

## Research Article

# Investigating Evaluative Strategies in Blurbs of Fiction: Exploring the Informative and Promotional Aspects

Alireza Jalilifar <sup>\*1</sup>, Sarah Korai <sup>2</sup>

1. Professor, Department of English Language & Literature Faculty of Letters & Humanities, Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Iran. (Corresponding Author) [ar.jalilifar@gmail.com](mailto:ar.jalilifar@gmail.com)
2. Instructor, Department of English Language & Literature Faculty of Letters & Humanities, Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Iran. [koraei@outlook.com](mailto:koraei@outlook.com)

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### ABSTRACT

This study explored elements involved in the construction of online English fiction blurbs through the analysis of their promotional and informative moves and the attitudinal markers within these two moves. Data were collected from 2014 *Goodreads* awards nominees from multiple categories: fantasy, historical fiction, and so forth. Valor's framework (2005) provided a foundation for the study to investigate promotional and informative moves/functions. Moreover, the use of the appraisal model allowed the discovery of the application of attitudinal markers in each of these moves. We found that blurbs can be categorised into three types: those with a single move, either promotional or informative, those incorporating the two moves, and those with a cyclic move order. Moreover, despite differences in their use, the three attitudinal markers were typically present in both moves. The differences lie in the fact that positivity and appreciation are conspicuous in promotional moves and negativity and judgmental expressions are characteristic of informative moves. More can be gained from further in-depth studies in the area of appraisal and/or the study of blurbs.

## Introduction

For centuries, people have read books for pleasure, enhancing their knowledge and

abilities and/or reaching new levels of achievement. But it was only in 1907 that the term *blurb* gained recognition, such that one



would only read a book if its blurb was compelling enough. The availability of online publications is opening up channels to people who might have once found it difficult to pick up a book and start reading. Thus, online blurbs play an extremely important role. Like a great title, a nice cover and good content, a blurb has the potential to sell a book. A blurb, in large part, can be viewed as a response to the demand of today's publishing industry. Because it reflects what the reader expects to find in an extremely limited number - usually 100-150 - of words, blurbs are considered as a means for the reader to get an idea of what the book is about and whether it is worth their time. Hence, an effective blurb would probably entice people to pay for the book, as a weak one would most probably sink the chance of a book to be cherished and thus successful. Subsequently, writing a good blurb can be stressful for a debut author.

Many writers have defined *blurb* in different ways (Valor, 2005; Bhatia, 2004; Kachru & Nelson, 2006). For example, Valor describes blurbs as short descriptive texts on the back cover of the book. Serving both an informative and a promotional function, blurbs, by their very nature, can position and also market a book (Kotler & Armstrong, 1993). Therefore, a blurb is "characterised by a strong promotional orientation and strict space constraints so that evaluations are almost always positive and their purpose promotional" (Hyland & Diani, 2009, p. 4). On this account, blurbs must be persuasive and informative; they rely on the effectiveness of both of these functions. For the writer to establish a persuasive impression in order to ensure the effectuality of the blurb, many types of strategies can be applied. Valor (2005), for

example, has introduced a number of evaluative strategies.

In writing blurbs, authors need to know how to strongly influence the potential readers. They need, therefore, to know and understand that they have choices regarding the strategies they can employ for realizing blurb promotional and informative functions. Evaluative resources exist in language to assist people socialize with others by expressing how they feel about phenomena and people (Martin & Rose, 2003).

Despite the high level of interest in blurbs in professional settings, research, with the exception of a few studies, has hardly investigated the application of evaluative language in book blurbs. And to the best of our knowledge, none have investigated the use of appraisal strategies in achieving blurb functions, leaving this area of research almost unexplored to date. Some of the previous work on blurbs has centered around different aspects, including generic structures (Valor, 2005; Onder, 2013; Asghar, Mahmood & Asghar, 2015), the lexical and discourse features of evaluative language (Cacchiani, 2007), the communicative purposes of blurbs and how they are realized linguistically (Valor, 2007; Anderson, 2012), high frequency words and their collocations in blurbs (Basturkmen, 2009), and providing evidence of the hybrid character of the genre of textbooks (Orna-Montesino, 2012).

