RECOGNIZING ATTITUDE AND POLARITY OF WORDS IN REVIEW TEXTS: AN ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH SOFT AND HARD DISCIPLINES

Narges Ahmadi
Sama Technical and Vocational Training College, Ahvaz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Ahvaz, Iran

ABSTRACT
The present study aims to analyze book review as a written discourse in order to follow the move structure (Motta-Roth, 1995). It also distinguishes words that convey evaluation of an item, as well as the evaluation polarity (positive or negative) in English Soft (Literature and History) and Hard (Math and Computer engineering) disciplines. 120 book reviews (60 of each) were selected and scrutinized to classify move structure (Motta-Roth, 1995), the expressions of Attitude (Martin & White, 2005), as well as to reveal Polarity. Most of the data used in this study were downloaded from the well-known book review websites. The reviews were published within the years from 2000 to 2013. It is necessary to mention that Persian reviews were lengthy. The chi-square results with 0.05 level of significance indicated that there were some similarities and differences in applying moves, steps, attitudinal expressions and polarity through two corpora. In a total comparison of soft and hard disciplines moves 2 (Outlining the Book) and 4 (Providing Closing Evaluation of the Book) showed significant differences. In terms of attitude, Chi-Square results indicated that only in total comparison of Hard and Soft group, affect and judgment had significant differences; affect and judgment expressions were used more by Soft group. In terms of polarity, both English Soft and Hard reviewers apply positive aspects of evaluation several times more than negative aspects.

KEYWORDS: Book review, Move structure, Appraisal theory, Attitude, Polarity

INTRODUCTION
Book reviews are primarily published by authors who have published several articles, notes, reviews, or letters and the authors publishing book reviews continue to publish articles, notes, reviews, or letters (Nicolaisen & Frandsen, 2007, p. 122). The writer and the reviewers are the main factors of book review. Book reviewer evaluates the work of a colleague researcher based on different criteria such as adequate treatment of the subject, usefulness for the expectant reader, and possible future anticipation (Gea Valor, 2000). The Appraisal theory is used to communicate evaluation, divided to Attitude (how writers communicate their point of view), Engagement (how writers align themselves with respect to the position of others) and Graduation (how writers amplify or diminish their opinions), the recognition of which may assist in performing other tasks in sentiment analysis (Hernandez, Lopez-Lopez & Medina, 2009). Each type of attitude involves positive or negative feeling (Martin, 2000). In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in the exploration of evaluation in academic genres. Hunston and Thompson (2000, p. 5) define
evaluation as “the broad cover term for the expression of the speaker or writer’s attitude or stance towards, viewpoint on, or feelings about the entities or propositions that he or she is talking about”. So a vast amount of literature has been published on the role of evaluation in different genres such as book reviews; they may well contribute to the construction and development of disciplinary knowledge (Lorez-Sanz, 2012). The ways that writers and speakers express their opinions have long been recognized as an important feature of language, however, and research has attempted to account for these meanings in a number of ways (Hyland, 2005). Hunston and Thompson (2000) use the term ‘evaluation’ to refer to the writer’s judgements, feelings, or viewpoint about something, and others have described these varied linguistic resources as *attitude* (Halliday, 1994), *epistemic modality* (Hyland, 1998), *appraisal* (Martin, 2000; White, 2003), *stance* (Biber & Finegan, 1989; Hyland, 1999), and *metadiscourse* (Crismore, 1989; Hyland & Tse, 2004). Whereas the book review is combined with critical claims, a negative and “face threatening speech act” (Gea Valor, 2000, p. 146), mitigation strategies are the best devices to maintain a social harmony and “interaction” (Roldan Reijos, 2004, p. 33) with the reviewer/adressee.

