

## Exploring Patterns of Evaluation in the Rhetorical Construction of Economics Blurbs: A Lexico-grammatical Analysis

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### Abstract

This study examined blurbs in the discipline of economics to investigate how evaluative lexico-grammatical resources are employed in the logogenetic constructions of these blurbs. The study was informed by the appraisal framework proposed by Martin and White (2005), which describes the language of our attitudes, viewpoints, and personal judgments toward people, objects, and things. All three categories of the appraisal framework, including attitude, engagement, and graduation, were thoroughly explored. Findings demonstrated that economics blurbs are densely packed with appreciation. Graduation was also found to be realized both as intensification and quantification. The study showed that blurbs can be dialogically or monologically constructed based on the presence or absence of external voices as well as engagement resources and locutions. Meanwhile, lexico-grammatical realizations were found not to be restricted to one type of grammatical structures. Various forms including adjectival qualities, nominalized qualities, and processes are employed for encoding evaluative resources. The findings of the study provide those interested in this genre insights into the practical details of blurbs' advertising discourse and keep them informed of the curricular rules and regularities dominating promotional discourse

**Keywords:** appraisal framework, rhetorical moves, lexico-grammatical resources, dialogic and monologic settings

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## 1. Introduction

Academic writing is recently viewed as an interactive accomplishment and a record of dialogue between writers and readers and incorporates rhetorical features for negotiating social relations and engagement contrary to the traditionally-held belief viewing it to be restricted to disciplinary content (Hyland, 2001, 2002, 2004; Thompson, 2001). That is, it involves the constant process of coordination among writers and readers for enabling the co-construction of coherence from the texts with the purpose of establishing and negotiating social relations among academic members (Hyland, 2005). Therefore, although academic writing is in charge of informing readers with propositional content, which until recently was assumed to be carried out impersonally and objectively, its role has considerably changed with the increasing awareness of writers about the active and effective presence and role of readers in the construal formation of texts.

Generally, academic texts perform two major functions of conveying information and promoting information for reader conviction (Hyland, 2008; Mauranen, 1993). However, (Hyland, 2008; Mauranen, 1993), some of these texts are more promotional than informational due to displaying a remarkable degree of evaluative resources in their textual constructions. Blurbs, as an example of these texts, not only exhibit the essential requirements of introductory genres but also display a considerable number of promotional features and are classified under the category of academic introductions (Bhatia, 1997, 2004).

## 2. Review of the Literature

In this section, the related studies are described and the inadequacies or limitations of the previous studies are highlighted. The reasons of conducting the current study are also recapitulated in terms of a few definite questions.

### 2.1. Literature

A number of studies explored the rhetorical features and generic structures of blurbs to shed light on the effectiveness of blurbs' rhetorical patterns in terms of their persuasiveness force. These studies examined blurbs in various existing forms, including non-electronic, non-fiction book blurbs to find out what area has made a greater use of blurbs (Cronin & La Barre, 2005), the keywords of academic

textbook blurbs across eight disciplines for demonstrating disciplinary preferences and sharing common keywords (Yang, 2012), the blurbs of non-electronic academic textbooks to identify generic moves (Iraji & Kuhi, 2013), non-electronic, non-fiction blurb's textbook to reveal their schematic structures (Basturkman, 2009), non-electronic fiction book blurbs with an evaluative perspective to identify the schematic structure and linguistic resources in the promotional genre of blurbs (Cacchiani, 2007). In another study, electronic, fiction, and non-fiction book blurbs were examined with the aim of analyzing their generic and rhetorical patterns (Gea-Valor, 2005) while in a further study, the non-electronic, fiction, and academic book blurbs were cross-culturally examined for discursal patterns, linguistic features, and non-linguistic strategies (Jalilifar & Banari, 2011). More recently, electronic fiction blurbs from Amazon UK and Okuoku TR were explored for their generic structures (Onder, 2013).

Although a few studies (e.g., Cacchiani, 2007; Cronin & La Barre, 2005) have recognized the role of evaluative resources and interpersonal meanings in the construction of blurbs, research has yet to systematically investigate the effect of evaluative language in the logogenetic (the progressive development of interpersonal meaning across a text) discourse of blurbs. A relatively growing body of research has examined rhetorical conventions and generic structures of blurbs (Basturkman, 2009; Gea-Valor, 2005; Iraji & Kuhi, 2013), identifying cultural as well as disciplinary and interdisciplinary variations in the construction of blurbs (Jalilifar & Banari, 2011; Kathpalia, 1997), identifying the grammatical evaluative forms (e.g., Gea-Valor, 2005), or the percentage of adjectives and adverbs (e.g., Marciulioniene, 2012). However, the effect of evaluative linguistic resources on blurbs' advertising discourse has not been precisely investigated via a comprehensive framework to determine their effective and constructive role in persuading readers to buy the books.

Research has examined the prosodic patternings of blurbs as well as their thematic progressions in their dialogic and monologic contexts (Jalilifar et al., 2019; Banari et al., 2019). However, the role and function of lexico-grammatical features representing promotion and persuasion have hardly been addressed in the logogenetic construction of blurbs. That is, the foci of the earlier studies were on the rhetorical moves (Basturkman, 2009; Cacchiani, 2007; Gea-Valor, 2005; Iraji & Kuhi, 2013; Onder, 2013), linguistic and non-linguistic features (Jalilifar & Banari,

2011; Kathpalia, 1997), persuasive linguistic resources (Marciulioniene, 2012), the spread of interpersonal meanings in the thematic progression of blurbs (Jalilifar et al., 2019), and the prosodic flow of evaluative resources across blurbs (Banari et al., 2019); however, the focus of the current study shifted onto examining logogenetically the function of lexico-grammatical features in the blurbs' formation. Meanwhile, there is an increasing concern to find out the effectiveness of blurbs' persuasive role in relation to the attitudinal assessment dimension of evaluation, interpersonal positioning constructed via dialogically intersubjective interactions of blurb writers and readers in a logogenetic context, and the gradability of meaning-making values.

