Generic structure and promotional elements in best-selling online book blurbs: a cross-cultural study

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Abstract

This study investigates the generic structure and promotional elements of the online fiction blurbs accompanying the 95 best-selling books from Amazon United Kingdom and Okuoku Turkey (1999-2011), a company that sells books online that are written in Turkish or translated into Turkish, and adds to the growing number of investigations into this genre (Kathpalia, 1997; Bhatia, 2004; Cacchiani, 2007; Gea-Valor, 2007; Gesuato, 2007; Basturkmen, 2009). Based on the findings, a two-level schematic structure (moves and steps) is proposed for the blurbs following Swales (1990). The findings suggest that Amazon UK book blurbs have a six-move schematic structure: complimenting the author, book description, justifying the book by establishing a niche, book promotion, author's background and author's website/blog being the second, fourth and fifth obligatory moves. However, Okuoku book blurbs feature a five-move schematic structure with complimenting the author, book description, involving the reader in the text, book promotion and author's background, the second and fourth being obligatory. Analysis of promotional elements in the corpora reveals that online fiction book blurbs employ the art of advertising through the use of favorable expressions (Bhatia, 2005) and innovative uses of rhetorical strategies to persuade the reader to read the book.

Keywords: blurbs, online books, genre analysis, promotional element, evaluative language.

Resumen

Estructura genérica y elementos de promoción de las reseñas publicitarias de los libros más vendidos en línea: un estudio transcultural

Este estudio investiga la estructura genérica y los elementos de promoción de la reseña publicitaria que acompaña a los 95 libros de ficción más vendidos por

Internet de Amazon Reino Unido y de Okuoku Turquía, una compañía que vende libros por Internet escritos en turco o traducidos a esta lengua, contribuyendo al creciente número de trabajos de investigación sobre este género (Kathpalia, 1997; Bhatia, 2004; Cacchiani, 2007; Gea-Valor, 2007; Gesuato, 2007; Basturkmen, 2009). A partir de estos estudios, se propone, una estructura esquemática de dos niveles (movimientos y pasos) para las reseñas publicitarias, siguiendo a Swales (1990). Los resultados sugieren que las reseñas publicitarias de los libros Amazon Reino Unido poseen una estructura esquemática de seis movimientos: 1) elogios para el autor, 2) descripción del libro, 3) justificación del libro estableciendo un nicho, 4) promoción del libro, 5) currículum del autor y 6) página web/blog del autor; de los cuales el segundo, cuarto y quinto son obligatorios. Sin embargo, las reseñas publicitarias de los libros Okuoku tienen una estructura esquemática de cinco movimientos, en parte diferentes: 1) elogios para el autor, 2) descripción del libro, 3) implicación del lector en el libro, 4) promoción del libro y 5) currículum del autor; de los cuales el segundo y el cuarto son obligatorios. El análisis de los elementos promocionales en los libros estudiados revela que la reseña publicitaria de libros de ficción vendidos por Internet se sirve del arte de la publicidad mediante el uso de expresiones favorables (Bhatia, 2005) y los usos innovadores de las estrategias retóricas para conseguir que el lector lea el libro.

Palabras clave: reseñas publicitarias, libros en línea, análisis de género, elemento promocional, lenguaje evaluativo.

Introduction

The persuasive tenor of advertisements is integral to promotional culture (Wernick, 1991). Promotional discourse pervades everyday life and is found in a number of varied genres among others, such as press releases (Maat, 2007), sales letters (Vergaro, 2004), job applications (Connor, Davis & De Rycker, 1995) and academic introductions (Bhatia, 1997a). Industry professionals commonly regard advertising as a "powerful marketing tool, a means of persuasively communicating with millions of customers" (Hackley, 2005: 8). Booksellers are no exception, with the book blurb being one of the field's promotional genres. However, despite the significance of promotional genres and the research that has been conducted on book blurbs to date, little work has been done on the cross-cultural analysis of book blurbs. In the present research, I aim to investigate generic structure and promotional elements (PEs) of online best-selling fiction blurbs from two booksellers' websites Amazon United Kingdom (UK) and Okuoku Turkey (TR) to reveal

how promotional goals and communicative purposes are achieved in two different cultural contexts. Specifically, the following four research questions in two different linguistic and cultural contexts will be addressed:

1. What is the generic structure of online best-seller fiction blurbs on Amazon UK and Okuoku TR?

2. What are the obligatory and optional moves in these blurbs?

3. How do the blurbs promote the books? Which PEs are the most frequently used to fulfill promotion?

4. Do online fiction book blurbs have the same communicative function in the two contexts?

First, the terms genre and blurb will be discussed briefly and previous research on blurb genres will be presented to contextualize the present study. Second, the methodology will be presented including details about the corpora and the analysis of the blurbs' generic structures and PEs. Finally, a discussion of the main findings will be presented.

Language and writing are regarded as cultural phenomena (Kaplan, 1966) which focus on rhetorical conventions of the society. Since different cultures have different rhetorical choices, these conventions are "products of discourse communities and are thereby "windows" into the functioning of such communities" (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995: 29). The focus in cross-cultural rhetoric, contrastive rhetoric, is how texts in different languages and cultures are formed and interpreted through examining, comparing and contrasting the texts and discourse (Connor, 1996; Enkvist, 1997). Cross-cultural rhetoric can be regarded as a substantive approach that employs various methods (see Flowerdew, 2002), including text analysis, genre analysis, corpus linguistics, and ethnographic approaches (Connor, 2004). The concept of *tertium comparationis* or common platform of comparison is important in contrastive rhetoric, including selection of the suitable texts for comparison to build comparable corpora (Connor & Moreno, 2005). As a significant part of cross-cultural rhetoric the term genre has been interpreted in a variety of ways, and various definitions have been used in the literature (Miller, 1984; Swales, 1990; Bhatia, 1993; Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995; among others); however, researchers agree that the one fundamental tenet that shapes the notion of genre is the use of language in conventionalized, shared, communicative settings with specific communicative goals.

