

Exploring the Patterns of Evaluative Language in Applied Linguistics Blurbs: A Rhetorical Structure Analysis

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Abstract

This study explored the patterns of evaluative language in applied linguistics blurbs to see how attitude is reflected in these advertising texts. Following a qualitative approach, the study was informed by pragmatic and discourse-semantic perspectives in exploring the overall structuring of blurbs. Findings indicated that blurbs are frequently charged with appreciation as a category of attitude in the appraisal framework. Graduation as another element in the appraisal framework was also found to be employed both as intensification and quantification. With respect to the communicative settings of blurbs, it was found that blurbs are mainly constructed monologically. Meanwhile, results also showed that blurbs are logogenetically constructed due to the interpersonally prosodic flow of attitudinal resources across the whole components of blurbs. The study concluded that blurbs are logogenetically constructed by means of the monologic pressure of attitudinal resources for increasing the impact of persuasion as the primary tool of advertising discourse in blurbs.

Keywords: Appraisal, Prosody, Logogenecy, Dialogic and Monologic Positionings

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1. Introduction

In the process of selling products in a maximally effective way, advertising is considered as an inseparable tool in commercial and noncommercial marketing. The importance of advertising has led to several studies from different perspectives (Christopher, 2013; El-daly, 2011; Gea-Valor, 2005;

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Vaičėnienė, 2006). Advertising a product usually seeks for achieving its purposes, that is, information as well as persuasion (Crismore, Marakkanen, & Stesffensen, 1993; Gea-Valor, 2005; Hyland, 1998, 2008; Katapalia, 1992; Mauranen, 1993). The persuasive aspect of advertising is regarded as the primary goal of advertising discourse and has a significant role in selling and buying products as well as a catalyst effect in the boosting sales volume (Cheung, 2009). In other words, it signals the promotional nature of advertising discourse generated through the application of certain similar positive and intensifying linguistic resources and rhetorical conventions in the commercial environment of marketing.

One of the promotional genres, alongside other promotional genres such as advertisements and job applications (Bhatia, 2004, p. 68), is evaluative-persuasive book blurbs that advance praise (Cronin & La Barre, 2005), tell readers about the content of the book (Cacchiani, 2007; Douglas, 2001), and lure readers into buying the book (Hyland & Diani, 2009). Blurbs are genre-oriented texts displayed on the book covers and on the internet, providing potential readers with the application of persuasive strategies or rhetorical conventions (Gea-Valor, 2005). In addition to the rhetorical conventions which manifest the promotional characteristics of blurbs, linguistic resources play a significant role not only in shaping the overall construction of blurbs and achieving their communicative purposes, but also in providing positive evaluation, as a significant contributory factor, for establishing convincing discourse (Gea-Valor, 2005). In other words, evaluation means the involvement of interpersonal meaning in construing stance or point of view (Hood, 2004, 2010) and has led to a remarkable upsurge of scholarly orientation and interest in the exploring of its role in the area of enquiry (Jalilifar, Hayati, & Mashhadi, 2012; Lemke, 1998; Liu, 2013; Stotesbury, 2003; Thetela, 1997; Thompson & Yiyun, 1991).

With regard to the significance of evaluative language in constructing interpersonal meaning, the appraisal framework, as a branch of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), has been proposed as a well-established evaluative model in exploring and theorizing the interpersonal positioning and adopting stances in different textual realizations (Martin, 2000; Martin & Rose, 2003; Martin & White, 2005; White, 2001a). In this regard, blurbs possess a potential fertility in using evaluative strategies for establishing an interpersonal relationship among texts, addressers, and addressees. Accordingly, this study first analyzes English applied linguistics blurbs by adopting the appraisal framework to see how this discourse-semantic oriented analytical tool can illuminate the structural formation of these promotional genre-oriented constructions (i.e., blurbs). Second, the study tends to explore how evaluative strategies and interpersonal meanings are developed logogenetically; that is, the progressive evolution of textual meaning (Hood, 2010). Third, the study sets its sights on how evaluative strategies employed in the construal of blurbs enhance and amplify the advertising discourse effectively. Meanwhile, the study seeks to answer whether the blurbs of applied linguistics are dialogically or monologically constructed.

2. Studies on Blurbs

Blurbs have appeared in different forms and through different mediums such as electronic or nonelectronic and fiction or nonfiction (i.e., academic). Meanwhile, local and international aspects of book blurbs have also been the focus in some research. For instance, the effects of socio-cultural factors were investigated in the construction of blurbs written by local Singaporean and international publishers and a six-move schema was devised (Kathpalia, 1997).

