

# Assessing Worthiness in Book Review Articles: Authors' Strategies in Evaluating the Reviewed Books

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## ABSTRACT

Book review articles highlight the worthiness of new publications through critical insights, encouraging deeper interest and appreciation among readers. Previous studies often lack focus on journal reputation and publication regions. This study aims to analyse authors' common rhetorical pattern and strategies for evaluating and issuing final opinions. Forty-eight articles from eight Scopus-indexed journals in language-related field were analysed using four moves with sixteen steps model. The results indicate that the first three moves (Introducing the book, Summarizing the content, and Evaluating the book) are obligatory, while Issuing a final opinion is conventional. Additionally, two steps (Defining the general topic of the book and Providing a general assessment) consistently appear. The analysis reveals that the authors tend to use praise more frequently than criticism in their evaluations, particularly when assessing the book as a whole. Furthermore, the findings show that authors primarily provide recommendations and rarely disqualify the works for final judgment. This study has important implications for novice writers, as they should be familiar with the rhetorical structure and aware of the strategies used for evaluating and issuing final opinions in book review articles, thereby enhancing their chances of publication in high-impact journals.

## ARTICLE INFO

*Paper type:*  
Research Article

*Article history:*  
Received: 19/08/2025  
Revised: 04/10/2025  
Accepted: 01/11/2025

*Keywords:*

- Book Review Article
- Worthiness
- Author's Strategies
- High-impact Journal
- Language-related Field

## 1. Introduction

Academics, including scholars and university students, are not only expected to complete a range of written assignments throughout their studies and upon graduation but are also required to effectively present and disseminate their scholarly work through publication in reputable journals (Bailey, 2004, 2006, 2011; Murray, 2005; Suryawinata et al., 2023). However, many studies and publications have noted that even highly skilled and proficient English authors still struggle with a variety of problems and shortcomings in their academic writing and publication in high-impact journals (Hinkel, 2004). Consequently, many authors in the fields of social sciences and humanities, particularly novice writers are unsuccessful in getting their articles published in high-impact journals (Adnan, 2014; Arono & Arsyad, 2019; Arsyad & Adila, 2018). The same situation also occurred with the students from the non-English countries, who must write and publish articles for reputable journals (Hamamah et al., 2023). A common issue is the lack of proficiency in producing well-structured academic writing, which requires adherence to specific rules, styles, and organizational structures (Azizah & Budiman, 2022; Bailey, 2004; Nodoushan & Montazeran, 2012). This presents a considerable challenge for academics, who are required to produce and publish academic writings in high-impact journals within their respective fields.

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Publications in high-impact journals primarily consist of research articles, yet many journals also welcome other forms of scholarly writing, such as Book Review Articles (BRAs) (Lewis, 2022). Therefore, academics seeking to participate in the academic community can write BRAs and get published in high-impact journals. Writing BRAs offers an opportunity to remain current with developments in the field by critically analyzing recently published books (Hyland, 2004). This practice also serves as a strategic approach to gaining acceptance and publication in reputable journals, while simultaneously building the confidence necessary to produce regular academic writing (Murray, 2005). However, many academics encounter challenges in completing BRAs due to a lack of familiarity with the genre's structure and conventions. Therefore, analyzing the rhetorical structure of BRAs is essential, as it not only deepens understanding of discourse conventions but also clarifies how writers participate in academic communication through this genre.

Book Review Articles (BRAs) serve an important role in academic communication as a medium for discussing and evaluating knowledge within a discipline or field (Hartly, 2008). A BRA is a form of academic writing that involves placing the book in context, stating an opinion, supporting it with evidence, and making recommendations for possible readers (Fang, 2021; Prasantham, 2023). Thus, an insightful and critical evaluation is required to provide deep and comprehensive understanding on the book being reviewed (Zou & Hyland, 2022). Written to both describe and evaluate published work, BRAs aim not only to analyze but also, at times, to promote the book (Bhatia, 1997; Paltridge, 2012). The description and evaluation cover the content, structure, quality, and contribution of the book to the field (Bal-Gezegin & Baş, 2020). They highlight the importance and relevance of recently published books. Suárez & Moreno (2006) note that BRAs introduce, assess, and recommend new books within a particular field by evaluating their significance, reliability, and contribution to the advancement of the discipline. Likewise, writing BRAs serves not only to attract public attention to the content and merit of recently published book but also to assist the reviewers in presenting their intellectual capability and credibility within the academic field (Hashemi et al., 2021). Hence, to fulfil this communicative function effectively, academics must first become familiar with reading this genre to enhance their language proficiency and understanding of its structural conventions before progressing to write and publish high-quality reviews in high-impact journals. Therefore, genre analysis is needed to understand the communicative aspects of discourse by examining how individuals use language to participate in particular communicative situations (Ulum, 2016).