Accordingly, in this study, genre is defined as "how things get done, when language is used to accomplish them" (Martin, 1985: 250) in the context of examining blurbs in Amazon UK and Okuoku TR. Blurb has generally been defined as a short description on the back cover of a book. However, due to the marketing policy of the professional setting addressed here, blurb refers to a promotional genre that attempts to persuade potential readers to buy books (Gea-Valor, 2007).

Main studies relevant to blurbs

In Applied Linguistics, various studies on the use of this promotional genre have been conducted to reveal the generic structures of blurbs. Bhatia (2004) examined two blurbs, one for a fiction book and another for an academic book. He suggested a six-move schema: headlines, justifying the book, appraising the book, establishing credentials, endorsements and targeting the market. Bhatia pointed out that the two types of blurbs were very similar in terms of communicative purpose and lexico-grammatical realizations but there were differences in the nature of nominals, particularly adjectives. After examining more than 60 online book blurbs from four publishing companies (Penguin, Ballantine, Routledge, Barnes & Noble), Gea-Valor (2005) proposed a three-move schema, consisting of description, evaluation and information about the author. Drawing on the work of Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993), Gea-Valor (2007) conducted another study that analyzed 36 blurbs and compared traditional blurbs, which appear on the book cover, with online "digital" blurbs from Penguin Books to reveal the communicative purposes of blurbs and how they are realized linguistically ("imperatives", "curiosity arousers"). Her findings were similar to her 2005 study, and she proposed three primary moves: description (that is, summary of the book content), evaluation (that is, reviews) and author's biography (that is, publications, awards, etc.). She noted that blurbs performed both an informative and a persuasive function while also providing positive evaluation by complimenting the book's qualities.

Gea-Valor and Inigo Ros (2009) investigated the evaluation of blurb genre to find out the changes over the years concerning rhetorical structure and salient linguistic features of the blurbs. The study consisted of more than 100 blurbs of books in the Penguin Classics series, namely Penguin Popular Classics, Penguin Modern Classics, Penguin Twentieth-Century Classics and

Penguin Red Classics since the late 1940s. Five communicative steps and moves were identified, namely catchphrase, description, appraisal which includes the submove endorsement, author's credentials and technical information. The findings showed that the use of catchphrases increased by means of superlatives and boosters in the 1970s in all collections but the oldest Classics. Evaluative language was available in all series across time. Moreover, earlier blurbs tended to have conventional clause and linguistic patterns, while recent blurbs elliptical structures and the use of cliff-hangers or curiosity arousers.

In a study of best-selling English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' books, Basturkmen (2009) built a small corpus comprised of the teacher's books of the seven EFL books. She conducted a two-step analysis following Swales (1990) and Bhatia (2004): a content analysis of blurbs based on an examination of their schematic structure, and a content analysis of the sub-corpus with the identification of high frequency words and their collocations. Her analysis revealed a four-move schema consisting of the following moves: identifying the market niche, identifying language teaching theory, presenting credentials and informing readers of other items in the course book package.

To the best of my knowledge, however, there is little research into cross cultural differences in book blurbs. An exception is Kathpalia's (1997) study, which examined cross-cultural variation of book blurbs in international publishers and local Singapore-based publishers, focusing more specifically on comparisons of rhetorical organization, textual patterns and lexico-grammatical realizations. The textual analysis revealed that although both international and local fiction and non-fiction book blurbs followed similar moves (she proposed a six-move schema: headlines, justifying the book, appraising the book, establishing credentials, endorsement(s) and targeting the market). Local blurbs were "conservative in the use of strategies such as sequencing and embedding of moves and in deviant realizations of the genre" (Kathpalia, 1997: 419). The expository and narrative patterns of local blurbs were very similar to the international blurbs, but they differed in their use of evaluative language and lexico-grammatical features. In light of her findings, Kathpalia (1997) suggested that local books tended to focus on the value of the book rather than on evaluative language, while evaluative language permeated the entire blurb for international books.

Not only the structure of book blurbs has been the object of research but also its specific features have been explored (for example, PEs, evaluative language) in blurbs. Drawing on Martin and White's (2005) appraisal framework, Cacchiani (2007) investigated the lexical and discourse features of evaluative language in 200 book blurbs of lazy reads, finding that positive evaluative language is vital to blurbs ("brilliant", "extraordinary"), and hyperbole ("wonderful", "screamingly funny") is a technique used for promotion. Gesuato (2007) described how evaluation was presented in the back-cover blurbs of 80 academic books from four disciplines (Biology, Engineering, Education and Linguistics), reporting that evaluation occurred in 77 (96.25%) of the blurbs.

The above-mentioned studies indicate that back-cover blurbs both inform and serve promotional roles, which are good, positive and favorable and do not include negative evaluations. They also function as advertisements to persuade potential readers to purchase the books. However, despite the high level of interest in the book blurb genre in professional settings, few empirical studies have investigated cross-cultural variations in book blurbs (except for Kathpalia, 1997), leaving this area of research unexplored to date. In light of the insightful research into the promotional genre of book blurbs, the present study attempts to investigate the generic structure and PEs of online best-selling fiction blurbs in two different cultural contexts.

Corpus and methodology

Following Bhatia (1993, 2004), three criteria were considered to select the most appropriate type and size of comparable corpora: the texts included in each corpus belonged to a specific genre, namely online book blurbs; based on their communicative purposes, they were distinguishable from other genres and to ensure corpora of sufficient size, a large sample (95 blurbs) was analyzed to reveal "a few specified features through easily identified indicators" (Bhatia, 2004: 165). The 95 blurbs described fiction best-sellers (1999-2011). In specific, 40 English blurbs were gathered from Amazon UK (URL: http://www.amazon.co.uk/), and 55 Turkish blurbs were gathered from Okuoku TR (URL: http://www.okuoku.com/tr/index.php), comprising 26,537 words in total (see Table 1). The difference in the number of blurbs results from the fact that when the data was collected in 2011, there were 40 best-selling online book blurbs in Amazon UK and 55 in

Okuoku TR. The blurbs were copied from the companies' websites, and all fiction books among the 95 best-selling titles were included when the corpora were compiled in March, 2011.[1] The number of words for the Amazon UK corpus (16,392) outnumbered that of Okuoku TR (10,145). The difference in the length is due to the reviews.

