

## Unveiling Rhetorical Patterns in Book Reviews: A Comprehensive Investigation and Proposal of a Novel Review Model

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Key Words	Abstract
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rhetorical moves,</li><li>• Book review,</li><li>• Genre analysis</li><li>• Synchronized Model</li></ul>	<p><i>This study aims to demonstrate different rhetorical moves used by book review authors. Although the book review genre has been the subject of numerous researchers and authors such as Basturkmen (2014), Montazeran (2014), and Bhatia (2006). It has yet to receive the attention of scholars in Pakistan. To fill this gap, the researcher randomly selected twenty book reviews from various websites that had not been previously analyzed. The results were analyzed using the Motta Roth (1995) model, which revealed that M2 (outlining the book) was the most commonly used rhetorical move in the book reviews, while M4 (commentary on the content and recommendations) was used less frequently. With these findings, the researcher presented a new, more flexible, comprehensive, and reliable model for writing book reviews which will help authors to write a comprehensive review of a book by covering multiple aspects. This model allows reviewers to not only observe the book from a variety of perspectives but also express their honest and unbiased views. By adopting this model, book reviewers can enhance the quality of their reviews and provide their readers with a more comprehensive understanding of the book in question.</i></p>

## **1. Introduction**

A book review is a literary assessment that involves appreciation, analysis, interpretation, or commentary on works of literature. It is a descriptive and critically evaluative account that assesses the production of knowledge. Book reviews serve multiple purposes, such as being a platform for reviewers to share their views on subject matter while identifying books that may be interesting in specific fields. They also offer important information about how latest publications contribute towards field development/expertise within given areas.

The process of book-reviewing involves experts in a particular field assessing the importance and legitimacy of a scholar's specific contribution. The objective is to describe the purpose, structure, and style of a book while highlighting significant sections. Additionally, it aims to analyze how it fits within its broader academic context. Therefore, this genre relies on description along with evaluation characterized by informative discourse.

Genres are a purposeful, structured means of communication involving specific discourse communities. Researchers study genres in two main ways: by analyzing the lexicogrammatical features of different texts or identifying their rhetorical structures through "structural move analysis," also known as schematic units or moves.

A book review is a type of critical evaluation aimed at assessing the knowledge presented in a piece of literature. Its significance cannot be overstated due to several reasons. Book reviews are used by most academic journals to appraise scholarly work, making them crucial in promoting academic literacy skills. In a nutshell, a review is an evaluation of various works, such as literary pieces, performances, events, art or architecture objects, and phenomena. It involves a thorough analysis of the features that constitute the genre in question. During school years, when we were students studying academic writing skills like creating book reviews, it was emphasized that it should not be just summarizing but presenting discussions with readers while making critical arguments about its multi-dimensional aspects, including the creator's ideas.

### **1.1. Statement of the Problem**

When it comes to writing a book review, authors often use various rhetorical techniques. However, the lack of knowledge on the structure and inability to coordinate the moves can make it challenging for attempting to write reviews. Therefore, developing a specific stylistic framework is necessary in order to alleviate any discomfort caused by this problem.

### **1.2. Research Objective**

Following are the research objectives:

- To analyze the frequently used moves in the book reviews available online
- To investigate the specific pattern used by the authors while writing book reviews.
- To propose a structural and comprehensive framework for writing book reviews using move analysis.

### 1.3. Research Questions

Following are the research objectives:

- What are the most commonly employed rhetorical moves in online book reviews?
- How do authors typically structure their language and employ specific patterns when crafting book reviews?
- In what ways can a comprehensive framework for writing book reviews be proposed through move analysis?

## 2. Literature Review

Similar to a critique, a book review evaluates the creation of knowledge (Motta-Roth, 1995). It is a formal assessment that aims to bring about necessary changes. Reviews extend beyond literary works to include critiques of films or plays in newspapers or magazines. They critically evaluate not only texts but also objects, characters, incidents, and phenomena across various genres. A review goes beyond summarizing; it requires an argument that facilitates dialogue between the author's intent and readers' understanding. This academic writing style consists of thesis statements followed by supporting paragraphs that lead to conclusions for effective critical appreciation.

### 2.1. Review an Academic Genre

The notion of genre entails a social context in which individuals assume specific roles and behaviors. Language plays a crucial role in this communicative process, with genres encapsulating shared purposes among multiple events that proffer constraints for the discourse structure's development and conclusion. Previous research on genre-based studies was dominated by evaluative investigations from hard sciences, while recent comparative research has been conducted on both hard sciences (Physics, Chemistry, Biology) and soft sciences (Humanities & Social Sciences). However, there has been notably less inquiry into RA genres related to soft science fields such as (Briones, 2012; Krishnasamy, 2011; Azirah, 2001; Smaraj, 2008; Loi, 2010; Ozturk, 2007).