As a dominant approach to discourse analysis that offers a social semiotic view of language, Systemic Functional Linguistics explores how language is used in social contexts to achieve particular purposes (Halliday, 1985). Accordingly, the present study utilized the Systemic Functional theory of language as a text-analytic tool to examine the role of evaluative

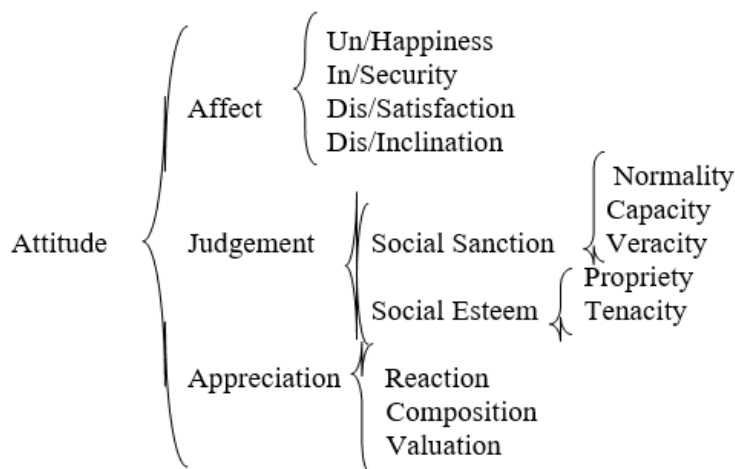
expressions in online English-language fiction blurbs with the purpose of identifying appraisal strategies and also illustrating their use in the development of the promotional and informative functions of blurbs. More specifically, the role of attitudinal markers as a tool for accomplishing the two functions in online fiction blurbs was studied. One of the reasons we are concerned with appraisal strategies is because these strategies provide explanations for emotions and elaborate on how emotions can be developed by writers (Martin & White, 2005). Therefore, the study helps uncover those areas in book blurbs that many researchers did not explore. Moreover, it can hopefully act as a reference for other researchers to further investigate alternative aspects of blurbs.

The findings of this study are assumed to redound to the benefit of the writers' community considering that blurbs play an important role in attracting the readers' attention. Many people judge books by their blurbs, justifying the need for a greater understanding of effective blurb writing. The task of blurb writing requires that writers commit to forming and maintaining a deep understanding of writing methods and techniques. Hence, the study intends to find possible answers to the following research questions:

1. What attitudinal markers specify the promotional and informative functions of fiction blurbs?
2. To what extent can a general trend in applying these strategies be recognized in fiction blurbs?

## **Methodology: Theoretical Basis**

Within systemic functional linguistics (SFL), there exist a number of grammatical systems used to create meaning through language. One of these systems is the appraisal system, which deals with the theorization of interpersonal meaning choices in discourse and/or modelling the capacity of language to express and negotiate opinions and feelings in a text. And it is considered as a promising framework with which the analysis of the negotiation of interpersonal and social relations in a text is possible (Martin, 2000). It is concerned with the way speakers/writers apply intersubjective and ideological positions through positive or negative evaluations of people, objects, and events (Young & Harrison, 2004). Appraisal choices are basically drawn from the systems of attitude, engagement, and graduation (Martin & White, 2005). Each one opens up a more extensive system of choices to the language users. In considering how blurbs fulfill their promotional and informative functions, this study examines the application of attitude, which also embodies its three subcategories of *affect*, *judgment* and *appreciation* in online fiction blurbs. Affect deals with emotional responses, positive or negative, brought alive to the writer or speaker through lexical items (Martin & White, 2005). Judgment is another subsystem within attitude that deals with the writers' negative and positive attitude towards the behavior of people and the way that writers approve or accuse the action of others. Appreciation is a kind of evaluation with positive and negative dimensions that is concerned with phenomena, natural or artificial, not the behavior of people (Liu & Thompson, 2009) (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

*Subcategories of attitude (Adopted from Martin & White, 2005)*

### Corpus

The candidates for inclusion in the corpus of this study were selected on the basis of nominations for Goodreads' 2014 choice awards on [www.goodreads.com](http://www.goodreads.com), an Amazon company and social cataloguing website founded in December 2006 and the largest and most popular site of this type, online for readers and for making book recommendations worldwide. The corpus included 200 blurbs of English fiction. Blurbs of fictional texts are mainly evaluative-persuasive. Also, "[t]hey summarise the main features of the book and provide a mostly subjective evaluation of the book" (Cacchiani, 2007, p. 1). The fact that fiction blurbs are rich in evaluative and persuasive language prompted the choice of fiction over nonfiction for the purpose of this study.

The data was chosen from different nomination categories such as *mystery and thriller*, *historical fiction*, *fantasy*, and so on. No special criteria were set on the selection of blurbs except for the language in which they were written. Since a small number of blurbs

were written in a language other than English, they were removed from the corpus. Blurbs of varying length were taken from each category to accomplish our objectives, accumulating to 37331 words. The shortest of the blurbs consisted of 50 words and the longest one contained 356 words.