Researchers have examined nonelectronic, nonfiction blurbs by investigating keywords in their construction (Yang, 2010), comparing

business and history blurbs to find out what area has made a greater use of blurbs (Cronin & La Barre, 2005), analyzing disciplinary areas from hard and soft sciences which revealed a four-move schema (Iraji & Kuhi, 2013), and examining a small corpus of textbooks manifesting a four-move schematic structure (Basturkman, 2009). Another category of blurbs' research incorporates electronic, fiction and nonfiction blurbs for their rhetorical organization (Gea-Valor, 2005). One more category of research includes nonelectronic, fiction and academic blurbs which were cross-culturally examined for discursal patterns, linguistic features, and nonlinguistic strategies (Jalilifar & Banari, 2011). In the case of electronic fiction blurbs, online blurbs from Amazon UK and Okuoku TR were investigated for their generic structures and promotional elements, showing diverse schematic structures (Onder, 2013). Nonelectronic fiction blurbs with an evaluative perspective were also investigated and a four-move schema was identified (Cacchiani, 2007).

Despite the relatively growing body of research as illustrated above, past research has provided little direction regarding how evaluative linguistic resources contribute to the overall construction of blurbs. That is, the effect of evaluative linguistic resources on blurbs' advertising discourse has yet to be explored via a comprehensive framework to determine their effective and constructive role in persuading readers to buy the books. In other words, blurb writers have access to various kinds of evaluative strategies for promoting books and persuading readers via employing highly positive linguistic expressions. However, it is not yet clear how these evaluative strategies are employed attitudinally and structurally to manipulate the minds of their readers and leave a positive impression on them. In addition, reviewing the related literature on blurb has shown that few studies have

systematically addressed the question of whether the blurbs are dialogically or monologically shaped.

Besides, the spread of interpersonal meanings can be studied and explored in terms of the patterns of prosodies. Because of the application of attitudinal and graduation resources creating interpersonal meanings in different rhetorical conventions of blurbs, the concept of patterns of prosody can shed light on the possibly systematic spread of interpersonal meanings among distinct moves. That is, the goal is to learn how interpersonal meaning spreads across the blurbs rhetorically. Thus, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

- 1) What categories and subcategories of the appraisal framework, i.e., attitude, engagement, and graduation, are responsible for the rhetorical construction of applied linguistics blurbs?
- 2) What patterns of evaluative language can be found in these blurbs?
- 3) How do the patterns of evaluative linguistic resources characterize the overall construction of blurbs?
- 4) How are the blurbs dialogically shaped or monologically constructed?

3. The Theoretical Framework

This study drew on pragmatic and discourse-semantic perspectives in exploring the overall structuring of blurbs. At the pragmatic level, the communicative purpose of blurbs was investigated in terms of the rhetorical patterns they possess. This phase of the study was based on Swales' (1990) analytic construct of *moves* that focuses on communicative purposes recognized by the expert members of discourse communities. Labeling of the moves and steps followed the perspective inspired by Bhatia (2004) although some modifications in terms of naming and determining the moves were made.

At the discourse-semantic phase, this study was informed by Martin and White's (2005) appraisal framework. This framework encompasses three

main categories including attitude, engagement, and graduation. Attitude is concerned with the positive and negative evaluation of emotional feelings, people's behavior, as well as the evaluation of things (Hood, 2004, 2006; Martin, 1997, 2000; Martin & Rose, 2003; Martin & White, 2005; White, 2001a, 2001b) and includes resources like affect (sad), judgment (normal), and appreciation (remarkable). Engagement provides a systematic account of the evaluative linguistic resources which are rhetorically dialogistic in nature. This category includes resources like disclaim (yet), proclaim (naturally), entertain (perhaps), and attribute (believe). The third category of the appraisal system is graduation which is concerned with scaling up and scaling down according to intensity and amount of the attitudinal evaluations or interpersonal engagement (Martin & White, 2005). This category includes resources like force (e.g., many) and focus (e.g., kind of).

In addition to the above theoretical concepts, the concept of prosodic patterning was also employed for exploring the interpersonal dimension of evaluative aspects of blurbs. The concept of patterns of prosody was introduced by Martin and White (2005) and elaborated by Hood (2010). "It consists of three patterns including domination, intensification and saturation. Prosody of domination refers to the prospective and retrospective flow of value from the hyper-Theme and hyper-New" (Hood, 2010, p.157). Prosody of saturation refers to the opportunistic aspect of interpersonal meaning (Hood, 2010, 157). Prosody of intensification "...rel[ies] on highly charged attitudinal choices..." (Hood, 2010, p. 159).

In order to show whether blurbs are dialogically or monologically constructed two other dichotomous concepts (Martin & White, 2005) were also covered in this study. The first dichotomy, heteroglossic vs. monoglossic, refers to the presence and absence of previously stated voices and positions which are external to the voice of the text and might be in

agreement with, or opposed to the internal voice. The second dichotomy, dialogistic vs. monologicistic, refers to the presence and absence of the possible anticipated responses on the part of readers. The heteroglossic and monoglossic dichotomy is retrospective, and the dialogistic and monologicistic dichotomy is prospective.