Although genre analysis is well-established in academia, few studies have addressed BRAs, likely due to their lower popularity than RAs and the limited scientific journals including them in their publications. However, research on this topic gained attention after Motta-Roth (1995) provided a comprehensive analysis of the rhetorical structure of book reviews. Investigating English book reviews published in 1990 from highly cited journals in three different fields: economics, linguistics, and chemistry, she identified the first rhetorical model of book review, consisting of four moves and eleven subfunctions. With the same purpose, Araujo (1996) examined English book reviews published between 1989 and 1994 from four reputable journals in the field of Applied Linguistics and suggested three moves and twelve strategies existed in the structure of BRAs. Another study by Bezerra (2001) provides a different descriptive model of book reviews consisting of four moves and thirteen subunits. Using two previous models in the analysis, he revealed differences between Portuguese reviews written by expert writers and undergraduate students in the area of Theology. Recently, Carvalho (2020) reported the rhetorical-compositional changes that the BRA genre has undergone over a 62-year time continuum (1953-2015). Using three previous models of BRA in analysis, he observed four moves and sixteen steps persisted in the Brazilian Scientific journals in the field of language and linguistics.

Several other studies have attempted to elucidate the rhetorical structure of BRAs published in reputable journals in the field of Applied Linguistic. Nodoushan & Montazeran (2012) found that native speakers (NS), second language speakers (ESL), and foreign language speakers (EFL) reviewers always introduce the book, but they infrequently highlight part of the book or provide a focused assessment. Similarly, Jalilifar & Tanavar (2015) reported a tendency for book reviews to be written shorter, with a noticeable decline in the communicative function of outlining and highlighting part of the book. The latter move appeared approximately half as often in reviews

published between 2000 and 2010 compared to those from 1980 to 1990, and became the least frequent, whereas introducing the book and providing a closing evaluation remained the most important across both time spans. Another study conducted by Junqueira (2013) discovered that English BRAs appeared to be more critical and often recommended the book after indicating shortcomings. Additionally, Carvalho (2020) reported that recommending or disqualifying the book was getting more significant between 2001 and 2015. Contrary to previous findings, Arabmofrad et al. (2023) discovered a new trend that most reviewers between 2012 and 2022 were less inclined to provide a closing evaluation, often hesitating to recommend or disqualify the books they reviewed. Instead, they considered outlining the book as the most important, besides introducing and highlighting parts of the book.

All these previous studies are very useful to show how BRAs are constructed and function as guidelines for further research on the rhetorical structure of BRAs. Nevertheless, further investigation on the moves and steps in English BRAs, utilizing a larger and more diverse corpus, is necessary to provide a clearer understanding of how BRAs particularly written in English within language-related fields are constructed. Research on the rhetorical structure of BRAs is essential to familiarize academics, including university students and lecturers, with the structural conventions and communicative functions of this genre to improve their ability to read, write, and publish high-quality academic writings that contribute meaningfully to academic discourse. However, previous studies on BRAs have often relied on data available at that time, often without considering the journals' reputation, and have been limited to publications from specific regions, resulting in a less representative overview of current and broader practices of BRAs writing within language-related field. Moreover, due to variations and conflicting findings in prior research, further investigation is needed to explore how recent authors published in high-impact journals provide evaluation and final opinion as the main communicative purpose of BRAs, particularly within the language-related field. The following questions are as guidelines for this study: (1) How do authors use a common rhetorical pattern (Moves and Steps) in their BRAs published in high-impact journals within language-related field? (2) How do authors of BRAs published in high-impact journals within language-related field evaluate the reviewed books? (3) How do authors of BRAs published in high-impact journals within language-related field present a final opinion on the reviewed books?