### Procedure

The analysis began with identifying the two moves dominating fiction blurbs. The analytical framework used in the study was a top-down approach following the rhetorical structure proposed by Valor (2005). The application of Valor's framework into a range of factors and strategies in search for a relation as to how blurbs are used and how to interpret them in realizing promotional and informative functions made it easier to identify the defining moves or functions. In what follows, the elements that needed to be examined in the blurbs will be elaborated in detail.

The informative function was realized in a summary of the book's content. The plot, character(s), setting, moral of the story and point

of view were usually described and, in some cases, an evaluation was also carried out. Also, the author's professional background, mainly their previous publications, awards, and the assessments made on the author's writing qualities, were described in *about the author*. The promotional function was accomplished through evaluations made using extracts from other reviews published in newspapers and magazines (Valor, 2005). Similarly, according to Valor, a publishing firm might provide its own evaluation of the book. The promotional function might also be realized using a number of strategies.

From the strategies proposed by Valor, the following were identified during the analysis. Complimenting was lavishly used to achieve evaluation, using intensifying adverbs, positive evaluative adjectives, and superlative constructions, which were abundantly used to praise the book and author, especially in the offering critics move, and reviews, mainly provided by the publishing firm itself. Other strategies were underlining the awards won by the book, highlighting the author's writing qualities and style, and the use of curiosity arousers (excerpts from the books, and questions concerning their contents or rhetorical questions). Imperatives and the address form *you* were also two of those less recurring strategies found in the data.

For the appraisal analysis, we relied on a bottom-up approach, beginning with inscriptions. One key issue in the appraisal analysis is the explicitness/implicitness of attitudinal values. As implicit evaluations are very challenging and confusing, this study, particularly, aimed at the attitudinal meanings indicated through explicit lexical items. One of

the problems of finding attitudinal markers was to try and understand how an individual lexical item was used several times in the same blurb, sometimes having different functions. Such lexical items which are called "hybrid realizations" carry both values of affect and appreciation/judgment simultaneously (Martin & White, 2005, pp. 60-68). In this study, these hybrid realizations were regarded as pure expressions of one of the attitudinal categories. Decisions were made based on the researcher's judgment as to what the dominant attitude is. Making mistakes and confronting uncertainty is to some extent unavoidable, but it further demonstrates the difficulty the researchers face during the analysis. For instance, there existed an unavoidable degree of uncertainty as to listing expressions such as *medal-winning* in the *capacity* or *normality* category of judgment. As such, a term can square the idea that it can both be capacity, adhere to the potential capability of the author in writing, and yet be normality and refer to the specialty of the author, thus decisions were made based on an assessment of the surrounding context.

In order to check the reliability of the assessments, 40 (20%) blurbs were analyzed after about two weeks. Obtaining reliability included both inter-coding (.94) and intra-coding (.91). Since the reliability levels were acceptable, we quickly started with the rest of the corpus without having to deal with potential reliability issues. Analysis was continued until the differences in the coding stage were diluted. This stage of analysis did not suggest a fixed number of blurbs to be studied; instead, the analysis was continued until theoretical saturation was achieved; that is, when no new patterns emerged regarding data categories and

when the categories were well established. Following the identification of attitudinal values, attempts were made to categorize attitudinal markers that characterize the informative and promotional aspects of the blurbs.

### Move Analysis

As can be seen in Table 1, the results surprisingly reveal that the frequencies and percentages were approximately the same for both moves and functions considering the whole corpus. Even though these moves do not point to the same direction pertaining to blurb writing strategies, it is noteworthy that there is a close link between them when they are used regarding the perceptions of the prominence of good strategies in writing successful blurbs.

**Table 1**  
*Inscriptions of Moves within 200 Blurbs of fiction*

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Informative</b>	219	49.65
<b>Promotional</b>	222	50.34
<b>Total</b>	441	100.0

Move patterning, promotional and informative, in blurbs can be divided into three categories: 1. blurbs with just one move, either informative or promotional 2. Blurbs that begin with a promotional move followed by an informative move and vice versa 3. Blurbs with a cyclic move order. A sample blurb is provided underneath each type to assist the understanding of the results.

1. Blurbs with just one move, either informative or promotional:

In Amy Poehler's highly anticipated first book, *Yes Please*, she offers up a big juicy stew of personal stories, funny bits on sex and love and friendship and parenthood and real

life advice (some useful, some not so much), like when to be funny and when to be serious. Powered by Amy's charming and hilarious, biting yet wise voice, *Yes Please* is a book full of words to live by. *Yes Please* by Amy Poehler.