Moreover, in order to explore the structural patterns that evaluative resources are encoded in the blurbs, the proposed grammatical framework by Hood (2010) was utilized. The purpose of exploring the grammatical encoding of evaluative resources was to know whether there is any systematic pattern in the application of these resources.

4. Methodology

This study provides a detailed discourse-semantic analysis, with the orientation of a qualitative approach, for analyzing applied linguistics blurbs. The analysis offers insights into how the interrelated lexical and grammatical choices are employed in the blurbs. All three categories of the appraisal framework were thoroughly investigated. The simultaneous study of these categories offers a comprehensive picture of how these categories coarticulate with each other in the construction of blurbs' lexico-grammatical patterns.

4.1 Materials Selection

Following the classification schemes proposed by Glanzel and Schubert (2003) and Coffin, Curry, Goodman, Hewings, Lillis, and Swann (2003) in relation to identifying disciplines, applied linguistics as a distinct subdiscipline of applied disciplines was selected to find out how evaluative language is employed in this discipline. The study encompassed a detailed and deep discourse-semantic analysis; therefore, the number of texts and the frequency of categories and subcategories carried no significant weight in the analytical procedure. In other words, the selection of blurbs' texts was

directly related to the analysis of these texts; that is, the selection and analysis happened synchronically. As far as the aim of this study was to explore the blurbs' evaluative linguistic resources with the purpose of finding all possible existing patterns in the organization of blurbs in applied linguistics, the analytical procedure ceased only when no further patterns emerged. Accordingly, there existed a completely close connection between the selection of the number of blurbs and the analytical procedure in this study. In the process of analyzing applied linguistics blurbs, 30 nonelectronic blurbs were qualitatively studied and examined in terms of their rhetorical patterns, attitudinal and graduation resources, patterns of prosodies, and communicative settings. The selection of nonelectronic blurbs was motivated by preference of many people to find their desired books via bookshops and libraries; therefore, nonelectronic blurbs are still worth investigating for assessing their evaluative linguistic resources.

As the findings of these blurbs were very similar and because the methodological analysis of these blurbs is lengthy, the qualitative analysis of two blurbs is merely reported. Although the blurbs were methodologically supposed to be selected since 2010, and this could potentially reduce the possible number of the available books to the researchers, a relatively large number of books were found, though. Three main sources were identified to obtain our required books: well-known bookshops, central library of *Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz*, and the library of *Islamic Azad University of Ahvaz*. More than 90 books were found in this searching process, and one third of the books were randomly selected for analysis.

The number of moves which might be used in a blurb varies from one to three, or perhaps more. The overarching question was on what basis we can easily identify one move from another. In this regard, the criterion was whether the move is internally or externally stated. If a move is externally

asserted, it can be recognized as a distinct move. On the other hand, if it is internally asserted, we need to know whether its content relates to the book itself or the author of the book. Any move which pertains to the book or the author of the book can separately constitute a distinct move. Inside a move, interrelated steps can also be identified in terms of their general similarities and subtle differences.

5. The First Blurb

Following Hood (2010), the coding conventions utilized in the analysis of applied linguistics blurbs entails boldface to indicate explicit attitude and italics to indicate graduation. Note the first blurb which was analyzed in this study followed by the rhetorical patterns, kinds of attitude and graduation, grammatical realizations of these resources, prosodic patterns, and the communicative setting of the blurb.

Second Language Learning Theories is a clear and concise overview of the field of second language acquisition (SLA) theories. Written by a team of leading academics working in different SLA specialisms, this book provides expert analysis of the main theories from multiple perspectives to offer a broad and balanced introduction to the topic.

The book covers all the main theoretical perspectives currently active in the SLA field and sets them in a broader perspective per chapter, e.g. linguistic, cognitive or sociolinguistic. Each chapter examines how various theories view language, the learner, and the acquisition process. Summaries of key studies and examples of data relating to a variety of languages illustrate the different theoretical perspectives. Each chapter concludes with an evaluative summary of the theories discussed. This third edition has been thoroughly updated to reflect the very latest research in the field of SLA.

Key features include:

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- a fully re-worked chapter on cognitive models of language and language learning
- a new chapter on information processing, including the roles of different types of memory and knowledge in language learning
- the addition of a glossary of key linguistic terms to help the nonspecialist
- a new timeline of second language learning theory development

This third edition takes account of the significant developments that have taken place in the field in recent years. Highly active domains in which theoretical and methodological advances have been made are treated in more depth to ensure that this new edition of *Second Language Learning Theories* remains as fresh and relevant as ever.

Rosamond Mitchell is Professor of Applied Linguistics, University of Southampton.

Florence Myles is Professor of Second Language Acquisition, University of Essex.

Emma Marsden is Senior Lecturer in Second Language Education, University of York (second Language Learning Theories, by Rosamond Mitchell, Florence Myles, & Emma Marsden, 2013, Routledge).

