a name is provided,

they do not expect to be questioned about the message. In the New World, due to the tasting note being directly integrated into the website, there has always been a factual possibility of contact between the author of the note and its reader; however, even though the traditionally anonymous Spanish comments ignored any such possibility of interaction, presently it is becoming possible due to the Internet medium and its globalizing influences.

- Non spontaneous – as it is either written to order, or it is one of the obligations inherent to the job performed;
- Public – the objective of the tasting sheets is to be universally accessible, with the sole exception of the New World’s websites requirement of having reached the minimum age established for alcohol consumption;
- And finally aimed at a specific purpose - the most evident being to inform; the second, less explicit, but equally important, to coax the prospective buyer into the acquisition of the wine, and the third one, the least obvious, almost subliminal, yet very significant, to generate a feeling of membership of an elitist oenological community.

While, as stated by Bhatia (2004: 112), transformations undergone by a genre must not endanger its integrity, numerous changes have been taking place in the Spanish wine tasting comments on various levels. The traditional tasting note, concise and sober in style, has been submitted to a globalizing transformation giving rise to unknown features such as providing the number of bottles produced. One plausible explanation could be an imitation of the New World’s tasting note style. Another, in my opinion more convincing, is the “feeling of membership of an elitist oenological community” (as stated above) which probably is the true reason for offering it in the first place. Finally, the reason could also be what Bhatia calls “invasion of territorial integrity”:

(...) it is often the case that informative functions are more likely to be colonized by promotional functions than any other (...). A number of such instances of mixed genres are getting established and are being given innovative names, as in the case of *infomercial*, *infotainment* or *advertorial*’.
(Bhatia, 2004: 89)

Table 2, also based on the research carried out, reflects the most significant differences perceived among the analysed corpora which, in my opinion, are mostly due to cultural – that is, traditional, and partially to technological aspects. During the first stage of my research I have had an opportunity to observe how even highly specialized domains like oenological language are being affected by globalization. Some of the most outstanding changes observed in a number of Somontano tasting notes are listed below as a way of example:

- Loss of anonymity of the author of the comments reinforced sometimes by a winemaker's photo, or even a family's history³.
- Details of the estate, harvest and vinification process become as important as the sensory analysis itself⁴.
- Classical oenological lexicon and style are counterbalanced by a more personal and literary manner: *Un trago de pasión, una pizca de paraíso auténtico. Blanco Somontano conseguirá que tu alma entre en calor. Una sonrisa larga, nunca amarga.*⁵ (“A gulp of passion, a dash of true paradise. White Somontano will make your soul feel warmth. A long, never bitter, smile”).
- Wine's names become imaginative and have a story to it, e.g. *Vicious*⁶, *Chesa*⁷, *Monte Ondina*⁸.
- Detailed food pairing is provided⁹, contrasting with the previous staple recommendations.
- Option to buy wines online is offered, unavailable until then¹⁰.
- A completely new presentation of the wine tasting sheet, language independent, is provided in form of the Spider web graph¹¹.
- Winery becomes a place for social events¹².
- Detailed number of the bottles produced starts to be given¹³.

Table 2 reflects the situation in Somontano wineries, as compared to Australia, California and New Zealand in 2010.

Tasting sheet Sections	Somontano	Australia	California	New Zealand
Disclosure of the winemaker's identity	Habitually anonymous	Full name, photo and biodata are often provided	Full name, photo and biodata are often provided	Full name, picture and biodata are often provided
Detailed information about the winery, its history, tasting room, other details	Hardly if ever	Profuse details regarding winery's history, awards, owner's family, etc.	Details, such as virtual tasting room visit, social events organised, etc.	Winery's history, awards, previous vintages
Tasting sheet style	Always impersonal	1st person plural appears sometimes	1st person plural appears sometimes	Usually impersonal
Technical data provided in a "laboratory" style	Always at the beginning	Usually at the end, small fonts	Usually at the end, small fonts	Not always provided
Traditional oenological lexicon	Exclusively	Traditional, but also literary figures and style	Oenological lexicon, but free or fairly literary style	Oenological lexicon, but free or fairly everyday language
Metaphors and other literary figures	Only those proper of oenological lexicon	Poetical and descriptive phrases	e.g.: "...it is a testament to both vintage and the vineyard..."	Full liberty: "...exoskeleton of fine tannin..."
Absence of "negatively" marked terms	Total absence	Total absence	freely admitted: e.g.: "feral fox"	freely admitted e.g.: "a hint of hedge-pig nest"
Details regarding harvesting, vinification, etc.	Unusual in small wineries, more frequent in the big ones	Usually very complete, often a specific section of a website	Exhaustive	No fixed model, but often with number of details
Aging in a bottle / best for drinking	Very seldom, mostly for <i>reserva</i> wines	Yes	Yes	Yes
Food pairing and serving temperature	Classical: reds with meats and cheeses, white with fish and poultry	Specific dishes suggested, e.g. <i>roast lamb & rosemary jus</i>	Not always	Specific dishes suggested: <i>ossobuco and daube, with red fleshed game such as venison (Cervena), hare and ostrich...</i>
Wine purchase directly from the website	Not possible	Always	Frequently	Always