In this blurb, from the beginning to the end of the paragraph, one can spot the language of complementing through the use of positive evaluative strategies and, also, the expression of the author's writing qualities and style. It is the publishing firm, itself, that has provided its own evaluation of the book with no reference to any other sources. This single move is meant to convince the readers of the qualities and benefits of the book. Consequently, using a number of positive evaluative strategies, the promotional function is ideally achieved in the blurb provided for Amy Poehler's book.

2. Blurbs that begin with a promotional move followed by an informative move:

How do you rid the Earth of seven billion humans? Rid the humans of their humanity. Surviving the first four waves was nearly impossible. Now Cassie Sullivan finds herself in a new world, a world in which the fundamental trust that binds us together is gone. As the 5th Wave rolls across the landscape, Cassie, Ben, and Ringer are forced to confront the Others' ultimate goal: the extermination of the human race. Cassie and her friends haven't seen the depths to which the Others will sink, nor have the Others seen the heights to which humanity will rise, in the ultimate battle between life and death, hope and despair, love and hate. *The Infinite Sea (The 5th Wave #2)* by Rick Yancey

The sequence in this blurb begins with a promotional move followed by an informational move. It starts with a question, a unique feature of book blurbs, which is one of the curiosity arouser strategies proposed by Valor (2005). As Volar states, curiosity arousers are those strategies that raise suspense, making readers crave more and more information and exhilaration. Then, the blurb goes on with the description, trying to, somehow, unfold the story and provide some information about the plot and the characters.

### 3. Blurbs with a cyclic move order:

There is danger in dreaming. But there is even more danger in waking up.

Blue Sargent has found things. For the first time in her life, she has friends she can trust, a group to which she can belong. The Raven Boys have taken her in as one of their own. Their problems have become hers, and her problems have become theirs. The trick with found things though, is how easily they can be lost. Friends can betray. Mothers can disappear. Visions can mislead. Certainties can unravel. Blue Lily, Lily Blue (The Raven Cycle #3) by Maggie Stiefvater (Goodreads Author)

Once more, the opening move/function of the blurb is that of promotion. The beginning line, in this blurb, could be considered as one of the curiosity arousers as it is an excerpt from the book that comes at the beginning of the blurb to catch the reader's attention. Following the promotional move, the informative move is presented. This move, aims at providing information and revealing points about the story. Then, again, there is an excerpt from the book itself, to prepare the ground for the

promotional function to appear at the end of the blurb.

Observing no significant differences between the frequencies of the moves reveals the fact that advertising books or, in other words, persuading people, happens by providing information, positive commentaries, and presenting a promotional move. Overall, the obtained frequency is almost the same for both moves but, they do not necessarily have the same importance. It is clear that developing a strong balance between useful and promotional content as one of the keys to a blurb's success is not always simple, and it takes innovation and circumspection. Provided that the writer presents reasonable information, and appropriate promotional messages, there would be no difficulties getting the potential reader(s) to accept and even appreciate these messages.

## **Evaluative Language Analysis**

### **Affect**

Affect, as the way to express emotions, is how writers convey emotional attitudes and stances, positively or negatively, towards a person, thing, or state of affairs (Martin & White, 2005). In all the blurbs analyzed, among the three subcategories of attitudinal markers, affect was utilized less than the others. The unexpectedly low demand of affect and, in some cases, its absence in some of the blurbs reduced the subjective and personal influence of the writers on the readers. Regarding the usage of affective values, no examples of the writers' use of their own emotional reactions were recognized and, typically, the writers intended to report the emotional responses of the characters of the story within the informative move. The only instances of writers reporting their own affectual

responses occurred in reviews from external sources – in blurbs that included reviews of sources other than the publication itself:

I think it is safe to say, this is my favorite of the series. It has all of the humor we **love** from Tara Sivec and we get the sweet from Tyler I didn't see coming.

Among the various affect subcategories, the un/happiness variable that covers emotions like anger, irritation, love, and pleasure comprised the most frequent expressions of emotion in the blurbs. Also, the verb *love* was the most recurring feeling of happiness found in the corpus. Examples of the informative moves of blurbs have been illustrated below:

... an unexpected threat could destroy everything, and everyone, they **love** ...

... to save everything and everyone he **loves** ...

As mentioned earlier, blurbs appeared with little, if any, affectual meaning and were mostly used in the informative move – the description of the book's storyline. Note the following examples:

At twenty-two years old, Sydney is **enjoying** (happiness: positive) a great ... She has **desperately** (un/happiness: negative) gone back to the same ...