The rhetorical moves characterizing the blurbs of a discipline intend to achieve definite communicative purposes, including giving information about the content of a book regarding the specific topics that the book covers as well as persuading readers to buy the book by means of capitalizing on the promotional devices. Therefore, it is expected that in constructing blurbs' meaning-making values different patterns of evaluative linguistic resources might emerge. As far as the significance of evaluative linguistic resources has not been adequately addressed with reference to the logogenesis of blurbs' discourse and interrelated moves simultaneously, research is yet to reveal how evaluative linguistic resources contribute to the overall construction of blurbs. Thus, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How are moves rhetorically constructed with regard to the existence of evaluative linguistic resources in economics blurbs?
2. What categories of the appraisal framework, i.e., attitude, engagement, and graduation, are used for the rhetorical construction of economics blurbs?
3. What lexico-grammatical features are employed to mark an evaluative stance?
4. How are the blurbs dialogically shaped or monologically constructed?

## **2.2. The Theoretical Framework**

Drawing on a discourse-semantic perspective in examining the overall structuring of economics blurbs, this study is inspired by the appraisal framework which is the language of expression of our attitudes, viewpoints, and personal judgments toward people, objects, and things. The appraisal framework is a recently developed

analytical model within systemic functional linguistic (SFL) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004); its focus of study among the three metafunctions of language (i.e., textual, interpersonal, and ideational) is on interpersonal meaning in language use which is the focus of this study. This framework, as an important development in discourse semantics, aims to identify, describe, and explain the role of interpersonal meaning choices and attitudinal assessments in the realization of linguistic resources for evaluation (White, 2001a).

This framework includes three main categories, including attitude, engagement, and graduation. Attitude involves 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, 2001b, 2001b) and includes resources like affect (sad), judgment (normal), and appreciation (remarkable). Engagement provides a systematic account of the evaluative lexico-grammatical resources, which are rhetorically dialogic in nature. It consists of resources like disclaim (yet), proclaim (naturally), entertain (perhaps), and attribute (believe). Graduation is another category of the appraisal framework which is concerned with scaling up and scaling down according to intensity and amount of the attitudinal evaluations or interpersonal engagement (Martin & White, 2005). It includes resources like force (e.g., many) and focus (e.g., kind of).

To determine the dialogic and monologic construction of economics blurbs, two other dichotomous concepts were also employed in this study (Martin & White, 2005). The first dichotomy, heteroglossic vs. monoglossic, is concerned with 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, is about 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 (Martin & White, 2005).

Meanwhile, in order to explore the grammatical resources based on which evaluative resources are encoded in the blurbs, the proposed grammatical framework by Hood (2010) was employed. The three grammatical resources introduced by Hood (2010) and utilized for the grammatical analysis of the evaluative language of economics blurbs are adjectival qualities, nominalized qualities, and processes. Adjectival qualities are also broken up into the two sub-

categories of attribute and epithet. Attributes refer to those adjectival qualities that follow linking verbs. 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.

Moreover, the concept of maximal and minimal rhetorical realizations of blurbs referring to the maximal and minimal presence of rhetorical moves in a blurb (Jalilifar et al., 2019) was employed. When a blurb is in its minimal or maximal rhetorical realization, it means that the least or most possible number of moves is employed in the construction of the blurb. The purpose of applying the concept is to systematically determine the number of rhetorical moves and identify the evaluative linguistic resources which are generally or specifically constructed across moves.

### 3. Methodology

This study offers a qualitatively detailed discourse-semantic analysis for analyzing a sample of economics blurbs. The detailed discourse-semantic analysis in this study gives us deep insights into how the interrelated lexical and grammatical choices are employed in the logogenesis of blurbs' discourse. All three categories of the appraisal framework were thoroughly explored in order to provide a better understanding of how these categories shape the total formation of blurbs.

#### 3.1. Materials Selection

In the process of analyzing economics blurbs, 30 non-electronic blurbs (i.e., those blurbs that are just on the back cover of books) were thoroughly examined in terms of their rhetorical patterns, attitudinal and graduation resources, lexico-grammatical patterns, and communicative settings. What follows is a report of their analysis. Selection was made from those blurbs which were published from 2010 onward and available at the central library of Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Iran. More than 90 books were chosen in this searching process, and one-third of the books were non-randomly selected for analysis. That is, to minimize the effect of subjective factors, non-random sampling was selected. The selected books for analysis were written by established authors in the field of economics and targeted experts and university students who are trained in this field. The books, published by publishing companies such as Wiley, Polity Press, Pearson, etc., were written

with the purpose of informing readers about current issues such as financial crisis, sociology of economics, and management in economics.

In order to identify the rhetorical moves of economics blurbs, demonstrating possible communicative purposes of the blurbs, some criteria were established. The study is concerned with internal referencing of the moves (i.e., the internal voice that has taken the responsibility of the proposition in the text) or external referencing (i.e., the external voice that has taken the responsibility of the argumentation in the text) (White, 2001b). The moves which were internally referenced were examined to see whether they are about the book itself or the author of the book. Any move about the subject of the book or the author was recognized as a rhetorically distinct move.

### **3.2. Analysis**

All three categories of the appraisal framework were explored in this study with the purpose of identifying how these evaluative lexico-grammatical resources were encoded in the sample of economics blurbs. Given the manageable number of blurbs for analysis in the study, first, the rhetorical moves, as characteristic of the blurbs, were specified. To this aim, each blurb was carefully read by each of the researchers of the study, and functions served through the blurbs were tagged independently. Next, the findings obtained by the three researchers of the study were juxtaposed in order to guarantee neutrality of the choices made, enhance analysis and agree on the interpretation of the blurbs functions.

In the next phase of the study, the kinds of attitudinal and graduation resources together with their linguistic realizations, were explored by three coders and then discussed in monologic and dialogic contexts. Similar to the first phase, the specification of the evaluative elements was made independently to increase the dependability of the analysis. Attitudinal and graduation categories were nominally coded to compare the independent findings of the three coders of the study. The categories of attitude and graduation were coded in terms of numbers and abbreviations (af1 for Affect, ju2 for Judgment, ap3 for Appreciation, Int4 for Intensification, and qua5 for Quantification). In order to cut down analytical subjectivity, 25 percent of the data were analyzed by two other experts who were familiar with the appraisal framework. Then, the experts' analyses were compared

with the researchers' results. Minor differences were negotiated, and agreement was reached on the method of analysis. The blurbs cited in this study were coded by means of brackets, including two numbers separated from each other by a slash.