	No. of blurbs	Total no. of words	Shortest blurb	Longest blurb	Average word count
Amazon	40	16,392	110	1,485	408.8
Okuoku	55	10,145	71	735	183.5

Table 1. Description of the corpus of online fiction book blurbs.

Move analysis was conducted as a top-down approach with a focus on communicative purposes to identify the blurbs' generic structure. By adopting Swales' (1990) approach, blurbs (N=95) were examined twice to form move-step sequences. The first stage allowed for familiarity with the content of the blurbs and with their specialized vocabulary, while blurbs' move-step schemes were identified during the second stage.

The existing literature labels frequently present moves as obligatory (see Peacock, 2002; Swales, 1990; Yang & Allison, 2003), conventional (see Kanoksilapatham, 2005), normally required (see Nwogu, 1997), while less frequent moves are labeled optional (see Swales, 1990); however, there is no consensus as to the precise frequencies needed to differentiate between obligatory and optional moves (J. Swales, personal communication, April, 11, 2011). In the present study, moves that occur in 80% or more of the corpus are considered obligatory, while those occurring less frequently are categorized as optional. To assess inter-rater agreement and coding reliability, a second coder was trained. The second coder, who studied Mathematics and has a particular interest in discourse analysis, independently analyzed 30 blurbs (31.6%) for the purposes of inter-coder reliability (see Crookes, 1986; Kanoksilapatham, 2005), with an 86.7% agreement rate. Differences were found primarily in two steps of the corpora: brief information about the book and summary of the book. Differences were discussed and resolved (see Appendix for the compromise).

The term promotional element (PE), borrowed from Maat (2007), refers to the words that add positive evaluation to the blurbs, including adjectives, nouns, verbs and adverbs. It is notable that due to the nature of the blurbs,

I need to modify Maat's suggestions on PEs considerably. He investigated how promotional language in corporate press releases is dealt with when the release is reused in different journalistic genres. The findings showed that promotional language is shown to be a regular feature of corporate press releases, especially those presenting new products or services suggest connective words, including moreover, furthermore and besides. However, in my corpus these connectives had no hits. Some subcategories were omitted, including time adjuncts, mitigators of numerals, modal intensifiers, connectives. Premodifiers, adjectives and adverbs (as subcategories intensifying adverbs, place) was appropriate for the analysis. A two-tailed Z test was conducted to find if there is a significant difference in the use of nouns, adjectives verbs and adverbs in Amazon UK compared to Okuoku TR online fiction book blurbs. Example PEs from the corpora are presented in Table 2.

Corpora Word categories	Amazon UK Examples	Okuoku TR Examples
Nouns	best-seller, achievement, masterpiece	*iltifat* (compliment),*basyapit* (masterpiece), *kabiliyet* (competence)
Verbs	orchestrate, award, achieve	*basarmak* (succeed), *buyulemek* (captivate), *bir solukta okumak* (devour)
Adjectives	best-selling, gripping, great	*unlu* (prominent), *degerli* (valuable), *seckin* (distinguished)
Adverbs	highly, startlingly, stunningly	*net bir bicimde* (explicitly), *tamamiyle* (completely), *ustalikla* (dexterously)

Table 2. Word categories of PEs on Amazon UK and Okuoku TR online book blurbs.

Results and discussion

Cross-cultural analysis of the generic structure of online fiction book blurbs

Genre analysis of the Amazon UK blurbs revealed a six-move schematic structure: Move 1 – complimenting the author, Move 2 – book description, Move 3 – justifying the book by establishing a niche, Move 4 – book promotion, Move 5 – author's background and Move 6 – author's website/blog. The moves and criteria are shown in Table 3, with a sample analysis in Figure 1.

Moves and criteria	Examples
Move 1 Complimenting the author focuses on the author's qualifications (e.g., narrative skills, success stories, etc.) by praising the author in general or the author on the particular book.	**Move 1** Kate Atkinson dovetails and counterpoints her plots with Dickensian brilliance in a tale peopled with unlikely heroes and villains. (No: 11)
Move 2 Book description describes the content of the book (e.g., plot and characters) by means of one or more of the following four steps:	**Move 2**
Step 1 Brief information about the book briefly describes the plot and book content (usually two to three sentences).	**Step 1** A day like any other for security chief Tracy Waterhouse, until she makes a shocking impulse purchase. That one moment of madness is all it takes for Tracy's humdrum world to be turned upside down, the tedium of everyday life replaced by fear and danger at every turn. (No: 11)
Step 2 Summary of the book provides detailed information about the content (usually one paragraph or more).	**Step 3** Jack is five. He lives with his Ma… Jack and Ma are prisoners. (No: 4)
Step 3 Description of the character(s) provides information about the main characters (e.g., age, job, family details).	**Step 4** "I can imagine you at forty," she said, a hint of malice in her voice. "I can picture it right now". (No: 2)
Step 4 Quotation from the book reproduces author's own sentence/s from the book.	
Move 3 Justifying the book by establishing a niche refers to the niche regarding the plot that is rarely addressed in other fictional texts.	**Move 3** It's rare to find a novel which ranges over the recent past with such authority. (No: 2)
Move 4 Book promotion praises the book and blurbs; it can also feature one or more of the following steps:	**Move 4**
Step 1 Complimenting the book uses positive and favorable words to describe the book.	**Step 1** WHEN GOD WAS A RABBIT is an incredibly exciting debut (No: 32)
Step 2 Review(s) refers to (inevitably favorable) reviews of the book/author by magazines, newspapers, etc. Reviews may include the name of the reviewer or publication only or details about both the reviewer and the relevant publication.	**Step 2** An ingenious, bizarre and exceptional serial-killer investigation ... as riveting as The Silence of the Lambs. (No: 40) The Sunday Times
Step 3 Recommendation to read refers to statements that directly target readers.	**Step 3** A page-turner you won't want to put down Time Out (No: 25) Mark Sanderson, Evening Standard
Move 5 Author's background provides both informative and promotional information about the author. Blurbs can feature one or both of the following steps:	**Move 5**
Step 1 Establishing credentials (education, publication(s), TV programs, success stories, work experience, awards)	**Step 1** Lisa Jane Smith is the author of more than twenty books for young adults, including the best-selling Night World (No: 5)
Step 2 Personal life (place/year of birth, family details, place of residence, place of death/information on the author's death)	**Step 2** Born in 1969, Emma Donoghue is an Irish writer who lives in Canada. Her fiction includes the best-selling Slammerkin (No: 4)
Move 6 Author's website/blog directs readers to an online source for further information about the author/book.	**Move 6** Check out www.jonesbo.co.uk (No: 40)