Using affect, predominantly in the informative move, indicates that the writer(s) do not intend to directly infuse personal emotions to the promotional part of the blurb (Wu, 2013). In other words, as affect is concerned with the appraiser's emotional stance toward the appraised item, writers might prefer to use affectual words and expressions when narrating the story. Correspondingly, there would be few examples of sharing feelings when presenting promotional content. Thus, the promotional

moves in fiction blurbs can be divided into two groupings: those in which there is no inscribed affect and those in which there is inscribed use of affect only in the promotional strategies that invite the possible readers to engage with the content of the story; for instance, strategies that, in some way, carry particular information about the story in the form of rhetorical questions, questions about the content of the book, which are primarily informative but used to support the progression of advertising and marketing (Valor, 2005).

The range of variation in those expressions that are readily interpretable in affective terms was not so diverse in the blurbs studied. Moreover, affectual meaning was primarily used to express positive feelings and just in rare cases were they implemented to show negative stances towards the appraised items. In fact, positivity could be considered as a mark of promotion, though some examples of negative meaning were identified in the promotional move. Conversely, in the informative move, both positive and negative feelings were identified.

Dis/inclination, in/security, and dis/satisfaction were the subcategories of affect that occurred only sporadically in the data; typically, to contribute the informative portion of the blurb:

There, they **hope** (dis/inclination: Positive) to find a cure for their beloved ... Sydney **risked** (in/security: negative) everything to follow her gut ... she's getting mighty **sick of running** (dis/satisfaction: negative).

### Judgment

The second category of attitudinal markers, Judgement, refers to the evaluation of human behavior with the observation of some set of

social norms (Wu, 2013). Unlike affect, which provides very little for the writer to rely on when composing fictional blurbs, judgment has a wealth of usage to contribute to the construction of blurbs. Also, both informative and promotional moves displayed nearly the same degree of significance regarding judgment values. In the case of informative moves, it appeared that many examples of judgment were engendered by a need to have the characters' actions evaluated and in promotional moves, mostly because of a need to praise the capacity of the author of the book. Furthermore, considering positivity and negativity, the target of judgment evaluation in promotional moves was to stress the positive aspects of the book and/or the author. Besides, roughly all the occurrences of the evaluations were positive. In other words, it can be said that no matter what the subject or the story of the book might be, every blurb writer, when promoting, is concerned with how to construct an encouraging identity for the book and its author via alignment with various sets of positive evaluative meanings. From this perspective, the following examples are provided to illustrate the way judgment values are used in blurbs:

With Auxier's **exquisite command of language** (normality: positive), *The Night Gardener* is a mesmerizing read and a classic in the making.

From the **New York Times-bestselling** (capacity: positive) author of *Lionheart* comes the dramatic sequel ...

Unofficially, Shara is one of her country's most **accomplished** (capacity: positive) spymasters ...

The third sentence is an example of the use of judgment in an informative move. It

contains a positive judgment of Shara, stressing how capable she is. This simple judgment of the individual presents the reader with information about the character they are going to read about. There were very few examples of judgment in the promotional moves in the corpus, with the use of address form *you*:

If you're Detective Versado's **over-achieving** (normality: positive) teenage daughter, Layla ...

Among the findings of the analysis is that the most frequently used judgment value in the promotional move pertained to social esteem and among the judgment values in social esteem, normality and capacity were the dominant types of attitude. Also, social sanction values were present in this move but nearly no promotional use was made of them; that is, the advertising of the book and the author. Additionally, due to the positive feature of public service advertising discourse, the number of positive judgments exceeded negative features. More specifically, only a few instances of negative meaning were discovered in the promotional move.

The analysis displayed that the fair value of the book would be presented by the use of positive, evaluative expressions within the promotional segment of the blurb, and it is important that negativity be surrounded by positivity. Therefore, there was not much need for using negative terms, excluding strategies such as rhetorical questions, shoutlines, and the address form *you*. To illustrate this, consider the following examples:

Friends can **betray** (veracity: negative).  
Mothers can disappear. Visions can mislead.  
Certainties can unravel.

## Appreciation

The use of appreciative expressions was mainly directed towards the explicit evaluation of objects. It was more or less regularly used in almost each of the blurbs. Though appreciation was prevalent in most of the data, yet there were differences in the application of its subcategories. *Reaction* was the most frequently used subcategory, under which objects, mainly the book and its story, were evaluated. In the blurbs studied, in the promotional move, reaction was mainly realized through positive adjectives like *thrilling*, *anticipated*, and *bestselling*. Note the following examples taken from promotional moves.