Table 2. Main differences observed among the wine tasting sheet corpora.

Genre flexibility requirement (Swales, 1990) paired with the marketwise policy of taking advantage of all available resources, have resulted in a wide adoption of digital media, and while this stage since long has been achieved by the New World cellars, for numerous Somontano wineries it is yet under process. While foreign markets requirements, compelling Spanish wineries' websites to become complex and interactive, may stay behind these tendencies, there is nothing yet available of the kind of live audio-visual

performances such as reflected elsewhere. Nevertheless, these multimodal and multimedia wine tasting comments confirm beyond dispute the ability of the genre to transform itself including “hybridization” or “mixing”, as already signalled by Bhatia (2004: 88).

5. Systemic Functional Linguistics as a framework for the study of wine tasting sheets

The three metafunctions defined in Halliday’s (1989) Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), in whose frame Martin and White (2005) have subsequently developed their Appraisal Theory, namely: ideational, interpersonal and textual seem to match the three essential functions of a tasting note: (i) to inform; (ii) to allure; and (iii) to confirm the membership of a specific and exclusive discourse community.

Even though only the first one is explicit, the second is essential to the winery’s commercial success; meanwhile the goal of the third one is subliminal and aimed directly at the consumer. A condition *sine qua non* for these communication aims to be accomplished is that the winemaker writing the message and the reader receiving it share, at least partially, previous sensory experiences. Simultaneously, if the terms used by the author of the evaluation are excessively unconventional, communication will be hindered and eventually might become abstruse:

The important point about such associations is that they communicate best in the context of what is already familiar. In such contexts words, on their own, carry no meanings; it is the experience that gives them the desired effect. (...) The innovation, the creativity or the exploitation becomes effective only in the context of the already available and familiar. (Bhatia, 2004: 188)

Even the neologisms, the ever changing buzzwords extremely common in winespeak, appear only in the contexts where their interpretation is fairly obvious (Lehrer, 2003). Their use is determined not so much by a true need to make up for a lexical void, but rather to reinforce the feeling of the membership of a specific discourse community.

6. Ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunctions in wine tasting sheets

There is no question that sensory experiences are determined by the social *milieu* and that their imprint becomes crucial in setting the mode of interaction between the individuals who communicate with each other, as shared environments produce common experience and understanding. The three metafunctions differentiated in the SFL: ideational, interpersonal and textual reflect the accumulated individual knowledge (ideational), interpersonal communication skills (interpersonal) and, finally, the manner in which a message needs to be elaborated and transmitted in order to fulfil its goal (textual).

6.1. Ideational

The largest part of the oenological lexicon is made up of olfactory and gustatory terms which, admittedly, cannot be shared in the same way it happens with what is perceived visually or aurally. Highly individualistic, even eccentric use of terms applied to describe the wine's aroma or bouquet explains the initially derogative connotation of the term "winespeak" coined for wine-tasting language. Extremely unusual references and observations referred to wine seemed to exceed an ordinary consumer's expectations, generating rejection and mockery, as it was often reflected in press commentaries:

They are seeking readers' favourite examples of "ridiculous wordspeak" when it comes to wine. Here are some examples so far: "Describing it in terms of musk or pine or peat? I don't know, it sounds like something you'd find on a forest floor rather than in a glass," wrote dcurrrie. "I still think discussing wine's legs is silly sounding," wrote reader bytemyfoot. (Parker, 2008)

Habitually uncultivated senses of smell and taste either preclude good perception of specific odours, or at least, diminish the faculty of their recognition. This lack of comprehension on the one side and seemingly capricious use of such terms on the other, have led to a suspicion that wine tasting is completely arbitrary and, should it be really so, tasting notes could be as well produced by a computer, just like the two examples below:

Premature almost second-rate Syrah. Throws out green tea, structured spice and forceful peach. Drink now through 2005.