Table 3. Generic structure of online fiction blurbs in Amazon UK.

Two details in this proposed scheme are worth highlighting. First, it is important to distinguish between the two steps in Move 4 (Step 2 – review(s) and Step 3 – recommendation to read), which at first sight appear to overlap, as those reviews classified as Step 3 target the reader directly and explicitly, often by means of the personal pronoun "you", the verb "recommend" and the adjective "must-read". To illustrate the difference between two steps, here are two reviews from the novel *The Help* and *The Redbreast* with their classification as either Step 2 or Step 3:

Step 2 – Review(s): Outstanding, immensely funny, very compelling, brilliant (*Daily Telegraph*)

Step 3 – Recommendation to read: A page-turner you won't want to put down Time Out (*Mark Sanderson, Evening Standard*)

Book Title: The Snowman (no: 40)
Author: Jo Nesbo

An ingenious, bizarre and exceptional serial-killer investigation as riveting as The Silence of the Lambs'. The Sunday Times

'Clearly, someone very disturbed but brilliantly clever is at work here, pitting himself against the very best cop in Norway.' Daily Mail
…

→ Move 4- Book Promotion - Step 2- Review(s)

'The fact that he is able to combine the urgency of the best storytellers with a keen and intelligent engagement with social issues may well be the reason why Nesbø is shaping up to be the next big name in Scandinavian crime fiction' --Harrogate International Festivals, December 6, 2010

→ Move 4- Step 2+ Move 1- Complimenting the author

Beware the falling snow... The first snowfall in Oslo brings a series of gruesome murders, and Harry Hole is pitted against a brutal killer who will drive him to the edge. The night the first snow falls a young boy wakes to find his mother gone. He walks through the silent house, but finds only wet footprints on the stairs. In the garden looms a solitary figure: a snowman bathed in cold moonlight, its black eyes glaring up at the bedroom windows. Round its neck is his mother's pink scarf. Inspector Harry Hole is convinced there is a link between the disappearance and a menacing letter he received some months earlier. As Harry and his team delve into unsolved case files, they discover that an alarming number of wives and mothers have gone missing over the years. When a second woman disappears Harry's suspicions are confirmed: he is a pawn in a deadly game. For the first time in his career Harry finds himself confronted with a serial killer operating on his turf, a killer who will drive him to the brink of insanity.

→ Move 2- Book description- Step 2- Summary of the book

Work experience Jo Nesbø is a musician, songwriter, economist and author.
Publication(s), His first crime novel featuring Harry Hole was published in Norway in 1997 and was an instant hit, Award(s), winning the Glass Key Award for best Nordic crime novel (an accolade shared with Peter Høeg, Henning Mankell and Stieg Larsson).

→ Move 5-Author's Background Step 1- Establishing credentials- Work experience

Check out www.jonesbo.co.uk
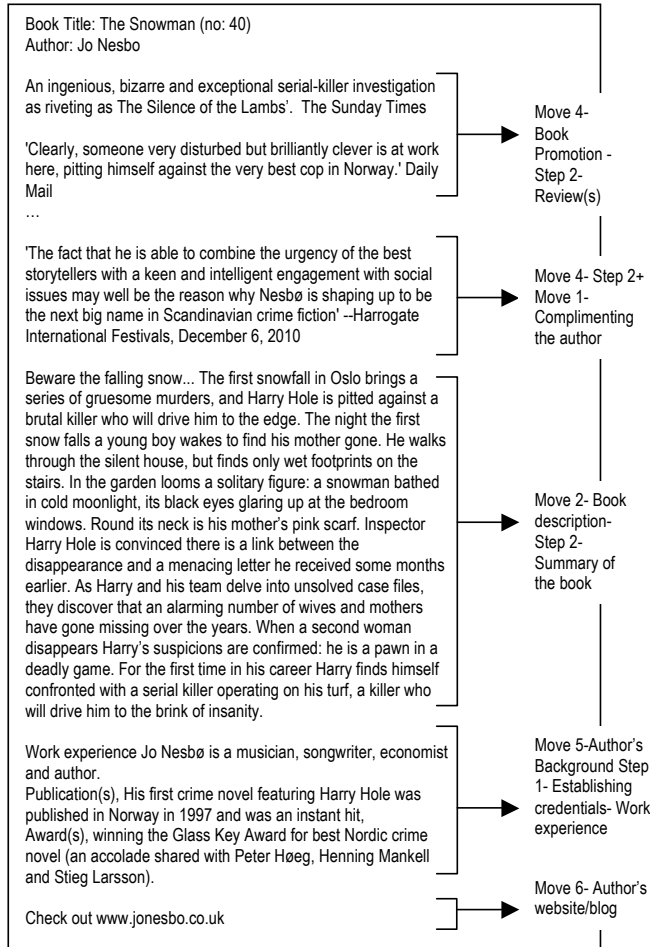
→ Move 6- Author's website/blog

Figure 1. An example of rhetorical moves in Amazon UK online book blurbs.