#### 4. Economics Blurbs' Analysis

In this section, the analysis of the blurbs of economics is presented to examine how they are rhetorically, lexico-grammatically, and communicatively constituted.

##### 4.1. The Analysis of the First Blurb

In this section, the rhetorical patterns, kinds of attitude and graduation, lexico-grammatical structures, and communicative settings of the following blurb are presented:

“Finally, an economic book that is neither dull nor inscrutable and that won't put you to sleep. Greg Ip gives us a lucid and entertaining understanding of ‘the dismal science and reveals how economic concepts and institutions affect our daily lives. This little gem can turn all of us into sophisticated and educated citizens.”

—**Burton G. Malkiel**, Professor of Economics, Princeton University; author of *A Random Walk Down Wall Street* and *The Elements of Investing*

“Greg Ip is one of the world's best economic journalists. The little book of economics will teach you much more than a little about the forces that shape all of our lives.”

—**Nouriel Roubini**, Professor of Economics, New York University; Co-founder and Chairman of Roubini Global Economics

"Here's the perfect way to understand the economy without breaking a sweat. Clearly written and easy to understand, *The Little Book of Economics* guides you through what you need to know. Ip's bright light illuminates places previously darkened by insider jargon and arcane formulae."

—**Robert B. Reich**, Professor of Public Policy, University of California, Berkeley; former U.S. Secretary of Labor

(The little book of economics: How the economy works in the real world, by Greg Ip. 2010. Wiley).

#### 4.1.1. Rhetorical analysis

The above blurb entails one move in its discursual formation-- *appraising the book by the external voice*. The exclusive use of the move in the blurb is indicative of the significance of this move in blurbs. That is, the move can accomplish the advertising function of blurb without the accompaniment of other moves.

#### 4.1.2. Attitudinal and graduation resources

This blurb is charged with an inscribed positive attitude as appreciation across its rhetorical construction.

a **lucid** and **entertaining** understanding [4/1]

one of the world's **best** economic journalists [4/2]

the **perfect** way to understand the economy [4/3]

**easy** to understand [4/4]

Ip's **bright** light [4/5]

In addition to the application of appreciation as the prevalent attitudinal resource, two instances of judgment as capacity are also observed:

**sophisticated** and **educated** citizens [4/6]

Instances of graduation in the blurb as force in terms of intensification and quantification are as follows:

This **little** [graduation: quantification: mass] gem [4/7]

**all** [graduation: quantification: number] of us [4/8]

The **little** [graduation: quantification: mass] book [4/9]

**much** [graduation: quantification: number] more than a little [4/10]

**all** [graduation: quantification: number] of our lives [4/11]

one of the world's **best** [graduation: intensification: superlative] economic journalists [4/12]

The word "best" performs two functions simultaneously. First, it is an attitudinal resource reflecting the view of the external voice about the book. Second, it represents the highest degree of the intensity of a resource with respect to other

relative options.

#### 4.1.3. 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 **lucid** and **entertaining** understanding[4/13]

the **perfect** way to understand the economy[4/14]

Instances of nouns carrying positive meanings are also observed in the rhetorical formation of the above blurb:

This little **gem** [4/15]

Ip's bright **light** [4/16]

Occurrences of process which are infused with attitudinal meaning are realized in the rhetorical construction of the blurb as follows:

*Economics* **guides** you through what you need to know [4/17]

Ip's bright light **illuminates** places previously darkened [4/18]

In addition to the above processes which possess positive meanings, the following processes might have polarity in their meanings, but their polarity is indefinite. The positive or negative polarity of words like these can be determined by means of the contextual and co-textual interpretations:

Greg Ip **gives** us a lucid and entertaining understanding [4/19]

This little gem can **turn** all of us into sophisticated and educated citizens [4/20]

Graduation is also lexico-grammatically realized as 1: pre-modification in terms of intensification:

one of the world's **best** economic journalists [4/21]

2: pre-modification in terms of quantification

**much** more[4/22]

3: listing in terms of inscribed attitude:

Ip's **bright light illuminates** places previously darkened [4/23]

Greg Ip gives us a **lucid** and **entertaining** understanding [4/24]

#### 4.1.4. Communicative setting

The above blurb is rhetorically heteroglossic. That is, the only rhetorical move which is present in the above blurb is *appraising the book by the external voice*. Here, statements of the external voices which are in agreement with the evaluative stance of the blurb writer are selected for showing the worthiness of the book. In other words, the blurb writer has opted for voices which are totally identical with his/her position in reference to the book. Here, external and internal voices hold completely identical positions.

#### 4.2. The Analysis of the Second Blurb

In this section, the rhetorical patterns, kinds of attitude and graduation, lexicogrammatical structures, and communicative setting of the following blurb are presented:

A fascinating close-up analysis of the causes of the 2007/8 financial crisis and its consequences placing the world of finance under the microscope, bringing together evidence of the involvement of banks, governments and regulators. It questions some of its most dangerous and dubious practices, witnessed while searching for the answer to the question: What really caused the financial crisis?