Tightly woven almost french-oaked Sparkler. Drops bing-cherry, soggy pineapple and atomic traces of marmalade. Drink now through April.¹⁴

Unremitting presence of these semi-technical oenological terms in the media has slowly allowed for their wider acceptance which, eventually, should enable sensory experiences thus described to be shared and comprehensible to both wine critics and wine enthusiasts.

6.2. Interpersonal

The type of interaction taking place between two communicating individuals is called “negotiation” by Martin and White (2005: 33) as it implies existence of a power hierarchy between the two. Five different tasting sheet variants (see Table 1), with four clearly differentiated author categories, may lead to a conclusion that public exhibition of one’s comments about wine is open to anybody. However, it should be borne in mind that the intrinsic weight of these comments, and even the manner in which they are expressed, are subordinated to the author’s prestige and position within their discourse community. Only those whose authority is either recognized beforehand, or assigned by default, may require responses or actions:

And as language – as expression and action – is simultaneously the construal and the construction of reality, these system networks reflect, in their limited way, the conception of reality of each interlocutor and the system of social values that motivate their speech behaviour. (Bartlett, 2004: 72)

As it can be inferred from Table 1, the hierarchical position of wine critics depends not only on their authority in the domain, with the *gurus* like Parker, Robinson, or Halliday outstanding in the field, but also on the discourse community within which the tasting note is delivered. An evaluation published by a winery on paper, without mentioning the author’s identity and labelled as “sensory” or “organoleptic” analysis, appears to acquire the status of an unquestionable scientific truth. Conversely, if the tasting note is signed by a specific person, be it a winemaker or vinery owner, and published on the Internet, albeit it still enjoys an authoritative status, it becomes susceptible of admitting different evaluations.

6.3. Textual

The goal of the textual metafunction in wine tasting domain is the cohesion of the information provided by the tasting entwined with Martin and White’s

(2005) “negotiation of power”: it is the proof of a wine critic’s authority, even if the style of their tasting observations needs to be tailored to the discourse community expectations to which it is addressed. Although Spanish consumers are used to the traditional style authoritative and straightforward remarks about wine, in the English speaking New World a clear need to mitigate the dominant position exercised by the in-home wine evaluator has resulted in a significant change in the attitude and style of a tasting note. The, until then, unquestionable opinion has been transformed into an informed and skilled observation yearning to be shared equally by its author and by the wine consumer. Suddenly it is not only the wine itself which is worth supplying profuse sensory details, but also the long road travelled to elaborate it; hence a considerable portion of the tasting sheet deals with the soil characteristics, cultivation, harvesting and vinification processes. The total length of these sections may become considerably greater than that of the tasting analysis itself. However, this desired proximity, action generating reaction, close contact between the “author” and the “reader”, can only be immediate if those two can really interact, as within the Internet, and if the sensory experiences described are intrinsically shared. The message contained in the tasting comments needs to remain within the possibilities considered as usual:

A field of human experience is composed of recurrent sequences of activities. Because they are recurrent, any sequence is to some extent predictable within a field, so that variations from such sequences are counter expectant. (Martin & Rose, 2003: 101)

7. Applying Appraisal Theory to wine tasting sheets

The Appraisal Theory, first addressed by Iedema, Feez and White (1994) and Eggins and Slade (1997), was further developed by Martin and White (White 2001; Martin & White, 2005). The concept has been defined as follows:

The term ‘Appraisal’ is used as a cover-all term to encompass all evaluative uses of language, including those by which speakers/writers adopt particular value positions or stances and by which they negotiate these stances with either actual or potential respondents. (White, 2001: 2)

A few years later the above definition was rewritten and amplified by Adendorff (2004: 206):

In particular it seeks to provide an account of how language construes the interpersonal relationships of solidarity and power. It encompasses aspects of grammar which, in other contexts, have been grouped variously under headings such as modality, hedging, evidentiality, attitude and stance. Appraisal is mainly realized lexically although it can also be realized by whole clauses.

Martin and White (2005: 38), as presented in Figure 1, divide the appraisal resources existing in a language into three broad semantic domains: engagement, attitude and graduation.