Second, some blurbs include embedded moves (that is, when two or more moves are both embedded in the same sentence). The two moves "Move 1 – complimenting the author" and "Move 4 – book promotion" were found to be capable of either standing alone or being embedded in other moves. In

this case, each move was counted as a separate move. An example is the following:

> WHEN GOD WAS A RABBIT is an *incredibly exciting debut* (Move 4 – book promotion; Step 1 – Complimenting the book) from an *extraordinary new voice* in fiction (Move 1 – complimenting the author)

It is important to note that the rhetorical structure proposed in this study is flexible and that the number of rhetorical moves and steps may change, which can be seen from the percentages of each move and the example analyses provided.

As indicated in Table 4, genre analysis of the Okuoku TR blurbs revealed a five-move generic structure (English translations for Turkish blurbs are provided in parentheses). Both corpora share four common moves: complimenting the author, book description, book promotion and author's background.
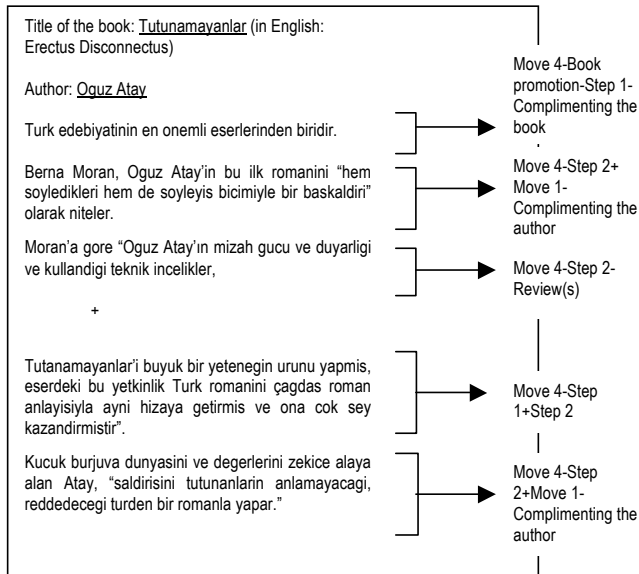

Figure 2. An example of rhetorical moves in Okuoku TR online fiction book blurbs.

Moves	Examples
Move 1 Complimenting the author	**Move 1** *Elif'in başkahramanı dünyaca meşhur yazar Paulo Coelho …*(No: 51) (The protagonist of Elif is the prominent author Paulo Coelho.)
Move 2 Book description **Step 1 Brief information about the book** **Step 2 Summary of the book** **Step 3 Description of the character(s)** **Step 4 Quotation from the book**	**Move 2 Step 3** *Bir Tao ustası, Rus yayıncısı ve en ilginci, yetenekli bir keman virtüözü olan, sıra dışı genç bir Türk kadını: Hilal...* (No: 51) (A Tao expert, Russian publisher, and also, surprisingly, a talented violinist and an extraordinary Turkish woman: Hilal) **Step 4** *Seni kırkında hayal edebiliyorum, dedi sesinde bir imayla. Şu an bile gözümde canlandırabiliyorum. Genç adam, gözlerini açmadan gülümsedi.* (No: 89) (She said in an allusive way that I can imagine you in your forties. I can even visualize you in my eyes. The young man laughed without opening his eyes.)
Move 3 Involving the reader in the text focuses on questions to attract the readers' attention and serve as "curiosity arousers" (see Gea-Valor, 2005). This move occurs by raising questions about the book, by asking a relevant question connected to the content or characters of the book or by using a quotation in the form of a question to arouse readers' curiosity. **Step 1 Raising questions to pique readers' curiosity**	**Move 3 Step 1** *Masum bir guzelin aski cirkin bir aristokrati terbiye edebilir mi?* (No: 74) (Could an innocent beauty's love train an ugly aristocrat?) *Yıllar önce kendisini yalnızlığa terk eden bu adama güvenebilir miydi*? (No: 50) (Could she rely on a man who deserted her to the loneliness many years ago?) *"...hipnotize olmuş, uyuşmuş gibiydim… Ah, Mac, bunu yapmadın değil mi?"* (I was as if I had been hypnotized… Oh, Mac, you have not done this, have you?) (No: 64)
Move 4 Book promotion **Step 1 Complimenting the book** **Step 2 Review(s)** **Step 3 Recommendation to read**	**Move 4 Step 1** *Türk edebiyatının en önemli eserlerinden biridir.* (No: 41) (One of the most significant masterpieces of Turkish Literature) **Step 2** *Millennium serisi dünya çapında benzersiz bir yayıncılık mucizesi.* Kate Mosse (No: 61) (Millennium serial is a unique miracle publication around the world.) **Step 3** *Sağlam ve sert duruşlu kadın karakterlerden hoşlanıyorsanız, Anita Blake maceraları tam size göre.* (Anita Blake's adventures are completely for you if you enjoy the female characters with strong and firm personalities.)
Move 5 Author's background **Step 1 Establishing credentials**-Education **Step 1 Establishing credentials**-Awards **Step 2 Personal life** -Place of residence **Step 2 Personal life**-Place/year of birth	**Move 5 Step 1** *Lisans eğitimi için Amerika'ya giderek, Lehigh Üniversitesinde işletme ve psikoloji eğitimi gördü.* (No: 54) (He went to the USA for his undergraduate studies in management and psychology.) **Step 1** *2010 Midwest, SIBA 2010 ve CBC En İyi Gençlik Kitabı Ödülünü kazandı.*(No: 77) (He won the 2010 Midwest, the SIBA 2010 and the CBC Best Youth Book Award.) **Step 2** *Halen İstanbul'da yaşayan Serdar Özkan, 2002 yılından beri tüm zamanını roman yazarlığına ayırıyor.* (No: 54) (Serdar Özkan, who is still living in Istanbul, devotes all of his time to novel writing.) **Step 3** *Ağustos 1975te doğan Serdar Ozkan…* (No: 54) (Serdar Özkan who was born in August, 1975...)