##### Financial Crisis

- offers a timeline of events, giving an accessible overview of the crisis- its prelude, its unfolding and its aftermath
- focuses upon how the seeds of the crisis were sown and how they grew
- highlights government responses to the crisis, and banking practices and failures from around the world
- includes exhibits and original press cutting, providing a relevant context to the story and aid to understanding
- examines the major context of the crisis, for example, securitization, regulation, the decline in house prices, bankruptcies, and the consequent

unemployment

- investigate frauds, swindles and the world's largest Ponzi scheme
- provides parallel between the 2007/8 financial crisis and the Wall Street Crash of 1929, together with the Great Depression
- looks at lessons for the future, and suggests a roadmap to recovery

Essential reading for students of economics, finance, politics, contemporary history, policy and ethics, and it is accessible to all interested in deepening their understanding in financial crisis

Adrian Buckley is Emeritus Professor of International Finance at Cranfield School of Management, Cranfield University, and Visiting Professor of Finance at the Free University, Amsterdam. Prior to entering academic life, he worked in banking, management consulting and as a group treasurer to a FTSE-100 company (Financial Crisis: causes, context, and consequences, by Adrian Buckley. 2011. Pearson)

#### 4.2.1. Rhetorical analysis

The above blurb consists of the following moves including *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 steps, i.e., *previewing the book*, *indicating the content and the value of the book*, and *targeting the market*.

#### 4.2.2. Attitudinal and graduation resources

The above blurb is charged with the following inscribed attitudinal resources as appreciation for constructing evaluative context:

- A **fascinating** close-up analysis [4/25]
- most **dangerous** and **dubious** practices [4/26]
- an **accessible** overview [4/27]
- a **relevant** context [4/28]
- the **major** context [4/29]
- Essential** reading [4/30]

One instance of inscribed attitude as affect is also seen in the rhetorical formation of the blurb showing that the blurb writer is reluctant to employ this category of attitude which draws on emotional aspects of human beings:

it is accessible to all **interested** in deepening their understanding in financial crisis[4/31]

Invoked attitude as judgment is also favored by reference to the academic status of the author of the book, indicating that the author of the book is a competent and reliable academic figure to read his book:

[4/32]

Adrian Buckley is **Emeritus Professor** of International Finance at Cranfield School of Management, Cranfield University, and **Visiting Professor** of Finance at the Free University, Amsterdam.

Instances of force as a category of graduation are evidenced in terms of both intensification and graduation:

A fascinating **close-up** [graduation: quantification: extent] analysis[4/33]

some of its **most** [graduation: intensification] dangerous and dubious practices[4/34]

it is accessible to **all** [graduation: quantification: number] interested in deepening their understanding in financial crisis[4/35]

The application of graduation resources is important and effective in advertising discourses such as blurbs due to their function in changing non-attitudinal meanings to attitudinal ones. Hood (2010) argues that “When ‘objective’ experiential meanings are adjusted with resources of graduation, that is when they are intensified or quantified, those objective meanings take on a subjective potential”.

#### *4.2.3. Grammatical forms for attitudinal and graduation resources*

Instances of adjective as epithet are frequently used for constructing the evaluative stance of the blurb:

A **fascinating** close-up analysis [4/36]

most **dangerous** and **dubious** practices [4/37]

an **accessible** overview [4/38]

a **relevant** context [4/39]

One instance of attribute as another lexico-grammatical form of adjective is also used in the above blurb:

it is **accessible** to all interested in deepening their understanding in financial crisis[4/40]

Additionally, nominalized qualities infused with attitudinal polarity are employed by the blurb writer showing that he makes his effort to use every possible grammatical form for increasing the level of evaluation:

financial **crisis** and its **consequences** [4/41]

the seeds of the **crisis** [4/42]

banking practices and **failures** [4/43]

and suggests a roadmap to **recovery** [4/44]

and **aid** to understanding [4/45]

Occurrences of process are also observed to play their part in constructing and enhancing the evaluative context of the blurb. The features and qualities of the book are listed and elaborated via the processes implying an appreciation of completeness and comprehensiveness:

[4/46]

**highlights** government responses to the crisis, and banking practices and failures from around the world

**includes** exhibits and original press cutting, providing a relevant context to the story and aid to understanding

**examines** the major context of the crisis, for example, securitization, regulation, the decline in house prices, bankruptcies, and the consequent unemployment

**investigate** frauds, swindles and the world's largest Ponzi scheme

Graduation as force is realized as 1: pre-modification in terms of intensification:

some of its **most** dangerous and dubious practices [4/47]

2: pre-modification in terms of quantification:

A fascinating **close-up** analysis [4/48]

it is accessible to **all** interested in deepening their understanding in financial crisis[4/49]

3: listing in terms of quantification:

[4/50]

Prior to entering **academic life**, he worked in **banking, management consulting** and as a **group treasurer** to a FTSE-100 company

Here, listing the previously related works of the author in relation to the field can imply an appreciation of experience, showing that the author has the sufficiently required expertise in the field.

[4/51]

Adrian Buckley is Emeritus Professor of International Finance **at Cranfield School of Management, Cranfield University**, and Visiting Professor of Finance **at the Free University, Amsterdam**

Listing the number of the universities that the author has worked acts to invoke an appreciation of academic capabilities of the author of the book in the mind of readers.

[4/52]

Essential reading for **students of economics, finance, politics, contemporary history, policy and ethics**

Listing the number of the disciplines which their students are required to read the book can give weight to the validity and value of the book and functions to imply an appreciation of worthiness of the book.

4: listing in terms of intensification:

most **dangerous** and **dubious** practices [4/53]

#### *4.2.4. Communicative setting*

The above blurb is retrospectively and prospectively monologic. The retrospectively monologic construction of the above blurb makes the blurb monoglossic. That is, because in the above blurb, no previous statements and voices are inserted into the text; therefore, the text is monoglossic. In reference to the prospective monologism of the blurb, it is argued that because no definite locution is explicitly used in the

above blurb for constructing and establishing mutual negotiation between readers and the blurb writer, the channel of communication is monologicistic. Here, the blurb writer shows the tendency to blurb the book by staying aloof from either aligned or disaligned communications. That is to say, the blurb writer closes down the space for heteroglossic and dialogistic voices and advances his entirely subjective attitudes toward the book. That is, positive value positions about the validity and reliability of the book are grounded in the subjectivity of the blurb writer.

