"Never judge a book by its cover": Generic and Promotional Variation in English and Arabic Linguistics Book Blurbs

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Abstract

Blurbs are short descriptions of the contents of books usually written on their back covers for promotional purposes. This study explores the rhetorical and promotional structure of back cover blurbs accompanying English and Arabic linguistics books from genre- and evaluation- analysis perspectives. To achieve the study aims, a selected corpus of 100 blurbs, divided equally into 50 from English and Arabic linguistics book blurbs, has been considered for analysis. Results have revealed that the generic structure of book blurbs is built around a five-schematic move structure for both languages’ corpora. As to the promotional structure, positive and evaluative adjectives take precedence over other lexical categories in English and Arabic corpora. The generic and promotional structure identified all contributes to the communicative function of promoting the marketing sales of books advertised. Book blurbs can be considered as an advertising discourse performing a persuasive effect on the part of potential customers to buy and read the books advertised.

1. Introduction

It is a common fact that most publishing companies and firms spend a lot of effort and money in designing their book covers to maximize their sales and to persuade their prospective readers to buy their products. Gea-Valor (2007) contends that the booming industry of book advertisement has motivated "hundreds of publishing companies to benefit from an international market where they need to be competitive: this is why these companies carefully design their book covers, amongst other marketing strategies devised to attract potential customers" (p.159). Thus, these publishing houses resort to this influential policy to advertise and enhance the selling of their books. As a main technique of advertising the books, some illustrative information and short description of the book contents are printed on the back covers of these books, and these short descriptive texts are generally known as "book blurbs".
Book blurbs (BBs) are identified as a hybrid genre which fulfills both an informative and a promotional function. BBs belong to a colony of a promotional genre alongside promotional letters, advertisements, and job application forms. The promotional use of blurbs is well documented in literature (cf. Gesuato, 2007) as the genre’s main purpose is not only to inform readers about the book contents but to market the publication and make it "attractive to buy" (Cacchiani, 2007, p. 5). The genre of BBs belongs to advertising discourse since it promotes the book as a product to the public through various functional moves. Blurbs have been studied for their generic structures and linguistic devices used to attract the potential customers.

Despite the amount of research that has been conducted on BBs to date (Basturkman, 1999; Gesuato, 2007; Gea-Valor and Inigo Ros, 2009; Asghar, et al., 2015), very little work has been done on the cross-linguistic analysis of BBs (Önder, 2015). The present research investigates the generic and promotional structure of back cover blurbs accompanying English and Arabic linguistics books to find out how promotional and communicative goals are achieved in two different linguistic and cultural contexts (English and Arabic). More specifically, the following research questions are addressed:

1. What is the generic structure of back cover blurbs accompanying English and Arabic linguistics books?
2. What is the promotional structure of back cover blurbs accompanying English and Arabic linguistics books?
3. How do the two different linguistic and cultural contexts articulate their back cover blurbs accompanying linguistics books?

Although cross-linguistic and cultural variation in spoken interaction has been extensively investigated in discourse-based research, very little research has been conducted on professional written genres (Kathpalia, 1997, p.417). To gain a better understanding of the role played by cross-linguistic variation in shaping the promotional genre of BBs, the present study examines, through a genre-based comparison, the cross-linguistic differences between the back cover blurbs of English and Arabic linguistics books in terms of their rhetorical organization and promotional structure. The significance of this study is highlighted by the findings that authors or writers from different languages and cultures organize and develop their ideas differently in academic and professional writings, and their written texts are sensitive to socio-linguistic and -cultural constraints (Bhatia, 1997; Kathpalia, 1997; Önder, 2013). To the best of researcher's knowledge, this study is the first of its type which
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dedicates itself to the investigation of the genre of back cover blurbs on the basis of cross-linguistic comparison. Hence, it is intended to fill a lacuna in applied linguistics research.

2. The genre of book blurbs

Here, the genre of book blurbs and related previous research will be discussed briefly to contextualize the present study.

Books blurbs are brief texts or descriptions generally printed on book covers, providing information about a book to potential readers (Gea-Valor, 2005). They describe not only the contents of a book, but also evaluate and recommend the book by means of extracts from reviews in well-known newspapers, journals and magazines which praise the qualities of the book and the author. Therefore, blurbs seem to function as factual marketing strategies aimed at getting the potential customer to buy and read the book (p. 41). Therefore, BBs are typical instances of informational-promotional texts.