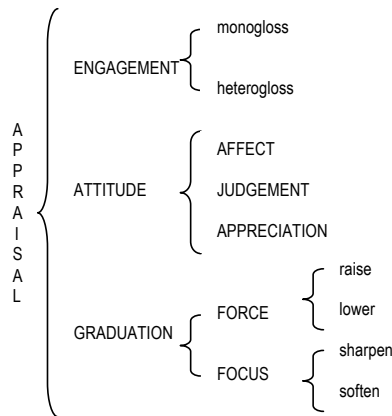


Figure 1. An overview of appraisal resources (Martin & White, 2005: 38).

7.1. The engagement and attitude domains

“Engagement” and “attitude” are particularly important for tasting notes, as they reflect the winemaker’s position towards the produced wine and the winemaking process itself. Their professional and commercial commitment inherent to the post is to elaborate not merely a favourable, but a truly enticing judgement which, however, cannot be made explicit – in spite of being the second essential goal of a tasting note: to allure and convince. This implicit aim is achieved through two differentiated options: the first, “monoglossic”, places winemaker’s authority well above the reader’s, as it is usual in “Spanish style” unquestionable evaluations. The “heteroglossic” character of the second, implying previous, intrinsic existence of divergent voices, diminishes the rejection usually associated with such an imposed

evaluation, seemingly placing the winemaker's and oenologist's opinion on the same level of authority as the wine consumers'.

7.2. The appreciation resource

Of the three concepts belonging to the domain of "attitude": "affect", "judgement" and "appreciation", only the third one is significant in the wine tasting linguistic analysis. As regards "affect", wine tasting for professional reasons does not evoke any true emotions, with the possibly only exception of the overall pleasure generated by its quality. Nevertheless, this sensation is being "experimented" by the drinker as a "beneficiary" of the process and not as its "agent". "Judgement", according to Martin and White (2005), implies social or moral evaluation, grade of fulfilment or achievement of the established social norms and goals; therefore it has no application to wine tasting. Hence, only the concept of "appreciation", which can be further differentiated into the notions of "reaction", "composition" and "valuation", will stay within the scope of the present study. As argued by Martin and White (2005), these three terms are related to mental processes, albeit can be directly linked to the wine tasting procedure: "reaction" is linked with emotion: "[wine] youthful, lively and alluring"¹⁵; "composition" is related to the sensory perception: "highly structured tannic core"¹⁶; "all framed by chalky, drying and faintly bony tannins"¹⁷ and finally the "valuation" proper, in this case the definite and all-encompassing outcome of wine-tasting. All these concepts are further developed in the following section.

8. Corpus-based case study

According to Moskovich (1982), even a small sample can be representative if a specific tendency is thus properly reflected. The representativeness of the study was ensured through the selection, in the four analysed regions, of the same six types of red wine previously listed, namely: cabernet sauvignon; cabernet sauvignon blended with merlot; merlot; pinot noir, shiraz/syrah and tempranillo. Since the knowledge of the kind of grape, and the vinification process it was submitted to, allows the wine critic to forecast many of the wine characteristics with considerable accuracy¹⁸, I endeavoured to prove that the most significant divergences in wine evaluation were due to cultural differences and to a lesser extent to the wine itself.

8.1. Winemaker's heteroglossic and monoglossic commitment

While the specific use of verbs in Parker's (2008), therefore English, tasting notes has been extensively researched by Caballero (2007), their conspicuous dearth in the Spanish wine comments (Wislocka Breit, 2010 & 2012) has not deserved the same linguistic attention. Those scarce which appear are used in attributive function reflecting static situations: *presenta un sorprendente color*¹⁹ ("presents a surprising colour"), *aparecen los tostados*²⁰ ("toasty nuances appear"), *tiene un final largo y persistente*²¹ ("has a long and lingering finish"). Wine is not the "agent" but the "beneficiary", such an impersonal description of the gustatory processes resembles closely a scientific report. Oenologist's and winemaker's lack of personal commitment is close to absolute, any personal investment is avoided producing a quasi-objective statement, nonetheless it must be remembered that this style has been perpetuated in Spain throughout its entire wine-growing history. Only one instance of personal commitment was identified in the Spanish corpus in form of a possessive pronoun *nos*²² ("us"), but even then it was an "all inclusive form" and not truly first person plural. This fairly extreme characteristic, fully truthful a few years ago, now needs to be nuanced, as traditional Spanish tasting notes have been significantly modified by foreign market requirements and their oenological lexicons, gradually making them resemble the sought after New World style.