#### 4.3. *The Analysis of the Third Blurb*

In this section, the rhetorical patterns, kinds of attitude and graduation, lexicogrammatical structures, and communicative setting of the following blurb are presented:

“Money and credit offers a pithy, fast-moving introduction to the sociology of money and credit, chronicling where modern monetary systems came from, how people assign social meaning to money, how consumer and corporate credit markets developed, and how the current system of credit operates for families and Fortune-500 companies alike. Carruthers and Ariovich provide insights not only into how modern currency and credit markets work, but into why they sometimes fail to stabilize value or to ensure that credit is given only where credit is due. This lucid and engaging book should be required reading for students of economic sociology.”  
Frank Dobbin, Harvard University

“Few books succeed in being both scholarly studies and textbooks at one and the same time, but Money and Credit is an exception. Written in an engaging and easy style, and full of interesting and important information on money and credit from early history to the current financial crisis, this important book will appeal to a wide audience. It is also likely to become the standard work in the sociology of money and credit.”

Richard Swedberg, Cornell University

“Carruthers and Ariovich view the mysteries of the money and credit through a distinctively sociological lens. They treat this complex and difficult subject in a way

that is illuminating, accessible, and concise, yet subtle and sophisticated- the gold standard of academic writing.”

Mark Granovetter, Stanford University

This book offers a fresh and uniquely sociological perspective on money and credit. As basic economic institutions, money and credit are easy to overlook when they work well. When they malfunction, their importance becomes obvious and demands further investigation.

Bruce G. Carruthers and Laura Ariovich examine the social dimensions of money and credit at both the individual and corporate levels, from the development of personal credit in a consumer society to the role of government in the creation of money. In clear prose, they illustrate how the overall economy is governed by the financial system and the flow capital into, and out of, firms. They also explore the social meanings of money, and how people distinguish between “dirty” and “clean” money.

This accessible and engaging book is an essential reading for upper-level students of economic sociology and those who want to know how the bills, coins, and plastic..... shape the world in which we live

Bruce G. Carruthers is professor of Sociology at Northwestern University.

Laura Ariovich is Becaria Supervisor of University of Buenos Aires.

[Money and Credit: A sociological Approach, Bruce G. Carruthers and Laura Ariovich. 2010. Polity Press]

#### 4.3.1. Rhetorical analysis

The above blurb comprises three moves in its discursual formation, including *appraising the book by the external voice*, *appraising the book by the blurb writer*, and *about the author*. The second move, i.e., *appraising the book by the blurb writer* is also divided into the following steps, i.e., *previewing the book*, *indicating the content and value of the book*, and *targeting the market*.

#### 4.3.2. Attitudinal and graduation resources

The first move, which is stated by external voices, resonates with numerous attitudinal resources. That is, because the major function of this rhetorical move is to praise the book, the move loads up inscriptions of attitudinal resources in its rhetorical formation:

**pithy, fast-moving** introduction [4/54]

**lucid** and **engaging** book [4/55]

**required** reading [4/56]

Money and Credit is an **exception** [4/57]

Written in an **engaging** and **easy** style and full of **interesting** and **important** information [4/58]

**complex** and **difficult** subject [4/59]

this **important** book [4/60]

the **standard** work [4/61]

a way that is **illuminating, accessible,** and **concise** [4/62]

In **clear** prose [4/63]

In the second move in which the book is praised by the internal voice, i.e., the blurb writer, instances of attitudinal resources indicate that the blurb writer also has the role of praising the book in terms of inscribed attitudinal values.

**fresh** and uniquely sociological perspective [4/64]

This **accessible** and **engaging** book is an **essential** reading [4/65]

In addition to the application of inscribed attitudinal resources, invoked attitude as judgment is used in the third move which is apparently regarded as the informative aspect of the blurb because of the absence of inscribed attitudinal resources in its formation. The third move which is located in an advertising discourse and surrounded by positive inscribed attitudinal resources is also likely to perform the function of persuasion. That is, although the third move gives information about the author of the book, it sends the message to readers that the book is a good and reliable one because it is written by academically competent authors, encouraging readers to buy the book:

[4/66]

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Only one instance of attitude as affect is observed in the blurb showing that the blurb writer has no tendency for using this kind of attitudinal category:

and those who **want** [attitude: affect] to know [4/67]

Furthermore, instantiations of graduation as force in terms of intensification and quantification are available in the blurb:

**Few** [graduation: quantification] books [4/68]

**full of** [graduation: quantification] interesting and important information [4/69]

**a wide** [graduation: quantification] audience [4/70]

This lucid and engaging book **should** [graduation: intensification] be required reading [4/71]

important book **will** [graduation: intensification] appeal to a wide audience [4/72]

It is **also likely** [graduation: intensification] to become the standard work [4/73]

The two modal verbs *should* and *will* and the adjective *likely* represent the possibility of the degree of intensity.

#### 4.3.3. Grammatical Forms for Attitudinal and Graduation Resources

Tokens of adjectival quality as epithet are frequently realized for encoding attitude in the above blurb:

**pithy, fast-moving** introduction [4/74]

**lucid** and **engaging** book [4/75]

this **important** book [4/76]

the **standard** work [4/77]

Written in an **engaging** and **easy** style [4/78]

Adjectival quality as attribute is further present in the above blurb as follows:

This accessible and engaging book is an **essential** reading [4/79]

a way that is **illuminating, accessible, and concise** [4/80]

In the above blurb, examples of nominalized quality as the non-congruent form of expressing attitudinal meaning are also sporadically used:

their **importance** becomes obvious [4/81]

current financial **crisis** [4/82]

the **mysteries** of the money [4/83]

In addition to the application of adjectival and nominalized qualities for encoding attitude, instances of process infused with attitudinal meaning also occur. The following processes are inherently infused with attitudinal meaning:

book will **appeal to** [*attitude: appreciation*] a wide audience [4/84]

and those who **want** [*attitude: affect: inclination*] to know [4/85]

There exists another category of process with its positive or negative polarity which is determined by its adjacent words:

[4/86]

Money and credit **offers** a pithy, fast-moving introduction to the sociology of money and credit

Carruthers and Ariovich **provide** insights not only into how modern currency and credit markets work

The third category of process found in the analysis of blurbs is the one which receives attitudinal meaning because of its role and function in presenting information to the readers about how the book is contently organized:

[4/87]

Bruce G. Carruthers and Laura Ariovich **examine** the social dimensions of money and credit at both the individual and corporate levels, from the development of personal credit in a consumer society to the role of government in the creation of money. In clear prose, they **illustrate** how the overall economy is governed by the financial system and the flow capital into, and out of, firms. They also **explore** the social meanings of money, and how people distinguish between “dirty” and “clean” money.