Table 4. Generic structure of online fiction book blurbs in Okuoku TR.

Moves	Steps		Occ.	%	Total occ. in moves	% of each move
Move1 Complimenting the author			12	30	12	30
Move 2 Book description	Step 1 Brief information on the book		3	7.5	46	90
	Step 2 Summary of the book		27	67.5		
	Step 3 Description of the character(s)		14	35		
	Step 4 Quotation from the book		2	5		
Move 3 Involving the reader in the text			7	17.5	7	17.5
Move 4 Book promotion	Step 1 Complimenting the book		32	80	67	85
	Step 2 Review(s)		27	67.5		
	Step 3 Recommendation to read		8	20		
Move 5 Author's background	Step 1 Establishing credentials	Education	7	17.5	125	97.5
		Publication(s)	32	80		
		TV programs	3	7.5		
	Step 2 Personal life	Success stories	9	22.5		
		Work experience	17	42.5		
		Awards	13	32.5		
		Place/year of birth	9	22.5		
		Family details	10	25		
		Place of residence	21	52.5		
		Death	4	10		
Move 6 Author's website/blog			2	5	2	5

Table 5. Move frequencies in the Amazon UK online fiction book blurbs.

Two moves present in Amazon UK data – justifying the book by establishing a niche and author's website/blog – are not present in the Turkish data; however, a different move involving the reader in the text by raising questions is found in Okuoku TR online fiction blurbs. After examining the move sequences in the sample analyses in Figures 1 and 2, we may interpret this finding by stating that moves and steps do not necessarily occur simultaneously and that moves could be discontinuous and embedded with one another (Bhatia, 2004). The

percentages reveal three obligatory moves in Amazon UK blurbs: Move 2 – Book description (90%), Move 4 – Book promotion (85%) and Move 5 – Author's background (97.5%) and two obligatory moves in Turkish blurbs – that is, Move 2 – book description (81.82%) and Move 4 – book promotion (85.45%) – as shown in Tables 5 and 6. The two common moves in the corpora, book description and author's background have primarily informative functions.

Moves	Steps		Occ.	%	Total occ. in moves	% of each move
Move1 Complimenting the author			14	25.45	14	25.45
Move 2 Book description	Step 1 Brief information		6	10.9	55	81.82
	Step 2 Summary		30	54.55		
	Step 3 Character(s)		9	16.36		
	Step 4 Quotation		10	18.18		
Move 3 Involving the reader in the text	Step 1 Raising questions to pique readers' curiosity		20	36.36	20	36.36
Move 4 Book promotion	Step 1 Complimenting the book		37	67.27	89	85.45
	Step 2 Review(s)		34	61.82		
	Step 3 Recommendation to read		18	32.72		
Move 5 Author's background	Step 1 Establishing credentials	Education	1	1.82	5	5.45
		Awards	2	3.64		
	Step 2 Personal life	Place of residence	1	1.82		
		Place/year of birth	1	1.82		

Table 6. Move frequencies in Okuoku TR online fiction book blurbs.

The blurbs tend to integrate both promotional and informative moves and steps in professional discourse across the corpora. This may be due to the promotional discursive practices of marketing policies that booksellers follow "creating more hybrid genres, especially as a result of an overwhelmingly compulsive nature of promotional and advertising activities" (Bhatia, 1997b: 635).

When we examine the corpora for common moves, there are similar frequencies for complimenting the author, book description and book

promotion (but authors' background). However, there are some surprising findings on the variation in the generic structure which seems to be a cultural tendency used as a marketing strategy. In particular:

- Complimenting the author and author's background: complimenting the author has similar frequencies across corpora (30% in Amazon UK blurbs and 25.45% in the Okuoku blurbs). However, author's background is the most frequent move in Amazon UK data (97.5%) but is the least frequent (5.45%) in the Okuoku TR corpus. This may be due to the marketing strategies chosen by each company to persuade potential readers to buy and read the book. Amazon seems to promote both the book and its author for possible further reading, whereas Okuoku TR tends to praise the book (85.45%) and to partially promote the author (25.45%), but it does not provide much specific information on the author's background in the blurbs (5.45%).

- Justifying the book by establishing a niche (17.5%) and author's website/blog (5%) are optional moves in Amazon UK corpus but do not occur in the Okuoku TR blurbs. This may be an indication that Amazon UK may attempt to situate a new book by establishing a niche to justify the need for the book as a rhetorical work and also tend to promote not only books but also the author through providing author's website/blog to encourage and nurture the reading habits.

- Involving the reader in the text is an optional move (36.36%) in the Okuoku TR corpus. As indicated in Table 7, one of the key differences is involving the reader in this move, which does not occur in Amazon UK blurbs. Turkish blurbs appear to involve potential readers with the content of the books more than their English counterparts do, primarily posing questions to learn the reader's opinion, stimulating the reader to make a guess about the text or providing a quotation as a question. A possible explanation for this might be the reflection of Turkish cultural values and close links among people in Turkish culture that are embedded in social interaction. Since Turkish community tends to be more close-knit, the company may prefer to address the reader in a more straightforward way.