According to Swales (1990), the defining factor of a given genre is the communicative purpose it fulfills. In the case of BBs, the main communicative purpose is to persuade potential readers to buy the book by providing both information and positive evaluation. This functional purpose is reflected in the generic or textual organization of these printed texts.

As far as the main textual components of BBs are concerned, Marčiulioniene (2006) outlines the following four basic elements of BBs: headline, the information about the content, the information about the author, and complementary information. Similarly, Gea-Valor (2005) lists the following parts of BBs: description of the book, evaluation of the book and additional information. This defined scheme suggests that BBs do have the specific structure, and linguistic patterns what makes BBs a separate genre. According to Marčiulioniene (2006), BBs are a separate genre which has specific linguistic features. She propounds that the language in these printed texts is extremely “market conscious” and emotional. That is, various rhetoric devices and expressive expressions are used purposely to create a persuasive image that would attract the potential reader.

Over the past decade, a growing number of investigations into the promotional genre of BBs have been reported in research literature. Bhatia (2004) examined 100 back cover blurbs accompanying fiction and academic books. A six-move schematic structure has been identified, namely, headlines, justifying the book, appraising the book, establishing credentials, endorsements and targeting the market. Furthermore, blurbs of fiction and academic books were very similar in their communicative purpose and lexico-grammatical realizations but different in their frequent use of adjectives. Gea-Valor (2007)
examined 36 physical book blurbs (traditional and online digital blurbs) to explore the communicative purposes of blurbs and how they are linguistically realized. Three basic moves were suggested for the two types of book blurbs; description, evaluation and author’s biography. In addition, BBs were found to have both an informative and a persuasive function while also providing positive evaluation by complimenting the book’s qualities. Drawing on Swales’ (1990) and Bhatia’s (2004) frameworks, Basturkmen (2009) analyzed seven EFL book blurbs. She identified four move schematic components; identifying the market niche, identifying language teaching theory, presenting credentials and informing readers of other items in the book. Following Gea-Valor’s (2005) analytic framework, Asghar, et al. (2015) examined 20 online blurbs accompanying socio-romantic novels published in Pakistan. Results revealed six component moves; description, information about the author, evaluation, Publishers’ information, theme of the novel and expectation from the readers, and these six rhetoric components had no fixed order. Moreover, it was found that this genre did not rely much on publisher’s name for their promotion; rather the description of the story was used as a tool to attract the potential readers.

Different languages and cultures have different rhetorical devices, these conventions are “products of discourse communities and are thereby “windows” into the functioning of such communities” (Berkenkotter and Huckin, 1995: 29). The focus in cross-linguistic and cultural rhetoric and contrastive rhetoric, is how texts in different languages and cultures are formed and interpreted through examining, comparing and contrasting the texts (Connor, 1996). Cross-cultural rhetoric can be regarded as a substantive approach that employs various analytic frameworks like text analysis, corpus linguistics, and ethnographic approaches (Connor, 2004). To the best of researcher’s knowledge, there is very little research on BBs from a cross-linguistic and cultural perspective. To name is but Kathpalia’s (1997) and Önder’s (2013) research. Kathpalia (1997) explored cross-cultural variation of fiction and non-fiction book blurbs in international publishers and local Singapore-based publishers. Specifically, it examined the rhetorical organization, textual patterns and lexicogrammatical realizations of these BBs. The textual analysis revealed that both international and local BBs followed a similar six-move schematic structure; headlines, justifying the book, appraising the book, establishing credentials, endorsement(s) and targeting the market. Local blurbs were “conservative in the use of strategies such as sequencing and embedding of moves and in deviant realizations of the genre” (Kathpalia, 1997, p. 419). Kathpalia concluded that both international and local BBs differed in their use of evaluative language.
and lexico-grammatical features. Furthermore, local books tended to focus on the value of the book rather than on evaluative language, while evaluative language permeated the entire blurb for international books.

Önder (2013) investigated the generic structure and promotional elements in online fiction blurbs accompanying the 95 best-selling books from Amazon (United Kingdom) and Okuoku (Turkey). He found that BBs of the two online sites followed different move-schematic structure in that Amazon had six-move structure while OkuoKu five moves. Besides, the analysis of promotional elements revealed that online fiction BBs employed the art of advertising through the use of favorable expressions and innovative uses of rhetorical strategies to persuade the reader to read the book.