English notes, on the contrary, reveal a completely different approach: wine and aromas act on their own: "Pinot Noir leaps from your glass"²³, "spicy prune nuances amalgamate to produce"²⁴, "a rich, ripe entry taunts the mouth"²⁵, "its layers unfold to reveal"²⁶. This dynamic style and personification of wine constitute an opposite extreme of the distant and self-restrained Spanish tasting note. As the winemaker's and oenologist's name appears explicitly on the sheet, wine evaluation becomes personal and committed; however this turns out to be an advantage and a drawback: on the one hand the wine's quality can be credited to a specific person, but on the other the status of professional unquestionability traditionally enjoyed by the Spanish winemakers is irretrievably lost. Personal involvement proper of the New World style frequently brings about personal forms such as: "we find in our vineyards"²⁷ or "we believe it will develop"²⁸.

8.2. Evocative and inscribed appreciation

According to Martin and White (2005) "evaluation" can be inscribed, i.e. overtly expressed, or evocative, through induced feelings. Both interact in the

tasting note, since intrinsically positive terms such as “ripe”, “rich”, “savoury”, “wonderfully fresh” appear in parallel to words invoking agreeable connotations linked to youth and childhood: “marshmallow”²⁹, “Life Savers confectionery”³⁰, “Manuka Honey”³¹ or metaphors of freedom and wilderness: “fur of an animal”³², “like a briar growing through straw mulch after recent rain”³³. However, the poetically inspired writer of the note needs to keep in mind that an excessively imaginative tasting note may result hilarious or pretentious to a non-initiated. It did happen with the just mentioned expression of “a briar growing...”³⁴

A third possibility, as signalled by Adendorff (2004: 206) when he points out that “[a]ppraisal is mainly realized lexically although it can also be realized by whole clauses”, appears when words which, by themselves, do not convey intrinsically positive connotations – for example, “long”, “structure”, “complex”, “layer” become positively marked due to their oenological collocations: “long finish”, “powerful structure”, “complex amalgam”, “rich layers” or even: “intense dark fruit core”, “luscious in character and sporting silky, rather than harsh, tannins”³⁵. Obviously, this practice is also present in the Spanish tasting notes, and even though there are no youth or childhood invocations, no wilderness or nature, the sought after sensation of “exclusivity” is obtained through their specific style resulting from the accumulation of oenological terms and seemingly exotic or less known fruits like “cassis”, *grosella negra* (“blackcurrants”), *frutos del bosque* (“forest fruits”) or *frutos negros* (“dark/black fruits”).

8.3. Lexico-semantic analysis

The three components of “appreciation”: “reaction”, “composition” and “valuation” present a striking parallel with the three tasting stages: “visual”, “olfactory” and “gustatory” proper. Spanish tasting notes generally include all of them; therefore we might visually have *un profundo color cereza* (“a deep cherry colour”), from the olfactory point of view: *nariç sugestiva y compleja* (“complex and insinuating nose”) and regarding taste: *paladar suave y redondo* (“soft and round palate”). Conspicuous accumulation of terms referring to fruit such as those already mentioned above: “cassis”, “blackcurrants” or “forest fruits” is not truly meant to evoke factual sensory experiences, since very few Spaniards have experimented their real taste, but rather to arouse alluring and exotic sensations. English “deeply scented Black Forest cherries”³⁶, “wafts of toasted marshmallows”³⁷, “nicoise black olive tapenade”³⁸ pursue the same goal significantly increasing positive

connotations thus produced; comprehension and use of exotic and literary terms as any discourse community specific jargon, additionally confirm the membership of such an exclusive social community.

Purely statistical data obtained from the corpora analysed with the WordSmith Tools regarding “fruit class” show that these terms build up an average of 4.1% of a Spanish tasting note contents, 4.6% of Californian, 6% of New Zealand and 6.3% of Australian ones. If Spanish wines were to be exported to Australia, the self-restrained style of their tasting notes, linked with the reduced range of the fruits mentioned, would probably negatively clash with Australian consumers’ expectations produced by the varied scope of Australian fruits options.³⁹

8.3.1. Gustatory and chromatic adjectives

Another striking feature of the wine tasting notes written by their makers is their absolute lack of negatively marked terms; seemingly, all those wines do not ever have any objectionable features. Invariably, the adjectives encountered are either intrinsically charged with positive connotations, or acquire them through the context, Spanish: *gran* (“great”), *sabroso*, (“savoury”), *intenso* (“intense”), *carnoso* (“fleshy/meaty”), *maduro* (“ripe/mature”), *prolongado* (“lingering/lasting”) are seamlessly paired with English: “rich”, “ripe”, “smooth”, “long” or “balanced”. Adjectives like *complejo* and “complex”, *persistente* and “persistent”, *profundo* and “deep”, etc. which could be negative in a different context, are always positive in the wine lexical domain (Lehrer, 1983/2009: 15).