Different ways are applied by the blurb writer for grading non-attitudinal meaning such as:

1: Modality as a lexico-grammatical resource of graduation as intensification:

This lucid and engaging book *should* [graduation: intensification] be required reading[4/88]

2: Graduation as quantification in terms of pre-modification:

*Few* books [4/89]

*a wide* audience [4/90]

3: Graduation as intensification in terms of listing:

a way that is **illuminating**, **accessible**, and **concise** [4/91]

#### 4.3.4. Communicative setting

The above blurb is retrospectively dialogic. That is, an external voice signals endorsement and solidarity for the propositions advanced by the internal voice. In other words, two distinct voices are positively disposed toward the value positions which are about the book. Here, the internal voice opts for an external voice which is in total agreement and alignment with him/her about the qualities of the book to strengthen the credibility of the book and to more convincingly encourage readers to buy the book.

The above blurb is prospectively monologic. That is, it is monologically constructed because of the non-existence of dialogic locutions, which are essential for establishing communication with readers. The lack of prospective dialogism signals to readers that the blurb writer is completely certain about the qualities of the book. Meanwhile, it demonstrates that the blurb writer is unwilling to accept other voices about the validity of the book.

## 5. Discussion

This section discusses the rhetorical patterns, kinds of attitude, graduation, grammatical features, and communicative settings of the above findings.

### 5.1. Moves, Vocalization, and Lexico-grammatical Features in Economics Blurbs

The moves of the economics blurbs can be analyzed in terms of the lexico-grammatical features which are employed in the blurbs and the voices adopted for expressing the evaluative stance which can be internally or externally referenced. Considering the concept of maximal and minimal rhetorical realizations referring to the maximal and minimal presence of moves (Jalilifar et al., 2019), three moves including *appraising the book by the external voice*, *describing the book by the blurb writer*, and *about the author* were observed in the maximal rhetorical realization of economics blurbs.

In the first move, i.e., *appraising the book by the external voice*, the lexico-grammatical feature which is predominantly encoded in the unfolding discourse is adjectival qualities. The adjectival qualities as the salient lexico-grammatical pattern in the first move are used for intensifying and reinforcing the impact of the persuasive aspect of blurbs. In respect to the voice employed in the move, the blurb writer references an external voice that holds to a positive viewpoint about the credibility of the book to indicate the maximal validity of the book. Here, the blurb writer references an external opinion about the book which aligns with his voice. That is, the blurb writer indicates his/her maximal support and endorsement toward the book via quoting positive remarks and compliments which are advanced by external sources. This is a very advertisingly useful means by which readers would be convincingly persuaded to accept the validity of the book, especially when these positive statements about the book are expressed by significant academic figures as external sources. To summarize, a multitude of positive inscribed attitudinal resources are lexico-grammatically encoded as appreciation in the rhetorical formation of the externally stated move.

The second rhetorical move, i.e., *describing the book by the blurb writer*, is lexico-grammatically charged with adjectival qualities, maintaining the persuasive aspect of blurbs. A few instances of nominalized qualities and processes are also seen in this move. In addition, the informative aspect is relatively infused into the textuality of the second move positioned after a thoroughly persuasive move in the economics blurbs to give information about the content of the book. Considering the voice used in this move, the positive evaluation is sourced to the internal voice, that is, the blurb writer. The blurb writer seeks to convince readers that the book is valid, reliable, and significant. To conclude, the move is frequently charged with evaluative lexico-grammatical resources in its construction.

The third move, i.e., *about the author*, is lexico-grammatically characterized as having nominalized qualities for constructing its evaluative discourse. Like the second move, in respect to the voice used in the move, evaluation is internally referenced. The blurb writer makes reference to the academic position of the author with the purpose of increasing the value of the book by mentioning that the book is written by an eminent academic figure. Because of this interpretation which is attributed to the experiential meaning, an evaluative attitudinal assessment is invoked. In the third move, the blurb writer adopts a different strategy for indicating the validity of the book. Here, the blurb writer attempts to present the author of the book as an academically significant figure by introducing his/her academic life. As such, the positive attitudinal meaning which is employed in this move is markedly different from the previous moves. Here, the blurb writer resorts to the application of invoked judgment as well as graduation resources to introduce the author as a reliable academic figure in the domain of this field of study. That is, the language of evaluation shifts from inscribed attitude to invoked attitude. According to Hood (2010), “When ‘objective’ experiential meanings are adjusted with resources of graduation, that is, when they are intensified or quantified, those objective meanings take on a subjective potential” (p. 91). Therefore, by mentioning the number of the books and articles that the author has written or the universities and academic settings that he has taught, the blurb writer is constructing a subjective evaluation in terms of experiential meaning. In brief, the move is lexico-grammatically charged with invocations of non-attitudinal meanings which are internally sourced.

### 5.2. Evaluative Harmony in the Blurbs

Based on the concept of attitudinal harmonies or consistent attitudinal selections proposed by Hood (2010), in relation to the analyzed blurbs in their maximal rhetorical realization, it is argued that evaluative resources in the first move, i.e., *appraising the book by the external voice*, build a strong prosody of positive appreciation which are attitudinally harmonized. The attitudinal harmony which is constructed in the first move by dint of inscriptions of appreciation spreads to the adjacent moves. Other moves help to make the created interpersonal prosody stronger. That is, the creation of interpersonally positive meanings construed via attitudinal resources in the first move sets up the primary harmony and is transmitted to the second and third moves. And, in each of the subsequent moves,

the attitudinal harmony becomes stronger and stronger.