A book review is a genre that meets three criteria. Firstly, it involves communication between participants who assume specific roles and social contexts for the purpose of introducing and evaluating new publications. Secondly, experts within the discourse community recognize the communicative purpose of this genre through academic and disciplinary culture schemata, as well as formal schema that relate to textual features. Lastly, the rhetoric within this genre is limited to introducing and evaluating recent works, which affects how readers consume these texts and requires critics to comply with these expectations. Effective writing skills are crucial in conveying anticipated content and form impressions based on prior knowledge and experience in relevant fields or literary genres, especially those expected by the intended audience.

### 2.2. Rhetoric Moves in Book Reviews

As per Nwogu's in 1990, a move in a text can be comprised of a single sentence or multiple sentences that are connected to other moves, thus forming a complete information structure

that can be identified as a specific genre. These moves are made up of smaller functional components known as steps, which when combined, convey the overall message of the move (Paltridge, 1994). However, Motta-Roth has criticized Swale's new model, stating that it fails to predict cyclic patterns within moves accurately and overlooks certain elements that are present during data analysis (Roth, 1998).

The current investigation commences with a traditional evaluation of book critiques, as carried out by Swales (1981-1990) and Motta-Roth (1998). The study culminates in the introduction of a novel model that is more fitting. Current analysis is based on Swale's 1981 "Creating a Research Space" methodology, which scrutinized introductions to forty-eight articles, equally distributed across pure, applied, and social sciences - sixteen for each domain.

### **2.3. Swale and Motta Roth on Book Reviews**

Swale's framework is a schema-based model that categorizes units of information into rankings. Each unit serves a specific purpose by providing vital pieces of data to the text, which are called "moves." According to Swale, Move 1 is designed to introduce the book and includes several sub-functions such as defining general topics covered in it, identifying potential readership demographics, and acquainting readers with authorship insights. It also involves making generalized statements about the insertion of the topic within field literature. Similarly, Move 2 refers to outlining various sections within the book and providing general organizational insights for each chapter, which are highlighted from external sources. On the other hand, Move 3 focuses on designated parts mentioned earlier, primarily related materials available, before progressing onto evaluation specifics under this measure too.

Based on the research conducted by Motta-Roth (1998), as well as studies by DeCarvalho (2001) and Nicolaisen (2002), book reviews across multiple disciplines display a consistent rhetorical framework. Motta-Roth's genre analysis of book reviews in the fields of Chemistry, Economics, and Linguistics revealed specific characteristics in both content and structure. As a result of her discoveries, a standard schematic representation was developed, consisting of four rhetorical moves and numerous sub-functions that typify the structural organization of these types of reviews.

The book review begins with an introduction comprising of five sub-functions in move 1. These functions convey different types of information to the reader. The first function entails providing details about the book and its theoretical approach, such as Iona Leki's *Academic Writing Techniques and Task* – a writing textbook aimed at advanced ESL students (Motta-Roth, 1998:150). Function two specifies the target audience for whom this particular read is intended (Suarez & Moreno, 2014:191), exemplifying that it caters towards knowledgeable readers interested in text books related to writing techniques. Additionally, function three furnishes insight into author's academic credentials along with their previous work highlighting terms referring to profession or authority demonstrating expertise within their field of study through designations like expert researcher and thinker.

During move 3, the reviewer evaluates a text, pointing out both its strengths and weaknesses to the readers. In the case of Mr. Arditti's work, it is mentioned that he has sensitively dealt with many significant issues (positive feedback). However, the fact that

such an engaging life story is written in a dull manner remains a mystery (negative feedback) (Cacchiani, 2005).

The main purpose of the fourth move is to conclude the reviewer's text. This can be achieved by either completely agreeing or disagreeing with it, or by combining constructive criticism with a positive evaluation in sub-function one. For example, one can say that "this book offers a comprehensive overview of the topic and is a valuable reference for each chapter".

However, a challenge arises where each individual writes a different version owing to these varied instructions on structure and perspectives presented by reviewers, leading towards the need for more effective models. This study proposes new moves/strategies enhancing existing methods for producing deeper and pioneering assessments focused mainly on constructing comprehensive evaluations under selective progression/validation criteria, thereby improving overall quality/results throughout authors' narrative development from start till end.

### **3. Research Methodology**

This study analyzes twenty book reviews collected from various websites and journals. The researcher has intentionally chosen books that were not read before by her to better understand the writing techniques used in the reviews. The researcher has carefully read and analyzed the reviews to identify any specific patterns or styles that the writers may have employed.

#### **3.1 Theoretical Framework**

In this study, the researcher has used Motta Roth's grounded theory/model to analyze book reviews and will subsequently present their own model for writing book reviews for various genres. This model offers a rhetorical structure for book reviews.

**Move 1**= introducing the book

**Move 2**= outlining the book

**Move 3**= highlighting the parts of book

**Move 4**= providing closing evaluation of the book

### **4. Data Analysis and Discussion**

This section has two parts. The first part is about analyzing the moves followed in selected book reviews. The second part is about the frequency of each move. The moves were identified based on the basis of paragraph after careful reading of each book review. The researcher identified and listed all the moves in each of the twenty selected book reviews.