Adjectives expressing wine colour are outstandingly important in the Spanish notes, as innumerable shades of “red” are further modified and complemented: *rojo granate bien cubierto* (“deep garnet red”), *rojo granate de gran intensidad* (“exceedingly intense garnet red”), *rojo rubí con tonos teja de gran intensidad* (“ruby red with intense tile red nuances”), *rojo guinda con tonos violetas* (“morello cherry red with violet nuances”), *intenso rojo (...) picota* (“intense cherry red”). Yet even these references do not easily find correspondence in English, as in this language the principal wine colour reference, if used, is not “ruby” or “bigarreau/morello cherry”, but “crimson”, “rich plum with crimson hues”, “glistening purple”, “opaque black red colour” even “deep garnet hue with its cusp of purple”.

Complete lack of any colour/visual references in California tasting notes results rather atypical, especially taking into account that, as it is

internationally acknowledged, it is the very first stage of a wine evaluation, never ignored. One plausible explanation of this culturally marked omission might be due to local norms, obliging winemakers to identify on the label the specific varietal, or their heritage, used to produce the wine bottled inside, implying thus its hue (red, white or rosé). The explicit colour description, considered superfluous in California and remarkably important elsewhere, is independent of the scientifically measured data regarding red colour light frequency; its significance is due to the stylistically marked terms used to describe it. Conspicuous accumulation of words with highly positive connotations like: “garnet”, “ruby”, “crimson” or “purple” contributes to the creation of an overwhelmingly select and desired setting.

8.3.2. Specialized oenological terms

“Textured tannins”, “matured in oak”, “medium bodied”, “mid- palate”, these terms reinforce the semi-conscious feeling of belonging to an exclusive discourse community within which their use is natural, necessary and expected by the reader. From the viewpoint of Appraisal Theory their purpose seems rather neutral, acting as scaffolding providing the unnoticeable yet essential support and structure. Since wine, with its corresponding oenological terminology, has always been present in Spanish culture and history, even specialized expressions like *aromas primarios* (“primary aromas”), *estructura tánica* (“tannin structure”) or *un retrogusto fino* (“fine aftertaste”) are not considered scholarly. Conversely, English winespeak only recently has become fairly familiar among ordinary people and “tight-grain French oak barrels”, “medium weight palate” or “a palate of gravely tannins” still do not belong to everyday vocabulary and are tilted as either professional or snobbish jargon. The only truly erudite oenological term encountered in the analysed Spanish corpus was *empironeumático*⁴⁰ (“smelling burnt”).

8.3.3. Scholarly terms and “culturemes”

Table 3 below provides a selection of seemingly most unusual English oenological terms extracted from the compiled corpora. The acronyms can be easily identified as: CS = Cabernet Sauvignon; PN = Pinot Noir; Shi-Shiraz; M = Merlot; CSM = Cab. Sauvignon blended with Merlot; T = Tempranillo. A corresponds to Australia; C to California; NZ to New Zealand; numbers identify specific wines from the corpora whose tasting notes had been analysed.

Common terms employed in an unusual way together with the truly unusual references are particularly interesting from the viewpoint of Appraisal Theory, even despite their contradictoriness with the previously cited principle: “variations from such sequences are counterexpectant” (Martin & Rose, 2003: 101). They foster certain aura of exoticism, attraction and poetry, “weaves a tapestry of flavors centered on a concentrated core of currant, black cherry”⁴¹; “Manuka Honey complexity”⁴²; “flirting strawberry creamy yogurt and freshly cut rhubarb aromatics unwittingly entice...”⁴³. Purely technical oenological terms, like those mentioned in the previous section, seem too “dry” to create a sensation of something exceptional, exotic and highly desired. These qualities do not need to be accurately defined; it is precisely their indefiniteness, which makes the wine so desirable.

However, the enticement thus conveyed unavoidably requires having previously shared similar sensory experiences; cultural gaps which emerge when there are none have given rise to concepts such as “culture bump” minted by Archer (1986) or “cultural word” proposed by Newmark (1988). These expressions, proper to their specific oenological discursive groups, with no cultural equivalent in a different oenological language, have been thus defined as “oenological culturemes” (Wislocka Breit, 2012).