Move 3	Sample examples with English translations
Raising a question for the reader's opinion	*Bir sabah, yıllardır görmediğiniz bir arkadaşınızı düşünerek uyandınız. Bir saat sonra, onunla sokakta karşılaştınız. Sizce bu sadece bir tesadüf mü, yoksa çok daha farklı bir anlamı olabilir mi?* (No: 88) (One morning you get up thinking about one of your friends that you have not seen in years. One hour later, you meet him/her on the road. Is it just a coincidence or might it have a very different meaning?)
Raising a question to stimulate the reader to make a guess about the text	*Ancak kendisine besbelli uygun olmayan bu kadını, nasıl eş olarak alacaktır?* (No: 43) (How will he get married to the woman who is clearly unsuitable for him?)
Question as a quotation	*Yeniçeriler kapıyı zorlarken, Uzun İhsan Efendi hala malum konuyu düşünüyor, fakat işin içinden bir türlü çıkamıyordu... Rendekar doğru mu söylüyor? Düşünüyorum, öyleyse varım.* (No: 93) (While janissaries are forcing the doors, Uzun Ihsan Efendi is still thinking of the issue but cannot find a solution… Is Rendekar telling the truth? I think therefore I am.)

Table 7. Some examples of move involving the reader in the text in Okuoku TR.

Additionally, this broad scheme of analysis is in line with previous research findings on blurbs (Bhatia, 1993 & 2004; Kathpalia, 1997; Basturkmen, 1999 & 2009; Gea-Valor, 2005 & 2007), although the total number of moves is different due to the nature of the texts examined. Similarly, not every move was present in both corpora, and each move varied in frequency across the English and Turkish texts. For example, Move 5 – author's background has 125 occurrences in Amazon UK data but has only 5 occurrences in Okuoku TR. Although Gea-Valor (2007, 2005) does not break down the identified moves into steps, the findings for the Amazon UK blurbs are consistent with her study. Moreover, the findings indicate that blurbs perform both an informative and a persuasive function in the online blurbs may be said to function as an advertisement for the book itself (see Kathpalia, 1997; Basturkmen, 1999 & 2009; Bhatia, 2003, 2004 & 2005; Gea-Valor, 2005 & 2007; for the same findings in back-cover blurbs).

Cross-cultural analysis of promotional linguistic elements of online fiction book blurbs

The PEs in the corpora entailed nouns, adjectives, adverbs and verbs that were identified in context. Some words ("addictive", "rare", "warning") that do not always serve as markers of positive evaluation in other genres and contexts here convey positive evaluation. Below are some examples across corpora:

One Day should come with a health warning attached: This Book is Seriously *Addictive*" (No: 2) *Belfast Telegraph*

Harika... Tempolu bir macera... Eğlenceli, sürükleyici and <u>bağımlılık yaratıcı</u>... (No: 53) *Tampa Tribune* (Wonderful … A lively adventure … Amusing, moving and *addictive*)

The results indicate that the most common form of advertising in online blurbs is achieved through positive and favorable descriptions of the product, primarily through the use of adjectives. Bhatia (2005) defines this effect as product differentiation which refers to good, positive and favorable descriptions. Unsurprisingly, this promotional genre does not feature any negative evaluation of the corpora's books being advertised.

As shown in Table 8, the frequency of nouns is similar in both corpora (14.9% in Amazon UK and 18.23% in Okuoku TR), as is the frequency of evaluative adjectives (65.5% in Amazon UK and 68.75% in Okuoku TR). However, the frequencies of adverbs and verbs are different, with adjectives having a 65.5% occurrence rate and adverbs a 14.6% rate in Amazon UK, while adjectives occur at the rate of 68.75% and adverbs at a rate of 5.73% in Okuoku TR. In addition, verbs have the lowest frequency as PEs in Amazon UK, whereas adverbs are the least frequent PE in Okuoku TR. When the overall frequencies are compared (see Table 8), the blurbs in Amazon UK have more PEs than the blurbs in Okuoku TR. Examples of PEs across corpora with frequencies of three and more are presented in Tables 9 and 10. It is tentatively suggested that Amazon UK uses more persuasive discourse with the promotional genre.

		Noun	Adjective	Adverb	Verb	Total
Amazon	Occurrences	137	602	134	46	919
	% in PEs	14.9	65.5	14.6	5	100
	% in Corpus	0.84	3.67	0.82	0.28	5.61
Okuoku	Occurrences	70	264	22	28	384
	% in PEs	18.23	68.75	5.73	7.3	100
	% in Corpus	0.69	2.6	0.22	0.28	3.79

Table 8. Frequency of PEs across corpora.

Noun	F	Adjective	F	Adjective	F	Adverb	F	Verb	F
gizem mystery	5	*benzersiz* unique	6	*gizemli* mysterious	7	*kesinlikle* absolutely	7	*bayılmak* adore	10
odul award	4	*buyuleyici* captivating	12	*harika* wonderful	8	*Zekice* intelligently	6	*suruklemek* sustain	7
Tutku passion	11	*canlı* vivid	5	*heyecanlı* exciting	4				
yetenek competence	8	*cagdas* contemporary	5	*muhteşem* excellent	16				
		cok satan best-selling	4	*olagandısı* extraordinary	17				
		dogaustu supernatural	4	*surukleyici* moving	6				
		en iyi the best	12	*Tutkulu* passionate	7				
		etkileyici impressive	4	*Zeki* intelligent	5				
		fantastik fantastic	5						

Table 9. Some examples of PEs from Okuoku TR online fiction book blurbs.

Noun	F	Adjective	F	Adjective	F	Adverb	F	Verb	F
achievement	4	acclaimed	8	leading	4	beautifully	5	acclaim	5
bestseller	5	ambitious	4	major	4	brilliantly	6	love	13
expert	6	astonishing	4	massive	4	deeply	5	win	10
genius	5	best-selling	15	moving	9	emotionally	6		
hit	5	big	10	must-read	5	highly	9		
masterpiece	4	brilliant	16	new	19	incredibly	4		
master	7	captivating	4	original	6	truly	10		
power	8	chilling	4	poignant	4	utterly	12		
prize	23	clever	4	popular	4				
skill	5	compelling	15	powerful	8				
star	14	contemporary	5	rare	6				
success	4	engaging	7	readable	5				
winner	5	exciting	6	remarkable	8				
		extraordinary	14	riveting	4				
		fascinating	6	shocking	5				
		finest	5	successful	4				
		funny	10	superb	5				
		good	7	surprising	4				
		great	20	the best	6				
		gripping	18	unique	5				
		intelligent	4	unputdownable	5				
		intoxicating	4	vivid	6				
		important	6	wonderful	4				

Table 10. Some examples of PEs from Amazon UK online fiction book blurbs.