In sum, very few investigations into the generic and promotional structure of BBs from a cross-linguistic and -cultural perspective do exist to date. Accordingly, the present study is the only study available investigating the genre of BBs in two different linguistic and cultural contexts (English and Arabic) not examined before. Hence, the main purpose of this study is to explore the most salient generic (i.e., rhetorical) organization and promotional elements of back cover blurbs accompanying English and Arabic linguistics books.

3. Research methodology

The corpus selection and the analytic procedures of the book blurbs’ considered for analysis are presented here.

3.1 Corpus selection

The texts examined in this study are a self-compiled corpus of 100 back cover blurbs of linguistics books published in English and Arabic languages. Specifically, they are divided equally into 50 English blurbs and 50 Arabic ones published between 2000 and 2014. The selected BBs deal with one specific discipline, viz. linguistics covering its various sub-disciplines such as phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, stylistics, pragmatics, text linguistics, discourse analysis, etc. The selection from a single discipline (i.e., linguistics) is motivated by "avoiding any overgeneralizations of the results due to possible discipline-specific characteristics" (Kuhi, 2008, p.67). The average words per each English and Arabic blurb were between 150 and 525 words long (see Table 1 below).

Book blurbs by the most widely-known publishing companies in the English- and Arabic-speaking worlds have been considered for analysis. Specifically, English blurbs have been selected from several renowned English publishing houses in the United States and United Kingdom (Penguin, Barnes & Noble, Cambridge, Routledge, and Elsevier), whereas Arabic blurbs have come from several regional
Arabic publishing houses in Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan and Morocco (e.g. Dar alTaleeha, Dar alMadaar, Aldar Alarabiah, and Lebanon Nashroon). BBs considered for analysis come from either the researcher’s personal belongings or local libraries’ belongings. The choice of study corpus is based upon the availability of BBs or ease of accessibility. It is worth noted that not all linguistics books published in Arabic contain back cover blurbs in comparison with linguistics books published in English. This is not to be taken for granted that all English linguistics books contain book blurbs, there are some exceptional cases. Only those Arabic books with back cover blurbs have been selected and considered for analysis. The use of BBs by Arab writers and authors is a recent tendency borrowed from Western publishing houses.

In selecting the representative type and size of comparable corpora, the following criteria have been taken into consideration. First, the texts examined in both English and Arabic corpora belong to the specific genre of printed linguistics book blurbs. Second, the printed book blurbs examined have their own communicative purposes which are distinguishable from other genres. Third, to ensure the appropriate and sufficient size of corpora examined, a relatively large sample of 100 blurbs has been selected to reveal “a few specified features through easily identified indicators” (Önder, 2013, p. 176).

Table 1. Description of the study corpus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Blurbs</th>
<th>No. of blurbs</th>
<th>Shortest blurb</th>
<th>Longest blurb</th>
<th>Average word count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English Linguistics book blurbs</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic Linguistics book blurbs</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 Analytic procedures

For the analysis of present corpus, a content analysis was employed to examine the compiled texts. Content analysis is widely used in genre and corpus research because these "two areas are concerned with extrapolating content, the former with typical sequential patterns of organization in text types and the latter with a description of language use based on multiple occurrences of linguistic phenomena in texts" (Basturkman, 1999, p. 22).

BBs were first examined for their sequential generic organization (i.e., move sequence) adopting the genre-analysis framework introduced by Swales (1990) and Bhatia (2004). Then, they were analyzed for their promotional structure and evaluative elements
following the evaluation approach framework presented by Gea-Valor (2005) and Gesuato (2007).

Following Swales (1990), a genre is defined as a communicative event with specific communicative purposes in a given discourse community. The communicative purpose is evidently reflected in the rhetorical organization of the genre in terms of component moves. A "move" is a stage that has a minor communicative purpose contributing to the major communicative purpose of the genre, and can be of any linguistic size, that is, a word, a phrase, a clause, or a paragraph. In the case of BBs, the main communicative purpose is to persuade potential readers to buy the book by providing both information and positive evaluation. Thus, the first stage in the study was devoted to exploring the rhetorical structure of BBs from a genre-analysis perspective in order to determine their global communicative purpose. As far as the promotional structure of the genre of BBs is concerned, promotional elements refer to those lexico-grammatical resources associated with positive evaluation including nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs (Önder, 2013).

The use of such conventional linguistic features is a relevant element to achieve the communicative goal of this genre. Thus, open class words were examined for the analysis of promotional linguistic features or devices used in the present corpus.