5.1 Rhetorical Analysis

The above blurb comprises the following two moves: *appraising the book by the blurb writer* and *about the author*. The move *appraising the book by the blurb writer* is divided into the following submoves, (i.e., *previewing the book* and *indicating the content and the value of the book*).

5.2 Attitudinal and Graduation Resources

A rich range of attitudinal resources are employed in the construction of the first move. Maximal reliance on inscriptions of attitude as appreciation is the salient characteristic of the first step in the first move, although one instance of judgment as capacity is also observed:

Second Language Learning Theories is a **clear** and **concise** overview of the field of second language acquisition (SLA) theories. Written

Banari, Jalilifar, & G. Shooshtari

by a team of **leading** academics working in different SLA specialisms, this book provides **expert** analysis of the **main** theories from multiple perspectives to offer a **broad** and **balanced** introduction to the topic.

In the second move, the blurb writer shows no tendency for the application of explicit attitudinal resources. Here, the writer attempts to implicitly give weight to the academic status of the authors of the book. In this move, the application of the strategy of invoked judgment functions to imply and highlight the academic ability of the authors of the book. Therefore, the writer employs the invocations of judgment as capacity in the second move. For example, when the readers of the above blurb come across with the sentence that says *Rosamond Mitchell is professor of Applied Linguistics, University of Southampton*, they naturally interpret the above sentence as showing the high academic status of the author. Therefore, they will likely accept other claims of the blurb writer about the validity of the book.

In relation to the kinds of graduation resources in the above-mentioned blurb, both kinds of graduation as force, (i.e., intensification and quantification, are employed in the construal of this blurb):

multiple [graduation: quantification: number] perspective

more [graduation: quantification: mass] depths

currently [graduation: quantification: extent] active

thoroughly [graduation: intensification] updated

5.3 Grammatical forms for Attitudinal Resources and Graduation Resources

Attitudinal qualities as epithet are the major grammatical resource for realizing attitudinal meanings in the above blurb. Blurb writers make use of this grammatical resource frequently for constructing a positive image of the book:

clear and **concise** overview

broad and **balanced** introduction

leading academics working

significant developments

One more grammatical resource for encoding attitudinal meaning in the above blurb is the employment of adjectives after linking verbs known as attribute:

This third edition has been thoroughly **updated**.

Theories remains as **fresh** and **relevant** as ever

Other grammatical resources which are employed in the above blurb for realizing attitudinal meaning is the application of nouns and processes reflecting, mirroring, and intensifying the positive aspect of the book. Here, attitudinal meaning is infused into these nonattitudinal forms, pushing readers toward having a better interpretation of the book. For example, in addition to the overwhelming use of inscribed positive attitudinal resources in the first step of the first move, processes such as *provides* and *offers* implicitly signal to readers that the book contains some attractive, useful, and effective features which will be shown and presented briefly as the text unfolds. In other words, these words implicitly carry positive meanings because of referring to the positive aspects of the book. So when readers come across these words in a blurb, they know that positive aspects of the book will be mentioned:

this book **provides expert analysis** of the main theories from multiple perspectives to **offer a broad and balanced** introduction to the topic.

Again, in the second step of the first move, the blurb writer relies heavily on attitudinal values to construct a positive image about the book. Here, in addition to the employment of explicit attitudinal resources such as *main*, *active*, and *clear*, processes such as *covers*, *examines*, *illustrates*, and *concludes* also implicitly play a significant role in creating the positive interpretation about the book. The elaboration of the book's features and qualities represented through the verbs acts to imply an appreciation of worthiness, completeness, and purposefulness of the book. Meanwhile,

although the congruent form for expressing attitude is adjective, nominalized qualities such as depth and addition are also applied in the construal of this submove.

Each chapter **examines** how various...
a variety of languages **illustrate** the different theoretical perspectives.
linguistic terms to **help** the nonspecialist
the **addition** of a glossary...
in more **depth**

In the above blurb, multiple instances of graduation resources as force can be seen. Graduation is also realized as premodification in terms of intensification:

more depths
thoroughly updated
Highly active
as premodification in terms of quantification:

a team of leading academics working
as listing in terms of inscribed attitude:
Second Language Learning Theories is a **clear** and **concise** overview of
...remains as **fresh** and **relevant** as ever

5.4 Patterns of Prosody

Prosody of domination which flows prospectively and retrospectively from the hyper-Theme and hyper-New (Hood, 2010, p. 157) is found in the beginning and at the end of the above blurb, although it is realized differently. In the beginning of the above blurb, prosody of domination is achieved through attitudinal resources, whereas at the end of the blurb it is achieved through the application of invoked judgment:

Second Language Learning Theories is a **clear**
and **concise** overview of the field of... (in the
beginning of the blurb)

Rosamond Mitchell is **Professor** of Applied
Linguistics, University of Southampton. (at the
end of the blurb)

Prosody of saturation is also seen in the rhetorical formation of the above blurb. That is, multiple instances of attitudinal and graduation resources are used in different parts of the above blurb:

Second Language Learning Theories is a **clear** and **concise** overview of the *field* of second language acquisition (SLA) theories. Written by *a team of leading* academics working in different SLA specialisms, this book **provides expert** analysis of the **main** theories from **multiple** perspectives to **offer a broad** and **balanced** introduction to the topic.