## 2. Methods

This study employed a qualitative content analysis approach. Kuckartz & Rädiker (2023) explain that qualitative content analysis involves a systematic and methodologically rigorous scientific examination of texts, images, films, and other communication materials. This qualitative content analysis involves data collection and analysis which are primarily in open-ended, non-numerical data through non-statistical methods analysis Dornyei (2011). Nevertheless, Drisko & Maschi (2016) state that the majority of researchers descriptively use this method, while it can be used to generate new hypotheses or examine existing theories. In this study, qualitative content analysis was implemented to identify the rhetorical structure of BRAs and the realization of Moves and Steps, in terms of linguistic resources and strategies.

### 2.1. Corpus of the Study

To address the interest in identifying the structural conventions of the genre across a broader and more reputable corpus, this study selected 48 BRAs from eight Scopus-indexed journals in the language-related field, published in seven different countries across three continents. The selection of the journals and BRAs was based on several important considerations: 1) the journals publish open-access BRAs in language-related field; 2) the journals are high-impact journals indexed by Scopus or Web of Science; 3) the BRAs were written in English by native or nonnative authors between 2021 and 2023.

There was no exact academic reason for choosing only 48 BRAs in the corpus, but the number was considered sufficient for a comprehensive examination of rhetorical structure BRAs in language-related field. As

Corder & Foreman (2014) suggested that small sample size for qualitative study analysis should not less than thirty. The distribution of the corpus in this study is presented in the following table.

Table 1: The Corpus of the Study

NO	JOURNALS	CODE	NUMBER OF PAPERS	QUARTILE VALUE	SJR	COUNTRY OF PUBLISHER
1	Journal of Second Language Writing	SLW	6	Q1	2,606	United Kingdom
2	Journal of English for Academic Purposes	EAP	6	Q1	1,589	United Kingdom
3	Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching	SLT	6	Q1	1,455	Poland
4	TESL-EJ	TSL	6	Q1	0,399	United States
5	LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network	LRN	6	Q1	0,334	Thailand
6	Journal of Asia TEFL	JAT	6	Q2	0,294	South Korea
7	Journal of Language and Education	JLE	6	Q2	0,257	Russian Federation
8	Mextesol Journal	MEX	6	Q2	0,177	Mexico

Table 1 illustrates the differences in Scimago Journal Rank (SJR) values among the selected journals, showing that higher Quartile values correspond to higher SJR scores. The SCImago Journal Rank (SJR) is a bibliometric metric that evaluates the prestige and impact of scientific journal articles by analyzing citation data over a three-year period, utilizing a comprehensive bibliographic database to provide a dynamic and robust measure of journal influence (González-Pereira et al., 2009). The SJR score reflects the transfer of prestige between journals, which is achieved through the citations of one journal in others, including itself. Essentially, a higher SJR score indicates a more reputable journal, with greater readership and citation of its articles.

## 2.2. Data Collection Procedure and Instrument

The identification of the rhetorical structure of BRAs was conducted to answer the first and second research questions following BRA Model suggested by Carvalho (2020). This model was used in this study because it is the most recent one and is derived from the foundational frameworks of three previous models Motta-Roth (1995), Araujo (1996), and (Bezerra, 2001). By integrating previous models, Carvalho's approach provides a comprehensive analysis of the most common moves and steps found in BRAs. The model consisted of four moves and sixteen steps as presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Framework for the Analysis of Moves of Book Reviews

Moves and Steps	Description
Move 1	Introducing the Book
Step 1	Making topic generalizations.
Step 2	Defining the general topic of the book.
Step 3	Informing about the author.
Step 4	Informing about potential readership.
Step 5	Informing the origin of the book.
Step 6	Inserting book in the field.
Move 2	Summarizing Content
Step 1	Describing the overall organization.
Step 2	Presenting the topics of the book.
Step 3	Discussing the content of the book.
Step 4	Reporting the methodology.
Step 5	Citing extra-text material.

Move 3	Evaluating the Book
Step 1	Providing general assessment.
Step 2	Providing focused assessment.
Step 3	Presenting suggestions for improvement.
Move 4	Issuing a Final Opinion
Step 1	Recommending/Disqualifying the book.
Step 2	Expressing wishes for future publication.