To achieve a reasonable degree of objectivity in the analysis of the present corpus, inter-rater agreement and coding reliability were sought. Besides the researcher, a second coder, who was a university professor of applied linguistics, analyzed one third of the present corpus with an 88% agreement rate, and differences found were discussed and resolved. Transliteration and translation are provided for the description of Arabic corpus of book blurbs.

4. Results and discussion:  
4.1 Generic structure of book blurbs

Move analysis was conducted as a top-down approach with a focus on communicative purposes to identify the blurbs’ generic structure. The generic structure proposed in this study consists of five rhetorical moves; each one performing a specific function in the global organization of the genre of book blurbs. The generic moves identified all contribute to the communicative function of promoting the book for potential customers. The schematic structure of component moves identified here is in line with previous research findings (Kathpalia, 1997; Basturkmen, 2009; Gea-Valor, 2007; Asghar, et al., 2015) though the number of moves identified is different due to the nature of the texts examined here. Table 2 below displays the distribution of recurrent moves in English and Arabic book blurbs.
Table 2: Distribution of the component moves in English and Arabic BBs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component Moves</th>
<th>English BBs No. &amp; %</th>
<th>Arabic BBs No. &amp; %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Move 1. Identifying the book’s title</td>
<td>40 (80%)</td>
<td>46 (92%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move 2: Describing the book</td>
<td>50 (100%)</td>
<td>50 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move 3: Promoting the book</td>
<td>50 (100%)</td>
<td>50 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move 4: Introducing the book’s author</td>
<td>44 (88%)</td>
<td>15 (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move 5: Providing the publishing house’s address or website</td>
<td>50 (100%)</td>
<td>50 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The broad scheme of analysis reveals that some component moves are mandatory (moves 2, 3 and 5), while others are optional (moves 1 and 4). This does not exclude the possibility of variation within the two corpora under analysis. A number of points are worth highlighting here. First, although both English and Arabic BBs share the same recurrent moves, there are some variations which are relatively favoured by writers of either language due to linguistic- and cultural-specific constraints. Second, at the rhetorical level, the book blurb writers of both languages relatively follow the same conventions set out by the professional discourse community, thus exhibiting a universal tendency. Third, the recurrent moves do not always follow a strict sequence like the one identified in Table 2 above. Fourth, some of the recurrent moves identified have one or more sub-moves. Fifth, book blurbs analyzed tend to integrate both promotional and informative moves in their professional discourse across the entire corpora. Such integration can be attributed to the promotional discursive practices of marketing policies and strategies that booksellers follow and adopt. This results in “creating more hybrid genres, especially as a result of an overwhelmingly compulsive nature of promotional and advertising activities” (Bhatia, 1997, p. 635).

Move 1, identifying the book’s title, functions as an introductory opening in which the title of a book is explicitly identified. It is often realized by stating the full title of the book advertised. It has the function of attracting the potential readership’s attention. Gea-Valor
(2005) remarks that this component produces the most striking effect on potential readers, and can be considered the slogan for the book in question, which is the most important part in an advertisement. The main purpose of identifying books’ titles is to capture the potential reader’s attention and arouse his/her interest in the product (p.49). According to Cacchiani (2007), the recurrence of this move positions the book on the market (p.3). This component regularly tends to appear first in the corpus of BBs under analysis. It is an optional move in both English and Arabic BBs as it constitutes an (80%) of the entire English corpus whereas a (92%) of the Arabic corpus. There is a statistical variation in the distribution of this component move in favour of Arabic corpus. As if Arabic book blurbs intentionally tend to highlight the books’ titles as a marketing strategy more than English ones do. The following are illustrative examples from the corpus:

1. Understanding Pragmatics (English Corpus)
2. Texting: The Great Debate (English Corpus)
3. /AlSawtiyat / Phonetics (Arabic Corpus)
4. /Allisanyat Albunyawiya / Structural Linguistics (Arabic Corpus)