Prosody of intensification which "...rel[ies] on highly charged attitudinal choices..." (Hood, 2010, p. 159) is also favored by the writer of the above blurb:

Second Language Learning Theories is a **clear** and **concise** overview of the...
multiple perspectives to **offer a broad** and **balanced** introduction to the topic.
...remains as **fresh** and **relevant** as ever

5.5 Communicative Setting

The meticulous and rigorous reading of the above blurb manifests that the blurb writer apparently shows no interest in the application of dialogistic locutions. Everything about the book is expressed confidently. The blurb writer presents himself as expressing the positive aspects of the book and signaling the message that he would refuse other alternative negative voices in relation to this book by means of closing down potential contrary positions. By advancing strongly positive interpretation and commitment about the book by means of the deployment of a considerable amount of positive attitudinal and graduation resources, the blurb writer attempts to establish a positive community of shared attitudes among the book's readers. Therefore, the dialogistic space which might signal the acceptance of other prospective voices in challenging the validity of the book is not an issue in this blurb. However, the blurb is monoglossically shaped due to the

nonexistence of previously stated opinions about the book. Thus, the blurb is dialogically inert in terms of its prospective and retrospective orientations.

6. The Second Blurb

The rhetorical patterns, kinds of attitude and graduation, prosodic patterns, and communicative setting of the following blurb will be presented:

"A complete reference for students, especially in undergraduate English language teaching programs. The magic of this book is in its honesty in making real connection between theory and practice."

Jayakaran Mukundan, Putra University, Malaysia

"For any interested teacher wanting to understand how to select, adapt, and create language learning materials, this book is an excellent guide."

Paul Slater, University of Brighton

Materials and Methods in ELT is an essential resource for teachers or for those engaged in taking professional courses, the relating to all aspects of English language teaching.

Updated throughout, the 3rd edition features new section on assessment and feedback, technology for materials and methods, as well as a new chapter on IT in English language teaching (ELT), and inclusion of samples from current teaching materials.

This popular teacher's guide offers a comprehensive and useful introduction to the principles and practice of teaching English as a foreign/second language. It examines the ideas behind current methodology and teaching materials, in addition to offering a practical guide to approaching materials and methods, evaluation and adaptation, technology for materials and methods, and teaching in under-resourced classrooms. These principles are then related to the individual language skills of reading, listening, speaking, and writing. The authors examine the different methodologies available to teachers for organizing and

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running an ELT classroom; discussing group and pair work, individualization, classroom observation, and the teachers' role in the contemporary ELT context.

Jo McDonough was Senior Lecturer and Director of ELT at the University of Essex. Her publications include *ESP in Perspective* (1984) and *Research Methods for English Language Teachers* (with S. McDonough, 1997).

Christopher Shaw was a lecturer on the MA TESOL course in the international academy and on several MA ELT modules in the Department of Language and Linguistics at the University of Essex. He is currently as a freelance lecturer.

Hitomi Mashuara is a Deputy Director of TESOL and MA Applied Linguistics at Liverpool University. She is a founding member and Secretary of MATSDA and is the author of *Developing Language Course Materials* (with B. Tomlinson, 2004) and editor of *Research for Materials Development: Evidence for Best Practice* (with B. Tomlinson, 2010) (Materials and Methods in ELT: A Teacher's Guide, by Jo McDonough, Christopher Shaw, & Hitomi Masuhara. 2013. Wiley-Blackwell).

6.1 Rhetorical Analysis

The above blurb entails three moves in its discursal formation including *appraising the book by the external voice*, *appraising the book by the blurb writer*, and *about the author*. The second move, namely *appraising the book by the blurb writer* is also divided into *previewing the book*, *indicating the content and value of the book*, and *targeting the market*.

6.2 Attitudinal and Graduation Resources

The first move (i.e., *appraising the book by the external voice*) plays a prominent role in the formation of the blurb. Multiple instances of attitudinal

resources are exploited for encoding attitude as appreciation. Meanwhile, one instance of judgment is also seen in this move:

A **complete** [attitude: appreciation] reference

The **magic** [attitude: appreciation] of this book is in its **honesty** [attitude: appreciation]

For any **interested** [affect: inclination] teacher

...this book is an **excellent** [attitude: appreciation] guide

In the analysis of the above move, the purpose is to praise and evaluate the positive aspects of the book; therefore, appreciation is almost exclusively employed in the evaluative construction of the blurb. The second move is also frequently charged with appreciation, reinforcing the persuasive effect and impression of the book:

essential resource

the 3rd edition features **new** section

a **comprehensive** and **useful** introduction

practical guide

Judgment as capacity is also invoked by means of mentioning the academic status of the authors of the book. The apparently nonattitudinal information about the academic status of the above authors implies the academic competency of these authors in their fields, convincing readers to assign more positive interpretation to the claims and propositions which are said about the book written by the authors.