It should be noted here that the attitudinal harmony which is shaped across the blurb might be created by means of different evaluative strategies as it is evident in our analysis. That is, the attitudinal harmony of the economics blurbs is constructed in terms of inscribed attitudinal resources in the first and second moves, and invoked judgment and graduation resources in the third one. However, they all cooperatively couple together, creating a unified prosody of interpersonal meaning which sends a definite message to the readers.

### ***5.3. The Rationale behind the Positioning of Blurbs' Moves***

The analysis of the blurbs has shown that the persuasive aspect of blurbs is positioned in the beginning phase of its discourse, and its informative aspect is situated at the end of it. 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, read an overview of what the book is about, or at least glance at the book and think momentarily about the relevance of the book to their needs because of their frequently positive attitudinal resources in their structures as well as their compellingly enticing force.

### ***5.4. The Diversity of Grammatical Realizations in the Blurbs***

The analysis of blurbs has shown that encoding attitudinal resources is not limited to merely one type of grammatical forms. On the contrary, every possible form enabling blurb writers to persuasively encourage readers is employed. This diversity in use reflects the tendency of blurb writers to keep persuasiveness at its optimum level. This means that adjectives are frequently used throughout the text. However, the analysis of economics blurbs revealed that adjectives might not be used in some parts or sentences of the blurbs where informativeness comes to the fore. Here, in order to compensate for the absence of adjectives for maintaining the level of persuasiveness in the informative section, the blurb writer opts for other lexical selections which carry and imply positive meanings. Meanwhile, the frequent

employment of just one grammatical form for encoding attitude can make the text unnatural and monotonous. Note the following instances:

Highly active domains in which theoretical and methodological advances have been made are treated in more **depth** [attitude: appreciation] (second Language Learning Theories, by Rosamond Mitchell, Florence Myles, & Emma Marsden. 2013. Routledge).

[The book] gives **solutions** [attitude: appreciation] of **problems** [attitude: appreciation] with different types of potentials including the Dirac delta function potential.[Quantum Mechanics: 500 Problems with Solutions. G. Aruldas. 2011. PHI Learning]

The book **helps** [attitude: appreciation] students appreciate the variety of the study of myth in one volume.(Exploring Greek Myth, by Mathew Clark. 2012. Blackwell Publishing).

*Economics* **guides** [attitude: appreciation] you through what you need to know (The little book of economics: How the economy works in the real world, by Greg Ip. 2010. Wiley).

### **5.5. The Lexico-grammatical Realizations of Processes**

Three types of processes are observed in the textuality of blurbs. One type of process is the one which has no inherently positive or negative meaning. Here, the *process* signals to readers that something will be presented. In order to determine the polarity of the verb and to assign positive or negative meanings to the process, we have to look beyond the immediate environment of that *process* which is primarily devoid of attitudinal meaning:

Money and credit **offer** a pithy, fast-moving introduction to the sociology of money and credit

Carruthers and Ariovich **provide** insights not only into how modern currency and credit markets work

The second type of process used in the blurbs by writers has inherently positive and negative meanings. That is, they are semantically charged with positive and negative meanings:

book will **appeal to**[attitude: appreciation] a wide audience

and those who **want**[attitude: affect: inclination] to know

*Economics* **guides** you through what you need to know. (The little book of economics: How the economy works in the real world, by Greg Ip. 2010. Wiley.

The third type of process is the one which constructs a rhetorically positive meaning by means of mentioning the way that the book is organized. Here, the processes connected to one another elaborate the worthiness of the book with reference to the way that the book is organized:

Bruce G. Carruthers and Laura Ariovich **examine** the social dimensions of money and credit at both the individual and corporate levels, from the development of personal credit in a consumer society to the role of government in the creation of money. In clear prose, they **illustrate** how the overall economy is governed by the financial system and the flow capital into, and out of, firms. They also **explore** the social meanings of money, and how people distinguish between “dirty” and “clean” money.

### ***5.6.The Evaluative Synergistic Hybridity of Informative and Persuasive Functions***

Gea Valor (2005) has introduced blurbs as having informative and persuasive functions. They have been recognized in terms of the functions they perform. That is, based on the rhetorical functions that they perform, we can differentiate them from each other. For example, in a blurb in its maximal rhetorical realization containing three moves, inscribed attitude is evident in the first and second moves, i.e., *appraising the book by an external voice* and *describing the book by the blurb writer*. On the other hand, invoked attitude is mainly realized in the third move, i.e., *about the author*. Inscribed attitude, which is predominantly fraught with attitudinal resources, evaluates the blurb directly. In other words, the first and second moves containing multiple instances of attitudinal resources are rhetorically represented as the persuasive aspect of the blurb. Invoked attitude, which is manifested in terms of invoked judgment and graduation resources, evaluates the blurb indirectly. Thus, the third move, i.e., *about the author*, is rhetorically represented as the informative aspect of the blurb accentuating experiential meaning.

However, the question here is whether these two functions, i.e., persuasive and

informative functions, are really unrelated and distinct. That is, are these two functions affected or unaffected by their counterparts? In order to answer the question, we need to know about the strategic functionality of academic blurbs. Academic blurbs are written for academic settings with the purpose of convincing students to consider the book as their proper choice. That is, blurbing for the academic setting is somewhat different from the ones which are written for pure marketing purposes. Here, a degree of academic sense is required to be maintained in the rhetorical formations of these blurbs. That is, while the blurb is informing the readers about the content of the book in its informative rhetorical move, the informative rhetorical component is also infused with inscribed or invoked attitude because of the promotional nature of blurbing. This is also true for the persuasive rhetorical component of blurbs. That is, while a blurb is persuading readers via the ostentatious display of multiple attitudinal resources, it also functions to inform readers for maintaining a degree of academic relevance. Based on what has been said, it can be inferred that blurbing for the academic setting is promotionally achieved in terms of the judicious complementarity of persuasive and informative functions. That is, it would be natural that in the persuasive move which is dense with attitudinal resources, signs of informative aspect of the blurb might also be observed, and vice versa. Note the following example:

A **fascinating close-up** analysis of the causes of the 2007/8 financial **crisis** and its consequences placing the world of finance under the microscope, bringing together evidence of the involvement of banks, governments and regulators. It questions some of its **most dangerous** and **dubious** practices, witnessed while searching for the answer to the question: What really caused the financial **crisis**?