CALIFORNIA	AUSTRALIA	NEW ZEALAND
contribution weaves a tapestry of flavour centered on a concentrated core of currant, black cherry, blackberry and sweet cigar smoke... (CSM-CA-3)	Flirting strawberry yoghurt creamy and freshly cut rhubarb aromatics unwittingly entice (Shi-A-1)	greet the nose and fuse with wafts of toasted marshmallow (PN-NZ-2)
infused with brambly blackberry fruit... (CSM-CA-5)	reminiscent of Life Savers confectionary (PN-A-1)	savoury thorny understory like a briar growing through straw mulch after recent rain (PN-NZ-2)
on your patio, or a hearty pasta dish enjoyed by the fire (Shi-CA-2)	mineral acidity and fine lacy tannins (CSM-A-1)	sweet fleshy grilled crimson plums on a bed of grated roast beetroot (PN-NZ-2)
unmistakable richness or decadence (M-CA-5)	a slight gaminess (PN-A-3)	Manuka honey complexity (PN-NZ-2)
darkness of tea leaf, humid forest, and a feral quality, like the fur of an animal or the nape of a neck (PN-CA-4)	the meaty element gives way to a very fragrant musk, lavender and talcum powder note. (PN-A-1)	run through the palate as smoothly as a Humvee over judder bars on an ocean boulevard (PN-NZ-2)
a splash of bacon fat (PN-CA-5) nicoise black olive tapenade (Shi-CA-5)	...even coating of talc-like tannins (CS-A-4)	the wine has the intensity of a babbling brook (PN-NZ-2)
Chinese camphor (Shi-CA-1) hibiscus tea (T-CA-4) dusty spice (T-CA-4)	a barrel-fermented vapour net entraps (Shi-A-1)	flavours are marshalled into clean, well defined lines by a stern palate edge (PN-NZ-2)
smoked butcher block (Shi-CA-1) boar sausage, cured meat (Shi-CA-5)	...developing a sooty mineral edge (CS-A-5)	florals arrive and evaporate into kind of strawberry transparency (PN-NZ-5)
western aspect of Madder Lake (T-CA-2)	edgy acidity and fine gritty mineral tannins (T-A-1)	

Table 3. Unusual English referents.

9. Conclusion

In this paper I have tried to show that wine tasting sheets can be rightfully considered “genre” as they fully comply with the linguistic requirements as signalled by Swales (1990) and Bhatia (2004).

The Systemic Functional Linguistics approach has resulted particularly suitable for analysing texts with specific communication goals, such as tasting notes. The three metafunctions differentiated within SFL: ideational, interpersonal and textual, coincide to a great extent with the three goals of a wine tasting sheet: (i) to inform; (ii) to allure, and (iii) to provide the feeling of membership of an exclusive group of people knowledgeable about wine. While certain measurable data provided explicitly within a tasting sheet contribute to its technical, therefore objective, appearance, the main goal of a tasting note remains subliminal: to convince the prospective reader into buying this specific bottle of wine.

Since excessively overt advertising would entail diminishing the semi-technical appearance of a tasting note as offering neutral, measurable information, its content needs to be drafted in subtle yet effective words, charged with positive connotations. These differentiated lexical means include, among others:

- Evoked sensory sensations.
- Reminiscences from childhood and youth.
- Exotic and alluring effects.
- Savoury local and exotic fruits.
- Enthralling flavours.
- Variety of intrinsically positive adjectives.
- Positive contamination of substantially neutral terms.
- Accumulation of specialized oenological terms.
- Unusual and culturally marked references.

The above inevitably leads to a conclusion that any genre whose aim is to stimulate a factual or emotional response from the receiver and, especially, the wine tasting sheet, may, and should be, analysed in the Appraisal Theory frame, as defined by Martin and White (2005). Despite the technical

measurable data contained in such texts, intrinsic cultural differences are manifest, even among different English discourses; therefore a careful sociolinguistic grounding needs to be performed before any translation to another language is attempted. Simultaneously, since marketwise globalizing policies usually act outside any linguistic constraints, mutual permeability, even though clearly biased in favour of the New World style, is streaming diverse idiosyncratic features into a number of core characteristics, implicitly shared and/or expected by all producers and consumers. Doubtlessly, this phenomenon will be even more noticeable in languages lacking their own established oenological tradition and lexis.