Jo McDonough was **Senior Lecturer** and Director of
ELT at the University of Essex.

Hitomi Mashuara is a **Deputy Director** of TESOL and
MA Applied Linguistics at Liverpool University.

Force as a category of graduation is mainly used in the above blurb, while only one instance of focus is observed:

as focus:

The magic of this book is in its honesty in making **real**
connection between theory and practice

as force:

all [quantification: number] aspects

samples from *current* [quantification: extent] teaching materials

several [quantification: number] MA ELT modules

6.3 Grammatical Forms for Attitudinal and Graduation Resources

Instances of adjective as the salient grammatical tool of encoding attitude can be seen as epithet in this blurb:

A **complete** reference

This popular teacher's guide offers a **comprehensive** and **useful** introduction

Attitudinal meaning is also infused in nominalized qualities, showing that evaluation is present even in the absence of congruent form for the expression of attitude:

The **magic** of this book

...this book is an excellent **guide**

The expression of the specific features of the book in terms of the processes like *offer*, *examine*, and *discuss* acts to imply an appreciation of worthiness, usefulness, and purposefulness of the book. For example, when readers encounter the verb *offer*, they know that something will be presented. In order to assign positive meaning to the verb *offer*, we have to look forward in the text to see whether the adjacent words are positive or negative. In other words, the word *offer* has polarity but to determine its kind of polarity, contextual and cotextual meanings need to be observed. Therefore, the above verbs receive positive polarity because of their positioning in a positively persuasive text as well as their lexically positive meaning. In the above blurb, graduation is realized as premodification in terms of quantification or as listing in terms of quantification:

...relating to **all** aspects of English language teaching

Her publications include *ESP in Perspective* (1984) and *Research Methods for English Language Teachers* (with S. McDonough, 1997).

Here, the number of the books of the author is mentioned, implying the perseverance of the researcher in writing and publishing academic books.

Listing the number of places that the author has academically worked or the number of the books that have been written by him can give more weight to or imply the validity and usefulness of the book:

Hitomi Mashuara is a Deputy Director of TESOL and MA Applied Linguistics at *Liverpool University*. She is a founding member and Secretary of *MATSDA* and is the author of *Developing Language Course Materials* (with B. Tomlinson, 2004) and editor of *Research for Materials Development: Evidence for Best Practice* (with B. Tomlinson, 2010).

Graduation is also sometimes realized as listing in terms of intensification:

[The book] offers a **comprehensive** and **useful** introduction

6.4 Prosodic Patterning

Prosody of domination flowing prospectively and retrospectively from the hyper-Theme and hyper-New (Hood, 2010, 157) is found in the beginning and at end of the above blurb:

A **complete** reference for students, especially in undergraduate English language teaching programs. (in the beginning of the blurb)

Hitomi Mashuara is a **Deputy Director** of TESOL and MA Applied Linguistics at Liverpool University. She is a **founding member and Secretary of MATSDA** and is **the author of** *Developing Language Course Materials* (with B. Tomlinson, 2004) and **editor of** *Research for Materials Development: Evidence for Best Practice* (with B. Tomlinson, 2010). (at the end of the blurb)

Prosody of saturation is also observed in the rhetorical formation of the above blurb:

Exploring the Patterns ...

A **complete** reference for students, especially in undergraduate English language teaching programs. The **magic** of this book is in its **honesty** in making *real* connection between theory and practice

Prosody of intensification which is concerned with highly charged attitudinal choices (Hood, 2010, p. 159) is also favored by the above blurb writer:

This popular teacher's guide **offers** a **comprehensive** and **useful** introduction to the principles and practice of teaching English

6.5 Communicative Setting

The above blurb is heteroglossically constructed, that is, its retrospectively dialogic space is populated by identical voices from different sources. On the contrary, the dialogistic space of the above blurb was heavily under the pressure of the monologic effect of attitudinal meanings. That is, because of the nonexistence of any explicit locution for establishing communication with readers, the interaction among blurb writer and readers is communicatively monologicistic. Therefore, the above blurb is prospectively monologicistic in its discursual construction showing that the writer would decline to acknowledge other likely alternative views about the book on the part of readers.

7. Discussion

Findings from this study present applied linguistics blurbs as having a complex evaluative structure together with their rhetorically informative and persuasive moves that form a concerted unity to attract readers' attention. Blurb writers make use of various means to increase the chance of selling books. They employ several persuasive and informative functions, attitudinal and graduation resources, monologicistic ways of asserting their claims to fend off alternative viewpoints, and all kinds of prosodic patterning of

interpersonal meaning for establishing solidarity and alignment with their readers. This section discusses the rhetorical moves, attitudinal and graduation resources, grammatical features as well as the communicative setting of applied linguistics blurbs.