Recently, Hyland (2000) has contrasted the ways in which reviewers in different disciplines handle praise and criticism in their assessments of the texts that they are reviewing. Hyland noted considerable disciplinary differences in the amounts of overall criticism and in the balance of praise and critique in 28 reviews taken from seven different disciplines. Thus, for example, praise and criticism were equally balanced in reviews in journals in the arts and social sciences, but reviews in the sciences contained appreciation than criticism. According to Hyland and Diani (2009), appreciation is relatively common in review genres, particularly blurbs and book reviews and is generally used as an opening move to offer global praise for the volume, relying heavily on a restricted range of adjectives, most commonly *interesting, comprehensive, significant*, and *excellent* (p. 12). The present study aims to analyze book review as a written discourse in order to follow the move structure (based on Motta-Roth, 1995), and the use of attitudinal expressions through it; to explore how using appraisal words reduces the threat to the reviewers’ negative face by making use of the attitudinal features. Thus, book reviews in the areas of English soft and hard disciplines will be analyzed to reach this goal. Thus, it examines the ways in which book reviews written in soft disciplines are different from those written in hard disciplines in terms of moves, steps, attitudinal expressions (Martin & White, 2005) and polarity of words (positive or negative).

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Generally, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. Are there any significant differences between book reviews written in English Soft (history and literature) and Hard (mathematics and computer engineering) disciplines in terms of moves (Motta-Roth, 1995) and steps incorporated in each field?
2. Based on Martin and White’s (2005) Appraisal Theory, Which attitudinal expression (*affect, judgment and appreciation*) is used more by reviewers of Soft and Hard disciplines?
3. Do reviewers apply more positive or negative words through the evaluation of the two datasets?
METHODOLOGY

Corpus

The corpus analyzed in the present study comprised 60 soft sciences (30 History and 30 Literature) and 60 hard sciences (30 Mathematics and 30 Computer) book reviews, which were extracted from available electronic sites and journals such as, Science Fiction and Fantasy, Walrus Journal, NYQ Foundation, Math DL, Asian EFL, Discourse Journals, Google, Yahoo, Amazon and Time Supplementary within the fields of English Soft and Hard book reviews (each book was found in a special site or journal). The selected texts, 60 from Soft and 60 from English Hard disciplines, were published recently, from 2005 to 2013- and they were approximately not more than 1000 words.

Instrumentation

Studying several book review analysis suggested by Cacchiani (2007), Motta-Roth (1998), Nicolaisen (2002), Paltridge (1995), Salager-Meyer, Alcaraz Ariza and Berbesi (2007), Suarez and Moreno (2005), Swales (1990), the present study exploited the move analysis suggested by Motta-Roth (1995). An important reason of selecting Motta-Roth’s (1995) model in the present study is the lack of analyzing recurrent lexical elements or lexico-grammatical features in the texts chosen as typical instances of this genre. Furthermore, the present research aims to distinguish words that convey evaluation of an item based on Martin and White (2005) framework, as well as the evaluation Polarity (positive, negative) in English Soft and Hard book reviews. We propose a strategy to distinguish words that convey evaluation of an item from the rest, as well as to classify the evaluation Polarity (positive or negative). In addition, relying on Appraisal Theory, we intend to classify the evaluation words in affect, judgment and appreciation, so the other parts of Appraisal are not within our area of investigation. Based on Martin and White’s (2005) Appraisal Theory strategy, 120 English Soft and Hard book reviews (30 of each four discipline) were selected and scrutinized to classify moves, steps and expressions of Attitude (affect, judgment, appreciation). Moreover, they were analyzed to reveal Polarity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of Chi-square tests for the constitutive moves of soft disciplines (History and Literature) indicated significant differences in the distribution of the moves 2 (Outlining the Book) and 4 (Providing Closing Evaluation of the Book). In terms of hard disciplines (Mathematics and Computer), there were significant differences in moves 1 (Introducing the Book), 2 (Outlining the Book), and 3 (Highlighting Parts of the Book). In a total comparison of soft and hard disciplines moves 2 (Outlining the Book) and 4 (Providing Closing Evaluation of the Book) showed significant differences.