*Veronica Mars*, comes the first book in a **thrilling** new mystery series.

The eagerly **anticipated** *Words of Radiance* continues the epic story and answers many of your questions.

In the epic sequel to the **New York Times bestselling** novel, *The School ...*

Moreover, examples of appreciation were depicted as less informative and more oriented towards the discovery of the significance of the book by expressing interesting and attention-grabbing points about it. Note the following example found in an informative move within the corpus:

The *Winner's Curse* by Marie Rutkoski is a story of **deadly** (Reaction: negative) games where everything is at stake ...

While the overall target is to give information and at the same time promote the text, the writer employs negative appreciation within the description of the story, showing that not every use of negativity will create negative responses from the readers. In the following example, documents are appraised using the adjective

“ancient”, a positive appreciation of valuation because of the positive semantic value of the word “ancient”.

She steals **ancient** (valuation: positive) documents from the Chancellor's secret collection.

Similar to other attitudinal markers, appreciation draws from both positive and negative values to assist blurb creation. With respect to how those appreciation values were used, positive attitudes were generally directed towards both promotional and informative moves while negative attitudes were used for informative moves. However, the promotional move demonstrated a flexible attitude in cases involving the evaluation of objects (appreciation) and no difficulties were observed in the use of negative evaluative expressions in this move, because of the employment of curiosity arousers (such as rhetorical questions and shoutlines) that counteract the negativity of words. Note the following shoutline:

Something is out there, something **terrifying** (Reaction: negative) that must not be seen.

## Processes Infused with Attitudinal Meaning in Promotional Moves

When advertising a book, there are few selling tools as important as writing a good book blurb. Surely, the first thing that can be done to breed enthusiasm is to have a perfect cover design, but if you are not successful in creating an intriguing cover, a good blurb is what will sell your book. The use of inscribed attitudinal markers can also help to infuse ideas and processes that can be captivating and impressing. The instances of processes infused with attitudinal meanings in the promotional moves are as follows:

Infusing satisfaction:

... in this **delightfully entertaining** offering ...  
 ... you were **charmed** by Celeste in *Flat-Out Love* ...

Infusing inclination:

... will keep readers **guessing** until the very end!  
 an unforgettable tale of transformation and second chances, an **irresistible** affirmation of why we read ...

Infusing happiness:

... the **exciting** direct sequel to *Patient Zero*.  
 ... **thrilling** fantasy with vintage photography to create to create a one-of-a-kind reading experience

Writers/speakers demonstrate the force of their assertions using intensification; something similar to the use of highlighting in phonology (Martin & White, 2005). Moreover, intensification can be carried out by either lexical or grammatical items. In this study, we are concerned with lexical items that convey attitudinal overtones – intensifications. In his/her persuasive and stimulating way, a blurb writer can make use of lexical overtones in the promotional moves of a blurb as an instrument to increase the influence that a blurb can have on the reader. We observed various uses of attitudinal inscriptions through employing terms that infuse *quality* and *process*:

Promotional move (Quality):

**Exuberant, moving, and keenly** observed ...

... **startlingly original** debut collection that signals the arrival of ...

Anne Rice's **epic, luxuriant, fiercely ambitious** new novel ...

Informative move (Quality):

Here, **gorgeously, bravely, hilariously**, is Matt's deeply honest answer ...

Informative move (Process):

... she has friends she can **trust**, a group to which she can **belong**.

For Sydney, **trapped** and **surrounded** by adversaries, life becomes ...

## The Main Linguistic Features

### Uniqueness

It is necessary in this context to distinguish between features that assist authors in writing blurbs. There were expressions that implied the power status of the writers. Within the blurbs of this study, there were also attempts to highlight the specialty of the characters (to fulfill an informative function) and uniqueness of the product (to accomplish a promotional function). Note how the concept of uniqueness is addressed in the examples below:

Informative function:

an **unusual** girl named Mira to rescue his friends ...

... a **rare** collection of Poe poems, has been stolen.

... from every common peril as well as the **distinctly uncommon** threat of the Assassin ...

Promotional function:

... set against the pageantry and colour of a **fascinating, unique** world ... Here he gives us the **remarkable** story of Tsukuru Tazaki ...

An **extraordinary** novel about a strong-willed woman who ...

A common trend concerning the indication of distinctiveness and uniqueness (of the book, the author, and the events and characters in the story) in the blurbs of fiction was the promotional use of adjectives mainly as appreciative expressions.