Move 2, describing the book, is usually a brief summary and description of the book advertised and its contents. Its main communicative function is to provide information about the book, its content and potential customers. Besides its basic informative function, it secondarily contributes to the promotion of the book advertised. The description move is present across the entire English and Arabic BBs with a 100%. This establishes its obligatory status in the corpora of both languages. Though this move basically performs an informative function, it sometimes includes some evaluation and promotion. The component move is typically realized by two sub-moves, viz., describing the book’s content and describing the book’s content and readership. The English corpus excessively employs the sub-move of describing the book’s content and its target readership compared to the Arabic corpus where there is a relatively scarce distribution of this sub-component. That is, sub-move 2.2 is the most frequent in the English corpus (90%) but is the least frequent in the Arabic corpus (14%). This may be due to the marketing strategies chosen by the writers of either language to persuade potential readers to buy and read the book advertised. English publishing houses seem to promote both the book’s content and its target readership, whereas Arabic publishing houses intend to praise and promote only the book’s content and to scarcely promote the target readership. The distribution of these sub-moves is presented in Table 3 below:
Table 3:
Distribution of sub-moves of move 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Move 2: Describing the book</th>
<th>English BBs No. &amp; %</th>
<th>Arabic BBs No. &amp; %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sub-move 2.1: Describing the book’s content</td>
<td>5 (10%)</td>
<td>43 (86%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-move 2.2: Describing the book’s content &amp; readership</td>
<td>45 (90%)</td>
<td>7 (14%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following are some examples from the present study corpus:

5. "This book presents the first detailed descriptive account of assessed writing in UK higher education sectors across more than 30 disciplines, from first year undergraduate to postgraduate level. It combines quantitative and qualitative approaches from genre analysis, corpus linguistics and discourse analysis. This is essential reading for those involved in syllabus and materials design for the development of writing in higher education, as well as for those investigating ESP". (English Corpus)

6. "Yatanwel hathaa alkitab almanha alwadeifi fi aluga alarabiya , wa yatalef min sheqein , awalhum rassed thawaher aluga alarabiya alfsah wa aldarej wa wasfaha wa muhawelt tafisirah min mabda tarabett alwadiffa wa albuniya …../ This book ideals with the pragmatics of Arabic language divided into two parts. The first part is concerned with the description and explanation of some Arabic linguistic phenomena from structural and pragmatic perspectives……. (Arabic Corpus).

Move 3, promoting the book, positively evaluates and praises the book in question. It has the promotional function of attracting readership and convincing target readers that the book is mainstream and new (Kathpalia, 1997, p. 418). The evaluative and promotional language is abundant and recurrent in this rhetorical component. The occurrence of this move in the entire corpus makes it an obligatory component as it constitutes a (100%) of English and Arabic BBs. With this move, book readers are advised that a given book is a good read encouraging them to purchase it, and this is a typical convention of advertising discourse. To successfully persuade potential readers, this move is realized through three sub-moves, namely, complimenting the
book, complimenting the book and its author, and justifying the need for a book by establishing a niche. It is worth mentioning that some or all of these sub-moves are employed to serve the promotional purpose of the genre of book blurbs.

Sub-move 3.3, justifying the need for a book by establishing a niche, serves the communicative purpose of preparing the ground for the book advertised by relating it to the academic world outside or delineating the target readers for which the book is written, and . It contributes largely to the promotional function of the genre of BBs. Perhaps the frequent use of this component in Arabic blurbs can be attributed to the fact that Arab "writers are competing with a host of international writers who have earned international acclaim due to the worldwide exposure of their works. Since Arab writers lack this exposure in the international academic world, this move attempts to capitalize on the importance and relevance of the book's subject-matter" (ibid. p. 420).

As displayed in Table 4 below, sub-move 3.2, complimenting the book and its author, is the most frequent component in English BBs (48%), but is the least frequent in Arabic BBs (6%). On the other hand, sub-move 3.3, justifying the need for a book by establishing a niche, is the most frequently used component in the Arabic BBs (52%), whereas it is the least frequent one in the English BBs (22%). This can be marketing strategies chosen by either language to persuade their potential readers to purchase the book advertised. English publishing houses tend to promote both the book and its author for possible further reading, whereas Arabic publishing houses seem to situate a new book by establishing a niche to justify the need for that book as a rhetorical work, and this, in turn, will positively result in encouraging and nurturing the reading habits (Önder, 2013).

To promote the book advertised, this component move occasionally includes positive comments, praises and evaluation from other authors, publishers, critics, newspapers, and institutions. The reviewing extracts are purposefully utilized to promote and recommend the book for potential readers by praising its good qualities. These excerpts tend to be relatively short and visually attractive to catch the potential readers’ attention; and in this way, they function as attention-seeking devices (Goddard, 1998, p. 9). In this respect, English BBs depend more on such advertising extracts as a marketing strategy that can maximize the number of potential customers in comparison with Arabic BBs. English extracts are usually written by renowned scholars and critics who have earned international fame. However, a recent trend of Arabic BBs seems to be of quoting well-known Arab scholars who have a distinguished regional reputation following the Western publishing conventions for
the promotion of book marketing. Table 4 below displays the distribution of recurrent sub-moves in English and Arabic BBs. Consider the following examples from the corpus:

7. This book serves as a comprehensive, up-to-date, and accessible introduction to second language acquisition research and as a reference book for this important field of study" (English Corpus)

8. "David Crystal is the prophet par excellence of the English language. The best reminder of why, whatever the best current theory ….. (Daily Telegraph)" (English Corpus)

9. /Ma yumaiz hatha alkitab hu bassatahu wa suhulatuhu fi mualajethu alnahu bisloob hadith wa sheiq wa ibtaada an kul altaaqeiddat/ This book is best characterized by its simplicity and accessibility in dealing with syntactic issues. It has a very interesting style which is away from any sophistication and complicated presentation. (Arabic Corpus)

10. /in altabbaq alyoumi fi laaihet almareffa Idaa Ahmed Hatoom hua aluga alarabiya. Inhu laa yamel min aliqbaal all hatha altabiq, wa min huna uthmen infitahu alugawi wa alaxad bi kul ma huwa yasiir …….Ahmed Ulabii/ The Arabic language is the main daily dish for Ahmed Hatoom. He is not fed up with that dish and keeps on. I really appreciate his linguistic mentality and his simple style of presenting his ideas…… Ahmed Ulabii. (Arabic Corpus)

Table 4: Distribution of sub-moves of move 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Move 3: Promoting the book</th>
<th>English BBs No. &amp; %</th>
<th>Arabic BBs No. &amp; %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sub-move 3.1: Complimenting the book</td>
<td>15 (30%)</td>
<td>21 (42%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-move 3.2: Complimenting the book and its author</td>
<td>24 (48%)</td>
<td>3 (6 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-move 3.3: Justifying the need for a book by establishing a niche</td>
<td>11 (22%)</td>
<td>26 (52%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Move 4, introducing the book’s author, is a complementary section on the author’s biography. Here, the author’s professional background is offered, which usually includes education, previous publications, awards won, current interests, and occasionally place of residence and family details (Gea-Valor, 2005, p. 51). It provides both informative
and promotional information about the author in that it establishes credentials for the book advertised. They are proof of value moves which authenticate the book by providing the author's credentials as experts in their discipline (Önder, 2013, p.179). Chahkandi and Zeinali (2016) maintain that the author’s endorsement is employed to promote the book even further by linking it to the high status and professional background of the authors and through a complimentary and positive tone (p. 82). Sometimes, the author’s short biography is accompanied by his/her photograph. This move is an optional component in the corpora of both languages under analysis. It is evident that it is more popularly used in English BBs (88%) than in Arabic BBs (30%). Again, this may be due to the marketing strategies and policies that the publishing houses of both languages follow. Douglas (2001) confirms that this tendency can be recognized as the author marketing strategy. The rarity of this move in Arabic BBs can be attributed to the fact that Arab "writers are perhaps first-time authors who have not earned international acclaim yet and are vying with other renowned scholars who have the support of well-reputed academic institutions and powerful publishing houses" (Kathpalia, 1997, p. 420). Below are some illustrative examples:

11. "John I. Saeed is associate professor of linguistics and Head of the School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences, Trinity College, University of Dublin. He is the author of several books, including *Somali Reference Grammar* (1993) and ............" (English Corpus)

12. "Bassam Barakah yahmel diktorah fi illooom alugah wa allisaniat fi aljamah allubnaniah , ameen alitahad alaam almutarjamein alarab, lahu aladeid min almanshoorat wa almualafaat fi alluga alarabia wal feransiah ......../ Bassam Barakah has a doctorate in linguistics, working as a full professor at the Lebanese University and the Secretary General of Arab Translators’ Association. He has many publications in Arabic and French ...... (Arabic Corpus)

**Move 5, providing the publishing house's address or website**, contains information about the book's publisher like the logo of the publisher, his address and website, and all of which make up this move as "*the publisher's business card"*. It is notable that the publisher information section is well exploited for fulfilling the purpose of promoting a range of the publisher's production. In this way, publishers exploit blurbs not only to promote that particular book but also other books by the same or other author s/he publishes. Thus, it is creatively utilized for advertising the publisher's production
(Marčiulioniene, 2003, p. 63). It is a mandatory component as it recurs in the entire corpora of both languages under analysis with a (100%). The same preference adopted by book blurb writers might indicate that the main concern of the writers of either language is to follow closely the conventions established by the professional community as far as possible. The following are some illustrative examples:

13. "Cambridge University Press. [www.cambridge.org]" (English Corpus)
14. /dar Almaddaar.Mouqaana aliliktroni [www.oeabooks.com/]

4.2 Promotional structure of book blurbs

So far, the analysis at the generic or discousal level seems to suggest that positive evaluation is a defining property of the genre of BBs, and this, in turn, plays a significant role for promoting the marketing of books. And mostly all component moves identified serve the evaluative or promotional function of the genre of BBs. Similarly, Cacchiani (2007) remarks that "the promotional function of book blurbs shapes and constrains choices of content and style in the genre. Their main purpose is not to inform the prospective reader but to catch his/her attention and keep his/her interest alive in order to promote the book from the shelves and make it attractive to buy. As a result, BBs present selected evaluative features of the book in highly positive terms (p.5). To perform their persuasive function, BBs purposely utilize a wide range of promotional features and conventions typical of advertising discourse to convince their target customers.

Now, it is time to examine the promotional or evaluative features at the lexical level through examining the main lexicogrammatical categories or resources that are employed to serve the evaluative function of the genre of book blurbs under analysis. Four lexical categories were identified to convey positive evaluation, viz., nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. Tables 5 and 6 below present the distribution of promotional categories within and across the English and Arabic corpora of BBs.
Table 5: Distribution of promotional categories within English and Arabic corpora.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component Moves</th>
<th>English BBs No. &amp; %</th>
<th>Arabic BBs No. &amp; %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nouns</td>
<td>145 (17.4%)</td>
<td>175 (26.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbs</td>
<td>90 (10.8%)</td>
<td>110 (16.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjectives</td>
<td>489 (58.7%)</td>
<td>309 (47.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverbs</td>
<td>108 (12.1%)</td>
<td>55 (8.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total &amp; percentages within both corpora</td>
<td>832 (100%)</td>
<td>649 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As displayed in Table 5 above, the statistical comparisons within each single corpus reveal that adjectives take precedence over other lexical categories as the most common devices of advertising the book in both English and Arabic BBs (58.7% and 47.6% for English and Arabic corpora respectively). As for the English corpus, it can be noted that after adjectives, the category of nouns comes second with a percentage of (17.4), followed by adverbs (12.1%) and then verbs (10.8%). The Arabic corpus, on the other hand, shows that after adjectives, the category of nouns (26.9%) comes second, followed by verbs (16.9%), whereas the category of adverbs (8.6%) comes finally. One can say that the two languages follow the same promotional preference as far as the lexical categories of adjectives and nouns are concerned in comparison with the lexical categories of adverbs and verbs. Similarly, Önder (2013) reports that "the most common form of advertising in online blurbs is achieved through positive and favorable descriptions of the product, primarily through the use of adjectives" (p. 187), while other lexical categories come after adjectives in relatively different less proportions.

Fairclough (1994: 198) identifies the discourse of advertising as basically strategic since it is directed to instrumental goals to getting positive marketing results. And this is what really happens in the written texts of BBs under analysis to achieve the same instrumental effects and goals. The use of different promotional lexico-grammatical resources are communicatively employed here to capture the reader’s attention, engage his/her interest, generate desire, and obtain the act of buying, which is the ultimate purpose of advertising (Gea-Valor, 2005).

Table 6 below indicates that the statistical comparisons across both corpora show that adjectives are the most frequent lexical category in
both corpora. It can be noted that there is a significant difference in the distribution of adjectives in the two corpora in favor of the English corpus. More specifically, the use of adjectives in English (33.01%) surpasses that of Arabic corpus (20.86%). Adjectives function as positive and favorable evaluations of the book for the target potential readers. As to the category of nouns, it constitutes an (11.8%) of the Arabic corpus while a (9.7 %) of the English corpus in favor of Arabic BBs. The distribution of the category of verbs is relatively even in both English (6.0%) and Arabic (6.7%) corpora. The category of adverbs constitutes a (7.2%) of the English corpus and a (3.7 %) of the Arabic corpus in favor of the English BBs. In this concern, Bhatia (2005) asserts that the use of such promotional lexical categories works as product differentiation effects as they refer to good, positive and favorable descriptions and evaluations of the advertised books.