The results revealed that there were some differences in the schematic structure of History-Literature (SOFT), Mathematics-Computer (HARD) and the overall schematic structure of both corpora. The observed differences were associated to the effects of context on text like disciplinary variability and the specific need requirements of each group. The term intertextuality (Toledo, 2005, p. 1062) (i.e., knowledge about other texts which influences the comprehension
and writing of a given one) is also an effective factor. In addition to knowledge of and prior experience with other specific texts, intertextuality includes the effects of prior knowledge of and experience with texts in general, and with different text types or genres. Other effective elements such as gender and culture of reviewers, specific needs of discourse community, knowledge of the reviewers, size of the audience and discourse community can be effective on the differences between the book reviews of the two corpora.

Table 1: The Constituent Moves and Steps in Soft and Hard Disciplines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOFT</th>
<th>HARD</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move 1</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>28.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M1s1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M1s2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M1s3</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M1s4</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M1s5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move 2</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>47.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M2s1</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>48.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M2s2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M2s3</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>42.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move 3</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>18.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M3s1</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move 4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M4s1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M4s2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Within move 1. Introducing the book subfunctions 1.1. Defining the general topic of the book and 1.2. Informing about potential readership indicate significant differences in the Soft corpus (history and literature). The higher frequency of these steps is presented by Literature field. In Hard corpus (mathematics and computer), move 1 itself and subfunctions 1.1 Defining the
Move 2. Outlining the book, the other mainly descriptive move in the book review genre, also shows higher frequencies of occurrence in the Soft corpus. The difference of use of this move between the two corpora is highly significant statistically speaking, \( \chi^2 = 34.49, p=.000 \). Within this move, the subfunctions 2.1. Providing general view of the organization of the book and 2.3. Citing extra-text material shows statistically significant difference.

Move 3. Highlighting parts of the book, and the only subfunction by which it is realized, Providing focused evaluation, can be said to be preferred by Soft book review writers, but in total comparison Chi-square test shows no significant difference between soft and hard group \( \chi^2 = 8.64, p=.124 \). Chi-square test was run for move 3 and subfunction 3.1. Providing focused evaluation in Hard group \( \chi^2 = 20.52, p=.000 \) indicates significant difference between Math and Computer. This contrasts show higher frequencies of this move and step for Math discipline. English Math book review writers seem to be more likely to keep separate the description of the book’s chapters and evaluative remarks on the book.

Especially, relevant to the present study were options 4.1. Definitely recommending/disqualifying the book and 4.2. Recommending the book despite indicated shortcomings within move 4. Providing closing evaluation of the book. Both of these options reflect the English Soft and Hard reviewers’ lower tendency to criticize books in a straightforward way in the concluding part of the review, although this is done differently in the two writing disciplines. While Hard (Math and Computer) book reviewers show a much higher tendency to recommend books with low room for criticism through option 4.1. Definitely recommending the book, Hard science reviewers tend to moderate their positive verdicts mainly through option 4.1. Recommending the book.

Another point observed in the study was that authors do not strictly follow the same move and step sequences as has been suggested in Motta Roth’s (1995) framework for book reviews. Authors seem to liberally reorder the sequence of steps in their book reviews to create their own styles. This was observed in almost all reviews and in all author groups. More interestingly, it was noticed that Moves 1 and 2 in many of the reviews seemed to be intertwined. This is perhaps because of authors’ commitment to texture. A piece of writing requires cohesion and coherence to be considered a well-organized piece of discourse.

In this article we have reviewed Appraisal, a systemic functional linguistic theory of evaluation in text. The theory describes a typology of language, consisting of three subsystems that operate in parallel: Attitude describes the language used to communicate personal feelings in terms of emotional reactions, judgments of people and appreciation of objects.