## Popularity

Another feature through which attitudinal markers were employed in the promotional move of fiction blurbs was the abundant use of lexical terms and expressions that imply the popularity of the product, the author and, sometimes, one of the characters of the story, as noted in the examples to follow. It seems that most of the blurb writers come up with this clever alluring device, which is amusingly effective. Of course, it is not that any book that is avidly embraced and is given the label of *bestseller* can serve as an entrance to an enduring love for reading, but such features can serve as a tremendous motivator for readers who are looking for the best of all.

From *New York Times* **best-selling** author and **popular** blogger Stephanie Pearl-McPhee comes a new spin ...

... told from the perspective of the **immensely popular** character Tobias.

From "America's **best novelist**" (*The Denver Post*): A sprawling thriller...

... 2010 with the *New York Times* **bestseller** *The Way of Kings*.

## Suggesting

Apart from the effects of presenting positive evaluations about a book and its story, comparisons to other books can also persuade a reader to explore a work of literary. This can be accomplished through illustrating the similarities in the writing styles or the content of the story and inviting the fans of such books to read the promoted book as well. Another possibility would be to assure the fans of particular authors or genres that the work being promoted should appeal to them. This process of suggesting is usually equipped with the use of

attitudinal markers as in the following example:

Amy Zhang's **haunting** and **universal** story will appeal to fans of Lauren Oliver, Gayle Forman, and Jay Asher

A **brilliant, luminous** story of first love, family, loss, and betrayal for fans of John Green, David Levithan, and Rainbow Rowell.

A **perfect** companion to Lisa Graff's **National Book Award-nominated**, *A Tangle of Knots*, this novel explores a similar theme in a realistic ...

The use of suggestive features is also realized through attempting to describe the reader(s) the publication would best suit:

So Grace Helbig has written a guide that's **perfect for anyone who** is faced with the daunting task of becoming an adult.

**Funny, relatable, and inspiring**, this is a **memoir for anyone who** has ever struggled to find love, but has also had a lot of fun in the process.

## Discussion

One observation that the analysis has presented is that all of the three attitudinal markers contributed to the informative and promotional objectives in one way or another, though not necessarily in order of importance, but randomly. The affective expressions, while having a very low frequency, were present in both moves. Judgment made a significant contribution to both moves, not only by evaluating the process of describing the story, but also for promotional purposes. Appreciation was beneficial mainly by way of contribution to carrying out the evaluation of the book or the story in the promotional move and/or following certain informative objectives.

The most visible difference appears to be in the significance of the appearance of values in each move. Positioning attitudinal values seems to be very much dependent on the surrounding contexts, the content and the aim of the writer of the blurb. Prior to this, it seems important to mention the fact that when evaluative meanings differ in negativity and positivity, positive expressions outrun negative ones in the promotional move. As in the promotional move, evaluative meaning is, directly or indirectly, important for the design and effectiveness of blurbs. Significant complications arise only in cases of the words with negative overtones and the question of how negativity can be promotional. As Hunston and Sinclair (2000) indicate, “the placement, or actual 'structural position' of language units in any text often overrides their constituency in determining whether the unit is regarded as (negatively or positively) evaluative” (p.80).

Moreover, considering the amount of information and promotion they present, writers appeared to identify blurb writing as informative and fairly promotional, using proper amounts of promotion. Also, blurb writing can be described as more information oriented, involving negative and positive expressions. While, the negativity/positivity is of concern in both moves, negative expressions can be viewed as a feature of information giving

Although, the results revealed that all the attitudinal markers can be deployed in both moves, it can be claimed that appreciation is of more promotional significance and judgment is of more informative value. The general picture emerging from the study reveals substantial similarities between the distribution of attitudinal strategies in the two moves. In the

promotional move, judgment and appreciation are relatively of the same importance and affect is basically limited to providing promotional strategies (shoutline, for example). Similarly, in the informative, the focus is on the judgement of people and the appreciation of objects and entities and affect makes an effective contribution by conveying the characters' feelings.

To sum up, the general trend in applying these strategies in fiction blurbs would consist of the following:

1. The use of affect, judgment, and appreciation in both promotional and informative moves.
2. The use of positive and negative evaluative meanings in both promotional and informative moves.
3. More significant use of negative expressions in informative moves.
4. More significant use of positive expressions in promotional moves.
5. Judgment is the main informative attitudinal strategy.
6. Appreciation is the main promotional attitudinal strategy.

It is not possible to make an exact list of the attitudinal markers that are used in English fiction blurbs or in any of their specific moves because of the fact that the words and expressions perform different functions depending on the context. Also, it is not like these words are always used to perform the same roles in different sentences; they may have different meanings in different sentences and therefore play different attitudinal roles. A single word can be positive in one context and negative in another. The tables below reveal some of the attitudinal markers presented in the

promotional and informative moves/functions in this study.