In addition to complimenting the book, the blurb writer also provides readers with some further information about the book.

In the third informatively constructed move of the blurb, signs of evaluation are also evident due to the presence of indirect judgment and graduation resources flagging to readers to interpret the text.

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(Financial Crisis: causes, context, and consequences, by Adrian Buckley. 2011. Pearson)

Thus, because of the simultaneous participation of the two functions together, blurbs exhibit two levels of evaluation, i.e., *the informative level of evaluation* and *the persuasive level of evaluation*. The simultaneous participation of these two levels of evaluation together does not mean that both of these two functions have the identical share of presence in any rhetorical move. The concept of two levels of evaluation means that in any move one function has the prominent role distinguished on the basis of the maximal or minimal reliance on attitudinal resources determining the overall rhetorical function of the move, indicating that the blurb is rhetorically persuasive or informative. The secondary function which accompanies the primary function of the move contributes to enriching the move. Therefore, the hybridity of blurbs' two functions would ultimately results in the synergistic, enhanced result of these two functions, generating a combined effect greater than their pure segregated forms. In other words, when these two functions are combined with each other and work together they accomplish more than they might do alone.

### 5.7. Communicative Settings in Blurbs

As stated earlier, blurbs can be retrospectively heteroglossic and monoglossic or prospectively dialogistic or monologicistic. The heteroglossic construction of blurbs means that the blurb is retrospectively dialogic with reference to the existence of external and internal voices that align with the value position which is developed across the whole text of the blurb, and the dialogistic construction of blurbs means that the blurb is prospectively dialogic by means of the presence of locutions classified under the categories of *deny* and *counter* both of which are also classified under the category of *disclaim*. The monoglossic setting of blurbs means that the external voices which might be aligned or disaligned with the value positions advanced in the blurb are not present, so the blurb writer grounds the value positions in the subjectivity of himself, and the monologicistic context is felt due to the dense accumulation of positive attitudinal lexis in different phases of the blurb's rhetorical moves as well as the absence of dialogistic locutions in the formations of blurbs.

## 6. Conclusion

The analysis showed that the persuasive function of economics blurbs which is realized through the maximal reliance on attitudinal resources is textually positioned in the beginning phase of the blurbs' discourse, and the informative function of blurbs rather lacking inscribed resources is situated at the end of the blurbs' structure. That is, a dense accumulation of inscribed attitudinal resources was observed in the beginning phase of the blurbs representing the persuasive function. On the other hand, invocations of attitudes on account of the application of graduation resources and invoked judgment were found at the end of the blurbs constituting the informative function.

The analysis has shown that blurb writers make use of a variety of lexicogrammatical forms for encoding evaluative resources. Using one kind of grammatical forms can make the texts boring, dull, unimpressive, and lackluster. Persuading readers to buy the books as the major purpose of blurbs' advertising discourse can be achieved by means of various possible strategies and mechanisms; therefore, the application of various grammatical forms can strikingly attract readers' attentions to the blurbs' advertising texts.

The dialogic and monologic contexts of blurbs' advertising discourse has been shown to be created by the number of rhetorical moves, the existence and non-existence of external and internal voices, and the monologic pressure of the attitudinal meanings across the blurbs' texts. The monologic setting as a mechanism of advertising discourse is established in the non-existence of communication between the blurb writer and external voices praising the worthiness of the book. It can also be created in the absence of the communicative setting between the blurb writer and readers of the book by dint of the pressure of attitudinal resources. Here, the channel of communication becomes unilateral. That is, the blurb writer intends to projects onto readers certain views and attitudes to make them interested in the book without acknowledging any alternative views.

The focus of this research was merely on the employment of evaluative resources in the blurbs of economics. That is, the findings of our research are methodologically confined to the outcomes of one discipline. Meanwhile, our study is carried out on the texts of English economics blurbs. Therefore, future research can take into account the blurbs of other disciplines and other languages.

Furthermore, the findings of this research are restricted to the advertising discourse of blurbs. Other advertising discourses can also be examined and their rhetorical and evaluative patterns can be identified. Then, the obtained findings of different advertising discourses can be compared and contrasted to see the degree of overlap among them in terms of their evaluative resources and rhetorical patterns, context of communication, as well as their textual patternings. In other words, in so doing, we might arrive at a better understanding of how these different advertising discourses are structurally constructed and to what extent they display similarities and differences with one another.

The findings of this research might have clear pedagogical implications for English for Specific Purposes courses in general and writing courses in particular. These findings might address specific needs of prospective ESP students, who have a specific focus, in terms of meeting their writing concerns by keeping them informed of the rules and regularities dominating the advertising discourses. Stated differently, the findings can be utilized for training prospective blurb writers whose purpose is to gain the required knowledge of the conventions of blurbing. In writing courses designed specifically to teach learners the practical details of advertising discourses such as the findings of this study, the major purpose is to adapt the curriculum and teaching materials of advertising issues to the needs of the stakeholders. Findings have demonstrated that blurbs can be charged with interpersonal resources in their construction and these interactive elements heighten writers' awareness of the contextual structuring of their discourse. Because the study intensively considered blurb construction in the discipline of economics, interested blurb writers would gain a clear understanding of how language of evaluation is characterized in the blurbs' discourse and how interpersonal meanings disperse progressively across the text. To provide instruction on the evaluative resources in terms of applying the findings of this study, the curriculum is suggested to be indicative of the genre approach to writing. First, novice writers are presented with sample blurbs and they are encouraged to read and reflect on the rhetorical patterns specifying these blurbs in the presence of an experienced adult who provides on the spot suggestions. The more proficient adult then presents the rhetorical specifications of the blurbs and the apprentices are invited to compare their initial analysis with the conventions suggested by the instructor. Finally, novices are asked to follow the practiced generic patterns to write their own hypothetical blurb. It is hoped that the findings gained from the current study open new vistas for research on this and other adjacent genres.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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