Table 6: Distribution of promotional categories across English and Arabic corpora.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component Moves</th>
<th>English BBs (%)</th>
<th>Arabic BBs (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nouns</td>
<td>9.7 %</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbs</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjectives</td>
<td>33.01%</td>
<td>20.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverbs</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>3.7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentages across the corpora</td>
<td>56.2%</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The promotional genre of BBs under analysis does not feature any negative evaluation or description of the corpora’s books being advertised. Thus, the genre of BBs is only about the positive features of the advertised books to maximize sales and to convince the potential costumers of the qualities and beneficial effects of the book. To support this finding, Cacchiani (2007) argues that "BBs display the main features of the book and provide a mostly subjective evaluation of the book using a restricted set of lexical, pragmatic and textual devices. As such they serve both an informative and a promotional function or, in terms of Kotler and Armstrong’s (1993) model of marketing strategies, they position and market the book" (p.1). With
the same view, Gesuato (2007) maintains that the evaluative genre of book blurbs basically adopts an interested stance which is clearly intended to promote the book marketing. It has an affective positive impact on the potential books’ buyers and readers.

The statistical comparisons across the corpora of both languages indicate that there is a cross-linguistic difference. This is due to the fact that the English corpus of BBs (56.2%) exceeds the Arabic corpus of BBs (43.8%) in terms of the distributions of the evaluative lexi-grammatical resources used in each corpus. Generally, one can say that the generic organization and promotional categories of both languages’ corpora are constructed to serve the main communicative function of promoting the book advertised.

As far as the lexi-grammatical resources are concerned, the following are some illustrative examples from both English and Arabic corpora:

i. English nouns: bestseller, prize, genius, master, success, founder, cornerstone, success, originality, improvement, achievement, advantage, comprehensiveness, clarity, breadth, variation, validity, reader-orientation, strength, etc.

ii. English Verbs: adore, acclaim, like, attract, love, fascinate, simplify, capture, impress, interest, enjoy, fascinate, delight, achieve, accomplish, illuminate, shed light on, succeed, etc.

iii. English Adjectives: nice, accessible, challenging, clear, excellent, good, helpful, important, innovative, intelligent, lucid, practical, useful, effective, thorough, valuable, relevant, attractive, comprehensive, extensive, serious, brief, etc.

iv. English Adverbs: gently, critically, admirably, interestingly, nicely, gratifyingly, purposefully, readily, remarkably, rightly, sensibly, convincingly, carefully, readily, lucidly, bravely, beautifully, fortunately, usefully, systematically, smoothly, well, etc.

v. Arabic Nouns: /xhabeer/ expert, /djaiza/ award, /kafaaha/ competence, /mahara/ skill, /abqariah/ genius, /balagath/ rhetoric, /idmadg/combine, etc.

vi. Arabic Verbs: /faazah/ win, /yasaha/seeks, /tasxeer/ utilize, /yatatareq/ deal, /yaqtareh/ suggest, /yuqarin/ compare, /yastarid/ review, etc.


viii. Arabic Adverbs: /bi umiq/ deeply, /bi hirafia/ professionally, /tafssliliin/ precisely, /kabeer n/ largely, etc.
5. Conclusions

The present study has identified the generic organization and promotional structure of back cover blurbs accompanying English and Arabic linguistics books. The corpus analysis has revealed that there are five basic constituent moves by means of which linguistics book blurbs of both languages are constructed. The promotional structure of these blurbs, on the other hand, is typically realized through the lexical category of adjectives compared to other lexical categories in the languages under analysis.

Book blurbs perform simultaneously both informative and persuasive functions, and the discourse of these blurbs can be said to function as an advertisement for the book itself. That is, they perform an informative function since it provides information about the book’s content and author. At the same time, it performs an affective function as it aims to convince the potential costumers of the qualities and beneficial effects of the book advertised. Taking all this into account, book blurbs fulfill the communicative purpose as a text. The overall findings of this cross-linguistic analysis are that English and Arabic blurb writers exhibit universal tendencies in terms of the rhetorical structure of blurbs as they follow a global set of conventions suggested and adopted by their professional discourse community. Although English and Arabic local blurbs have similar component moves, there are some moves and sub-moves which are favoured by the writers of either language due to cultural-specific preferences.

As the present study is confined to the generic structure of English and Arabic linguistics book blurbs, it is possible to compare different linguistic and cultural contexts not examined before to explore how different languages and cultures articulate and construct their book blurbs, and whether they exhibit universal tendencies in terms of the rhetorical structure of book blurbs or not. Also, it may be possible to conduct study on the generic structure of a discipline other than linguistics in the same languages under analysis to identify if there are cross-disciplinary variations.

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References