7.1 The Rhetorical Structures of Applied Linguistics Blurbs

The above analysis revealed that applied linguistics blurbs rely on three moves in their maximal rhetorical realizations: *appraising the book by the external voice*, *describing the book by the blurb writer*, and *about the author*. These three major moves will be more fully discussed in the following.

The analysis of the above blurbs has shown that the persuasive aspect of blurbs is positioned in the beginning phase of their discourse followed by their informative aspect. In other words, blurbs shift smoothly from the noticeable presence of attitudinal resources in the beginning phase of their construction to the absence of these resources at the end. The rational justification of such a rhetorical positioning might be attributed to the fact that a persuasive move is more attractive, compelling and powerful for convincing readers to buy the book because of its frequent positive attitudinal resources in their structures.

7.1.1 Appraising the book by an external voice

Under this rhetorical move, the blurb writer assigns the responsibility of the argument and proposition to external voice(s). The voices that can be employed in the current communicative context of the blurb have been classified as extra-vocalization and intra-vocalization by White (2002). Extra-vocalization refers to the external voice that has taken the responsibility of the proposition in the text, and intra-vocalization refers to the internal voice that has taken the responsibility of the argumentation in the text (p. 10). The external voice which might be used in the discourse of any written or spoken

context is expressed against or in favor of the text. Even an external voice can adopt a neutral position with reference to the position of the text.

In reference to the blurbs of applied linguistics and particularly the one which entails this move, the external voice is in agreement with the internal voice, that is, the blurb writer. The two voices couple together to strengthen the value positions which are adopted in the text. We know that blurbs have the function of convincing and persuading readers to buy books; therefore, any potentially positive strategy which can enhance the chance of successful selling of books will be applied. Here, the external voice enters the textuality of the above blurb to ensure readers that the above book is academically acceptable, valid, and reliable. The recommendation of these voices will be of great importance because the external voices who endorsed the reliability of the above book are academic figures themselves. The rhetorical strategy of appraising the book by an external voice seems to be intentionally selected for constructing a stronger and more compelling commencement in the textuality of the above blurb.

7.1.2 Appraising the book by the blurb writer

After establishing a strongly positive claim about the validity of the book on the part of the external voice, the blurb writer enters into a new phase of discursal progression, that is, a new move which can be rhetorically recognized in comparison to the previous one. The new move can be distinguished either in terms of the function that the move has to fulfill or the voice that is going to endorse the argumentation of the blurb's discourse. The new move has the same rhetorical purpose like the previous one in enhancing the persuasiveness and reliability of the book; however, as a distinct move it performs its rhetorical function by means of applying three steps (i.e., *previewing the book*, *indicating the content and value of the book*, and *targeting the market*, in its maximal) rhetorical realization. In the first step,

the blurb writer offers a general description of the book, and in the second step he/she gives specific information about the content and value of the book. In the third step, the description of the book is targeted toward determining the right and proper group for whom the book is written. That is, the blurb writer identifies the targeted group of the above book on the basis of his/her knowledge about the content of the book.

7.1.3 About the author

The third move is identified as having the function of introducing the academic personality and figure of the author of the book. In this move, the blurb writer offers the academic backgrounds of the authors and their publications. Here again, the blurb writer himself is responsible for providing the required information for this move. The above blurbs represent slight variations in terms of their moves and steps. The variations can be systematically identified under the name of the concept of maximal/minimal rhetorical realizations. That is to say, in the maximal rhetorical realization of applied linguistics moves, blurbs represent three moves, and in their minimal rhetorical realizations, they entail two moves. Meanwhile, the concept of maximal/minimal rhetorical realization is also applicable to the steps. Here, the second move of the above blurbs (i.e., *describing the book by the blurb writer*, has three and two steps in their maximal and minimal realizations, respectively).

7.2 The Attitudinal Dispersal of Applied Linguistics Blurbs

The analysis of the above blurbs has presented a systematic application of attitudinal categories across the blurbs due to their rhetorical purposes that have to be achieved. The primary characteristic of blurbs is to appraise the book by dint of evaluative expressions; therefore, there is a maximal reliance on attitudinal resources as appreciation in the rhetorical construction of blurbs. The noticeable presence of appreciation can thus contribute to making

the blurbs more compelling and convincing, hence persuading readers to buy the book.

Analyzing the blurbs has revealed that there is a one-to-one correspondence between the application of appreciation and the presence of the subject of book under discussion. Among the three moves which were identified in the blurbs, two of them are directly related to the book itself, and one of them is about the author. A dense accumulation of appreciation is employed in *appraising the book by the external voice* and *appraising the book by the blurb writer*. However, no instance of appreciation was found in *about the author* which is indirectly linked to the book. The presence of appreciation in the first and second moves and its absence in the third move indicate the existence of a rhetorically systematic application of attitudinal resources in the studied blurbs.