The results showed that Appreciation words encompass high frequency among the Attitudinal expressions in both Soft and Hard group. Chi-Square results indicated that only in total
comparison of Hard and Soft group, Affect and Judgment had significant differences. In Soft group Affect and Judgment was used more than Hard group: $\chi^2 = 26.20$, $p=.050$ (Affect). $\chi^2 = 32.51$, $p=.009$ (Judgment).

### Table 2: The Attitudinal Expressions and Polarity in Soft and Hard Disciplines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SOFT</th>
<th>HARD</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>History (30)</td>
<td>Literature (30)</td>
<td>com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AF F</td>
<td>95 12.66</td>
<td>252 29.57</td>
<td>23.7 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP P</td>
<td>485 64.66</td>
<td>390 45.77</td>
<td>29.8 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JU D</td>
<td>170 22.66</td>
<td>210 24.64</td>
<td>4.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO S</td>
<td>550 73.23</td>
<td>663 77.81</td>
<td>31.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NE G</td>
<td>201 26.76</td>
<td>189 22.18</td>
<td>14.4 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Table 2, the findings indicate that both English Soft and Hard reviewers apply positive aspects of evaluation several times more than negative aspects. These positive aspects are politeness maxims, compliments, indirect conventional requests (can/could you), non-conventional indirect requests (questions, criticism patterns, even sometimes plain statements). Negative evaluation is conveyed either by means of the negation of the verb, followed by an adjective with a positive meaning or by means of a negative adjective (e.g., difficult, poor).

**Discussion**

The results reveal that Soft reviewers evaluate the writers’ works more positively. It might be because of the fact that interpersonal relationship between the communicative participants—the writer and the reviewer— in the genre of book reviewing is a crucial factor which determines the construction of the discourse and developing the genre; therefore, the reviewers tend to be more positive than negative. They want to maintain the writers’ face by applying positive aspects of evaluation besides criticisms.
The experienced, fair, and knowledgeable reviewers know that a completely negative critique offends the writers’ personality. They know that a positive critique can be more effective; a critique which presents both weaknesses and strengths of the reviewed book and the writer. The writer will be more satisfied and content to see the evaluation more positive; to see that the evaluation is fair, not biased and malicious.

The Appraisal theory describes a hierarchy of the language used to communicate evaluation, and one type of Attitude expresses how writers communicate their point of view. Opinion is conveyed in text in a wide variety of domains and genres. Here in discipline review genre, the results revealed that the overall application of Attitude words in the two corpora was different, but the use of polarity was the same. This difference in the use of appraisal-bearing (Hernandez, Lopez-Lopez & Medina, 2009) expressions in English Hard and Soft reviews might be attributed to effective elements such as specific needs of the discourse community and knowledge of the reviewers on the nature of the book reviews in journals or strict review policies set by journal reviewers of two different cultures. As we have seen, book reviewing is a potentially face-threatening act since it basically involves the assessment of a colleague’s work. Hard discipline reviewers showed less affection or emotional viewpoints in their works. They mostly focused on the nature of the reviewed text, the writer’s materials and the way of reviewing the text.

CONCLUSION
In terms of polarity; though, soft discipline reviewers applied more negative statements in their reviews, but the difference was not so significant. They might believe to review the text directly without using compliment expressions. It might be an attempt to show the defects of the work completely to be removed in the future. English Soft reviewers; also, revealed more affection and used more positive expressions. Thus, the present study has partly focused on the use and function of Appraisal (attitude) words and Polarity in the Hard and Soft discipline reviews.

The main limitation of this study is that the data was obtained from scrutinizing only two disciplines and one culture; thus not allowing for a more comprehensive cross-cultural analysis of book reviews; e.g., increasing the size of sentences and extending their domain. Also, in this research, the reviews were analyzed based on Martin and White (2005) and Motta-Roth (1995) models. The sphere of such research can be extended to other genres using other frameworks.

REFERENCES


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