*Move 1- Introducing the book*

*Move 2- Outlining the book*

*Move 3- Highlighting the parts of book*



Table 2  
*Occurrence of Moves*

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<b>Samples</b>	<b>Move 1</b>	<b>Move2</b>	<b>Move 3</b>	<b>Move 4</b>
1	2	6	3	1
2	4	8	3	1
3	8	6	1	1
4	4	9	1	3
5	1	8	2	0
6	10	19	4	1
7	5	13	2	4
8	6	10	3	6
9	7	16	2	2
10	4	18	2	6
11	4	6	9	2
12	2	3	1	1
13	1	6	5	0
14	6	4	2	2
15	3	6	4	2
16	3	9	13	0
17	4	5	3	2
18	1	6	6	0
19	5	13	2	4
20	4	9	1	3

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Table 2

Total no of occurrences of moves

Move 1	84
Move 2	180
Move 3	69
Move 4	41

#### 4.1. Discussion

Based on the data analysis above, the following conclusions can be drawn:

Firstly, it is apparent that "Move one" is utilized by every writer more than twice. In fact, in twenty reviews, the first move is used over eighty times, indicating that every writer is giving significant attention to the introduction section. Secondly, "Move two" is the most commonly used move by every writer, suggesting that it is their preferred method for outlining and summarizing the text. This move plays a crucial role in constructing the review and, in twenty book reviews, it has been used over 180 times.

Thirdly, "Move three" highlights important segments of the book, enabling the reader to understand the book's significance or main message. Although most book reviews use this move more than once, it is still a relatively infrequent occurrence, with the writer identifying it occurring only 69 times from the current data. Lastly, "Move four" evaluates the book by including the writer's critical appreciation or evaluative comment of the text. This move is the least used by writers, with only 40 occurrences in the present data. One potential reason for this is that writers tend to avoid critiquing the text consciously or unconsciously.

The purpose of writing a book review is to attract readers and motivate them to read the book. Book reviews should be written in a convincing way which encourages readers to read the book. However, the book reviews that researchers have analyzed have followed a uniform pattern. According to my personal opinion, there should be no uniformity in writing book reviews because it is actually a debate between the reader and the author, in which the author motivates the reader to read the book. It should be a personal opinion of the author, which reflects why they want others to read that book.

If all authors follow the same pattern in writing book reviews, then what is the purpose of writing a book review that just summarizes the book? The presented model is flexible, synchronized, and a more detailed model for writing book reviews. It provides a vast canvas to review writers where they can observe and reflect on the book from a variety of perspectives. The presented model also allows for personal but unbiased and honest views.

The presented model consists of seven moves. The first move determines the genre of the book review, as it is important to mention the genre to the reader to develop their interest. The second move is the introduction, which further elaborates on the author's background and motivates the reader to read the book due to some special qualities of writing and with



the mention of the context of the book. The third move summarizes the book, including the subject of the book, description of contents, and highlighting the main and important events in the book. The fourth move is the evaluative comment, which is also the main point of the review. It further consists of comments on the theme, significance of the theme, and the objective of writing the review. The fifth move is about the style of language, sequence, and mood. The sixth move is about argumentation and personal opinion, which is also called the critique. The last move is about recommendations.

#### **4.2. Structure of presented model**

Move 1~ Determining type of genre

- About the genre
- Justifying the type of genre

Move 2~ introduction

- About the author
- About motivation
- About the socio-cultural context

Move 3~ Summary

- Subject of the book
- Description of content
- Highlighting the main content/aspects

Move 4~ Evaluative comment

- Comment on theme
- Comment on significance of theme
- Comment on objective

Move 5~ Style

- sequence
- language
- mood

Move 6~ Argumentation

- author's argument
- personal opinion

Move 7~ Recommendations

## 5. Conclusion

The current study has observed that all authors introduced the book at start while reviewing. However, it has been noticed that sometimes authors didn't expand on the introduction of the book by generalizing the topic or recommending it, or by placing it in a specific genre. The findings showed that the sequencing of moves in almost all book reviews was the same, and most of them ended with the specific move M4 which is about recommending or suggesting the book. The move sequence and occurrences were mentioned in Table 1, Table 2, and Table 3. The dominant move was M2, which focused on introducing the book, while the least focused move was M4, which involved critiquing the book and providing recommendations. The length of book reviews varied from author to author, and there was no specific limit to writing the reviews. This study revealed that there is uniformity in almost all book reviews, as they follow the same pattern. The purpose of writing a book review is to convince and motivate the reader to read the book, not to detract their attention with the same ideas. However, there are some features lacking in book reviews that, in my opinion, are necessary to attract the reader's attention. The proposed model focused on those features as well. The presented model is more flexible and synchronized, providing a vast canvas for book review writers to observe the book from different perspectives.

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