**Table 2**

*Attitudinal markers in promotional move*

	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>
Affect Judgement	love, hope, thrilled ... give up, tired, lose ... Judgement	give up, tired, lose ... betray ...
Appreciation	unexpected, surprising, popular, impact, trust, finest, mature, gifted ... heartbreaking, haunting, dazzling, thrilling, systematically, famed, revealed, long-awaited, acclaimed, classic, important, one of a kind, peculiar bestselling, exclusive, epic, heart-stopping, peculiar, original shocking, captivating, tantalizing moving, mesmerizing, spectacular like no other, stunning, magical right mix, engaging, creative, entertaining, perfect, superb	nonlinear, terrible, scary silly, plucky ...

**Table 3**

*Attitudinal markers in informative move*

	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>
<b>Affect</b>	hope, wants, intent trusting, ensure certain, desire seek out, Like secure, intrigued ...	tries to die, give up, desperate cower, risked, lose, startled fed up, confused ...
<b>Judgement</b>	romantic, enigmatic, wunderkind, excellent, daring, freedom, survived succeed, help, intelligent, strong, untrained ...	abomination, destroy, imprisoned, fugitives vicious, enslaving, mysterious, normal sinfully, violent, threatened naive, invade, brutal, ruthless, terrorists, scary reluctant, untrained misfit
<b>Appreciation</b>	competitive, beautiful, important, one of a kind best, clear, staggering daunting, precious, vast romantic, powerful ...	mess, mysterious, tumultuous terrible, deadly, hideous, separated, brutal, monstrous shattering, deadly, darkest unclear, chilling, dead-end, unthinkable vicious, twisted vengeful, foolish ...

## Conclusion

Comparing and contrasting the various blurbs included in the corpus of the study suggests that although different methods are used in writing, the purpose for which they are applied is somehow similar. Although blurb writing

models vary, the literature (e.g., Valor, 2005; Cacchiani, 2007) suggests that most forms of blurbs are aimed at using similar types of moves to fulfill of the authors' or the publishers' intentions. Furthermore, a survey of the existing blurbs revealed a rather hybrid message: some

writers see blurbs as a promotional tool, while others do not, and those who do find them promotional show a similar range of the advertising strategies by which the current account of blurbs responds to demands in the social stance.

Investigating evaluative strategies used in the blurbs of fiction relates more generally to the aims of the authors in writing blurbs. For instance, the significance of blurbs could be justified on the grounds of improving the sales rates. The information in this analysis is written primarily for two types of groups: those engaged in educational planning and organizations, teaching students of language as well as writers; and others, more specialized, such as novice authors and blurb writers who seek a more general understanding of effective blurbs and how they can influence the overall accomplishment of what they are trying to do.

Reflecting on the tendency of people to read blurbs before making choices about the book they would prefer to read, improving the stock of skills and competencies available by investing in learning through research done in this area is an issue of great importance. It is essential to expand the information base regarding blurb writing for authors. Also, it is in fact an effective way for “exercising language skills with students who are intermediate level and above” (Maxom, 2010, p. 98).

In particular, the myriad ways of organizing blurbs, including blurbs with dominating informative and/or promotional moves, should be linked to different writing styles and also the differences among the potential users of the book, including the abundant use of evaluative terms and expressions, and in turn, this needs to be linked to strategy choices. For this reason, the

results of this study have a potential application to further research which is needed to understand the nature and the extent of the substitutes and complements of evaluative language to create more stimulating and successful blurbs. The use of blurbs can be equally relevant to a number of purposes, particularly those relating to advertisements in social media as well as to information giving situations. Thus, a study based on a larger corpus of blurbs is needed to put the before-mentioned findings in a better position to validate and generate a new understanding of evaluative language in advertising. Moreover, because of the arguably subjective nature of the qualitative analysis, the present study was only concerned with the inscribed attitudinal markers that are in some way easier to spot, trying to decrease the likely mistakes in the process of the analysis of such data, which may probably contain invoked appraisal language and therefore require great command of knowledge of the appraisal model.

The study offers a number of caveats in the form of directions for further research. The generalization of the conclusions could be further strengthened by examining non-fiction blurbs to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the issues suggested in this study. More research is needed to better understand the nature of appraisal strategies \_ graduation and engagement\_ which were not of concern to this study. A final, but worthwhile, direction for future research would be undertaking a comparative study to explore the experiences of international writers. Such research would provide a more complete understanding of the blurb writing experience considering the use of appraisal strategies.

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