In spite of the overwhelming use of appreciation in the blurbs of applied linguistics, affect and judgment are of limited use. Judgment was applied as inscribed and invoked. The category of both inscribed and invoked judgment is capacity. The very few instances of inscribed judgment are in the second move, (i.e., *appraising the book by the blurb writer*). Invoked judgment is employed in the third move. Due to the consistent application of invoked judgment in the third move of the studied blurbs, it can be claimed that the third move has a definite function which is rhetorically achieved on account of the application of this invoked attitudinal resource. Therefore, it can be inferred that invoked judgment has a rhetorically systematic function due to its consistent recurrence in the blurbs.

7.3 Graduation Resources and Grammatical and Prosodic Patterns

Graduation as focus was hardly seen in the analyzed blurbs showing that they are not favored by the blurb writers. On the other hand, graduation as force

was frequently applied across the analyzed blurbs. Likewise, the analysis of the above blurbs showed that evaluation is not restricted to just one grammatical form. The impetus for using these resources might be the advertising purpose of grading up the values which are attributed to the book, making the book more attractive.

By looking closely into the rhetorical configuration, deployment of multiple instantiations of attitudinal choices, and graduation resources which implicitly flag positive reading, it becomes evident that all three patterns of prosody are employed in the rhetorical formation of the studied blurbs. That is, these prosodic patterns establish a more convincing, compelling, and effective evaluation based on which readers might be persuaded to buy the book.

7.4 The Monologic Setting of the Blurbs

Findings from the above blurbs revealed that blurbs are structurally monologic due to the monoglossic and monologic nature of attitudinal resources that force readers into trusting the blurb writers' claims. Only those external voices which align with the internal voice would be situated in the blurbs' construction. This nature of blurbs casts aspersions on the truthfulness of the information reflected in a blurb.

7.5 The Logogenetic Progression in Blurbs' Construction

In the logogenetic discourse of the above blurbs, two concepts of *interpersonal, intra-rhetorical diffusion* and *interpersonal, inter-rhetorical diffusion* are present. Interpersonal, intra-rhetorical diffusion refers to the prosodic flow of interpersonal meaning inside a move, and interpersonal, inter-rhetorical diffusion is concerned with the prosodic spread of value between the moves. Inside a move, interpersonal meaning might be created by means of inscriptions or invocations of attitudinal meanings as well as experiential meaning on account of graduation resources. For example, the

above blurb in its maximal rhetorical realization consists of three moves. In the first and second moves, evaluative meaning is inscribed in multiple instances of attitudinal resources. However, in the third move, evaluative stance is created through grading experiential meanings as well as invoking attitude. In any of the above moves, interpersonal meaning is diffused intra-rhetorically through the connection of attitudinal resources. That is, inside a move, one instance of inscribed attitudinal resource propagates its interpersonal meaning to the subsequent inscribed or invoked attitudinal resources. On the other hand, due to the rhetorical juxtaposition and relevance of moves together, the prosodic value which is constructed in one move will also be propagated to its adjacent move. That is, the interpersonal meaning of one move is diffused inter-rhetorically into the next moves. This would lead to the construction of logogeneity and unity across the whole blurb.

8. Conclusion

To eliminate alternative voices and establish solidarity with their readers blurb writers rely on several strategies. For example, they employ multiple instances of appreciation and invoked judgment. Both kinds of graduation as force (i.e., intensification and quantification, are used as well). All three kinds of patterns of prosody (i.e., intensification, saturation, & domination, demonstrating the distribution of interpersonal meaning across the whole blurb are also embedded). The use of several rhetorical moves, attitudinal and graduation resources, and the propagation of interpersonal meaning via all kinds of patterns of prosodies indicate that blurbs are multilevel constructions, creating compellingly persuasive claims about the book, leaving no space for other possible alternative positions about the claims advanced by the text and getting readers to confidently trust the proposition referenced by the blurb.

Moreover, it was found that all of the evaluative strategies are logogenetically systematized in the construal of blurbs' generic formation. That is, they evolve progressively through the systematic integration, participation, and selection of the above strategies at different levels of its formation rather than the accumulation of disharmonized parts.

In relation to the grammatical forms of attitude, analysis uncovered that attitudinal resources capitalize on various grammatical forms to evaluatively advertise the book. Graduation was also found to be used in numerous structural patterns such as premodification in both kinds of quantification and intensification as well as listing identical expressions. The application of a variety of grammatical forms in blurbs make them more spirited, natural, and attractive.

Findings from this study merely entail analyzing a limited sample of blurbs in applied linguistics. This might naturally restrict our findings to merely one discipline. Further research is required to explore the evaluative and rhetorical structures of blurbs of other disciplines as well as other languages for consolidating our methodological procedures and findings.

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