Due to differences in the number of blurbs in each corpus, a two-tailed Z test was conducted. The test revealed no significant difference in the use of nouns, adjectives and verbs in each corpus; however, there was a significant difference in the use of adverbs in Amazon UK compared to Okuoku TR online fiction book blurbs. This can be seen as a cross-linguistic difference since adverbs are fewer than nouns and adjectives in Turkish texts. Additionally, the promotional adjectives in both corpora outnumbered their equivalents, which belonged to other word categories.

All in all, despite some differences in the generic structures and promotional elements of the online fiction book blurbs from Amazon UK and Okuoku TR, blurbs tended to fulfill the same communicative function in two contexts of publication, namely to promote the book.

Conclusion and suggestions for future research

The present research has identified the generic structure of online fiction book blurbs and PEs from Amazon UK and Okuoku TR. In this paper, blurbs are advertisements in the form of a promotional genre, while PEs are words that add positive evaluation to the blurbs. The findings show that book blurbs in Amazon UK have a six-move schematic structure that includes three obligatory moves, while Okuoku TR blurbs feature a five-move schematic structure with two obligatory moves. The above discussion indicates that cross-cultural variation in the generic structure is not highly marked, although there are some differences when generic structures and quantity of PEs are compared across corpora. For instance, the move "Involving the reader in the text", which only appears in the Turkish blurbs and which seems to involve potential readers with the content of the books more than their Amazon UK blurbs do. It is also interesting to note that Amazon UK seems to promote both the book and its author, while Okuoku TR tends to praise the book and to partially promote the author. Moreover, Turkish blurbs do not provide much specific information on the author's background in the blurbs in contrast with the blurbs in Amazon UK. Book authors are usually praised in the newspapers or television programmes in Turkey rather than in books. Therefore, it is tentatively suggested that the difference may be due to the strategy of the company to provide clear and concise information about the book for potential readers. A further explanation can be related to poor reading habits in Turkey and the company may try to nurture the reading habit.

The online blurbs in the corpora show that it is a mixed genre, incorporating both informative and promotional elements, which occur in both corpora. However, as descriptive and evaluative texts blurbs employ promotional and interactive strategies to persuade readers to read and ultimately to buy and read the books in question. The findings suggest that the promotional genre and PEs are more likely to be successful when the target group engages with the meaning of the advertisements and then responds to that meaning (Hackley, 2005). Therefore, companies should be attentive to the means of

discourse and culture of the society when marketing their products, which may encourage potential readers to buy and read a book.

It is also important to note that this study is confined to English and Turkish blurbs. It may, however, be possible to use the proposed generic structure in different languages and cultures, considering the similarity in the findings due to the common promotional genres and informative function of blurbs. Because genres are "constructions of professional community discourse whose meaning is created by and for the consumption of the promotional community" (Bhatia, 2004: 179), future research might concentrate on customers' perceptions and awareness of and responses to blurb genres to reveal the extent to which the companies' hoped-for responses are successful with potential readers.[3]

Acknowledgements

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NOTES

[1] The full list of online fiction book blurbs in the corpora (1999-2011) has not been included in this paper due to editorial space constraints.

[2] The English translation is as follows: This is one of the most significant novels of Turkish literature. Berna Moran describes the first novel of Oguz Atay as "rebellious in both what and how he writes". According to Moran, the high level of humor and sensitivity and his use of technical details cause Tutunamayanlar (Erectus Disconnectus) to be a product of great competence. This competence has brought this Turkish novel into the league of other contemporary Turkish novels. Atay intellectually mocks the world and values of the small middle-class with a novel that the non-disconnected cannot understand and who will reject his attack.

[3] See Gea Valor's (2008) small-scale study regarding the impact of customers' reviews on readers.

Appendix: Example blurb analysis that shows compromise for the two steps

Book Title: The Girl Who Kicked the Hornets' Nest (Millennium Trilogy Book 3) (No: 10)

Move 2-Book description- Step 2-Summary of the book

Salander is plotting her revenge - against the man who tried to kill her, and against the government institutions that very nearly destroyed her life. But it is not going to be a straightforward campaign. After taking a bullet to the head, Salander is under close supervision in Intensive Care, and is set to face trial for three murders and one attempted murder on her eventual release. With the help of journalist Mikael Blomkvist and his researchers at Millennium magazine, Salander must not only prove her innocence, but identify and denounce the corrupt politicians that have allowed the vulnerable to become victims of abuse and violence. Once a victim herself, Salander is now ready to fight back.

Book Title: *Cadı* (No: 82)

Move 2- Book description- Step 1-Brief information about the book
Dünyalar Savaşı yeniden başlıyor...
Karanlık Gölgeler yükseliyor...
Öteki dünyanın gizemli karakterleri bu sefer aramıza karışıyor...
(The World wars starts again… The Dark Shadows increase… The mysterious characters of the hereafter are among us.)

Book Title: *Kirpiklerimin Gölgesi* (No: 92)

Move 2- Book description- Step 1-Brief information about the book
Sebnem İşigüzel, Kirpiklerimin Gölgesinde, henüz on bir yaşında bir kız çocuğunun yaşadığı akıl almaz olayları anlatıyor. Herkesin bildiği, ama kimsenin görmek istemediği bir trajedinin üzerindeki perdeyi kaldırıyor.
(Sebnem Isiguzel describes the unbelievable events that an eleven-year female child has experienced. She uncovers the tragedy that everyone knows but no one wants to see.)