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NOTES

- ¹ See OIV’s website at URL: <http://www.oiv.org>
- ² See, for instance, URL: <http://www.bodegapiirineos.net/?ids=641> [15/05/13]
- ³ URL: <http://www.bodega-ottobestue.com> [15/05/13]
- ⁴ URL: <http://www.bodegairius.com/productos.html> [12/03/12]; currently see: <http://web.archive.org/web/20120822232002/http://www.bodegairius.com/productos.html> [15/05/13]
- ⁵ URL: <http://www.bodegasabinasa.com/> [15/05/13]
- ⁶ URL: http://www.bodegastada.com/vinos_autor/index.htm [15/05/13]
- ⁷ URL: <http://www.bodegaschesa.com/vinedos.html> [15/05/13]
- ⁸ URL: <http://www.monteodina.com/esp/sender.asp> [15/05/13]
- ⁹ URL: <http://www.bodegasmeler.com/vistas/producto/MELER-CHARDONNAY.aspx> [12/03/12]
- ¹⁰ URL: <http://www.bodegaslaus.com/tienda.php?idioma=ESP> [15/05/13]
- ¹¹ URL: <http://www.bodegapiirineos.net/?ids=641> [15/05/13]
- ¹² URL: <http://www.bodegaslalanne.es/bodas-en-lalanne.html> [15/05/13];
- ¹³ URL: <http://www.bodegassers.es/> [15/05/13]
- ¹⁴ URL: <http://www.gmon.com/tech/output.shtml> [15/05/13]
- ¹⁵ URL: <http://www.grangeforsale.com/forsale.php?Grange=1389> [15/05/13]
- ¹⁶ URL: <http://www.bravantevineyards.com/index.cfm?method=products.productDrilldown&productID=df4f8c57-1cc4-81ae-753d-dc82512afb91&pageID=7be0a8e0-082a-9916-533e-47840b2b4352&sortBy=DisplayOrder&> [15/05/13]
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- ¹⁸ URL: <http://aromadictionary.com/winewhitelist.pdf>, URL: <http://aromadictionary.com/wineredlist.pdf> [15/05/13]
- ¹⁹ URL: <http://somontano.uvinum.es/vinas-del-vero-cabernet-sauvignon-2004> [15/05/13]
- ²⁰ URL: <http://somontano.uvinum.es/vinas-del-vero-cabernet-sauvignon-2004> [15/03/13]
- ²¹ URL: <http://www.sibaritia.com/vinos/leonor-lalanne-merlot-crianza-p-194.html> [15/05/13]
- ²² URL: <http://www.vinogusto.com/es/vinos/espana/aragon/somontano,co:tinto,p:vinos-12-hatsa-25-euros?pg=6> [15/05/13]
- ²³ URL: <http://assets3.casellawines.com.au/assets/RlaSPZCLH8Pw2C1/yt-pn.pdf> [15/05/13]

- ²⁴ URL: http://web.archive.org/web/20081014014112/http://www.okahuestate.co.nz/site/index.php/content/wine_detail/merlot_cabernet1 [15/05/13]
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- ³⁰ URL: http://www.darenberg.com.au/sites/default/files/TastingNotes/2007_The_Feral_Fox_Pinot_Noir.pdf [15/05/13]
- ³¹ See note 29
- ³² URL: <http://www.wine.com/V6/Hanzell-Pinot-Noir-2006/wine/102114/detail.aspx> [15/05/13]
- ³³ See note 29
- ³⁴ URL: <http://www.goseewrite.com/2010/02/funny-wine-tasting-notes/> [15/05/13]
- ³⁵ URL: http://www.atasteofmonterey.com/assets/files/newsletters/newsletter_03_2011.pdf [15/05/13]
- ³⁶ URL: <http://www.stuff.co.nz/life-style/food-wine/533498/Putting-wines-into-words> [15/05/13]
- ³⁷ See note 29
- ³⁸ URL: http://web.archive.org/web/20121009035756/http://www.peayvineyards.com/archive_syrah.shtml [15/05/13]
- ³⁹ Obviously this observation has been invalidated by the on-going changes in Spanish tasting notes style.
- ⁴⁰ URL: <http://www.bodegassierradeguara.es/htm/es/prod2/control?zone=pub&sec=prod2&pag=ver&cid=17&loc=es> [15/05/13]
- ⁴¹ URL: <http://chwine.com/lot-55-2005-napa-valley-meritage> [15/05/13]
- ⁴² See note 29
- ⁴³ URL: <http://www.penfolds.com/en/Wines/Icon-Luxury-Range/RWT.aspx> [15/05/13]