Following Table 2 above, the identification of Moves and Steps was carried out by analyzing linguistic features, including discourse markers, distinctive terminology, and textual cues. All BRAs in the corpus were read at least twice in order to get a general and prior understanding of the topic. In introducing the book and summarizing its content, reviewers typically use neutral and descriptive language. In evaluation, linguistic resources like modality, evaluative language, and hedging are prominent, allowing the reviewer to critically engage with the book's arguments. Issuing a final opinion is typically marked by stronger evaluative language and the use of personal pronouns, as the reviewer delivers their final judgment on the book's usefulness or contribution. The identification of the rhetorical structure of BRAs was conducted by marking and coding all possible variations that characterize Moves and Steps found in the reviews.

To answer the second research question, further examination was performed to identify the strategy used by authors in evaluating the book. To know how authors evaluate the book, all defined positive and negative assessments were noted and classified. According to Hyland (2004), positive assessment involves giving praise that acknowledges the merits of a work, whereas negative assessment refers to criticism expressing dissatisfaction or negative remarks about the work. Both praise and criticism can be focused on five evaluation categories (content, style, reader, text, writer), which are used to facilitate the identification of the evaluation. The possible strategies used in assessing the entire or specific part of the book are: (1) praising, (2) criticizing, and (3) a combination of praising and criticizing. Below are examples of the strategies.

Excerpt 1 (praising):

*With globalization gaining increased attention in current scholarship, **this book does an excellent job of providing a number of lenses, from historical to more recent time periods, and their effects on language and migration.*** (MEX 4)

Excerpt 2 (criticizing):

*Although Part IV addresses the needs and approaches to adjusting assessments, **some crucial issues are insufficiently discussed**, such as how to maintain learners' academic integrity in online assessment.* (EAP 1)

Excerpt 3 (combination of praising and criticizing):

*We consider Chapter 9, which focuses on the teaching and learning of ERPP, **to be the most intriguing and meaningful chapter of the book.** ... It is a shame that **the authors do not offer more thoughts on possible solutions to the predicament**, as we believe that readers would expect to learn more about these possible solutions.* (EAP 5)

Finally, to answer the third question, further examination was also performed to identify the strategy used by authors in presenting their final opinions. The possible final opinions addressed by authors on the reviewed books are (1) recommendation and (2) disqualification. The recommendation is a concluding opinion showing whether the book is worthy of reading or not. Below are the examples of recommendations.

Excerpt 4:

*Our final remark is that the importance of a volume such as **this is of immense insight and a “mustread”** for students as well as scholars in English language teaching and applied linguistics.* (JLE 3)

### 2.3. Data Analysis Procedure

Following the data collection, the next phase was calculating the frequency of each Move and Steps realization. This was done to find out the extent to which Moves and Steps had been used by the authors. The frequency and percentage of occurrence were recorded to all Moves and Steps. Then, the percentage of Move and Step was categorized based on Rasmeenin (2006): 1) Obligatory, if move or step occurred in each and every BRAs in the corpus (the frequency is 100%), 2) Conventional, if move or step occurred quite often in BRAs in the corpus (the frequency is between 66% and 99%), and 3) Optional, if move or step occurred less frequently in BRAs in the corpus (the frequency is less than 66%). This categorization revealed the dominant move and step in the rhetorical structure of BRAs. Finally, the frequency of occurrence for the strategy used in the evaluation and final opinion was also determined to identify the dominant realization.

### 2.4. Inter-coder Reliability Analysis

In this study, inter-coder reliability was conducted to ensure the degree of agreement or consistency between two or more coders in independently categorizing qualitative data. An independent coder, a professor holding a master's degree in applied linguistics was involved in the process. A randomly selected sample of 20% from the corpus was assigned to an independent coder for examination using the same instrument, accompanied by detailed instructions on how to apply the coding scheme. The coding results from both the researcher and the independent coder were compared to assess the level of agreement in analyzing the moves and steps within BRAs.

After completing the coding process, the researcher compared their results with those of an independent coder by calculating Cohen's Kappa coefficient. Cohen's Kappa coefficient ( $k$ ) is a statistical measure used to evaluate agreement between two raters and classify items into categories while accounting for the possibility that some agreement occurs by chance Cohen (1960). The coefficient ranges from 0.00 to 1.00, with values closer to 1.00 indicating stronger agreement. According to Kanoksilapatham (2005), a Kappa value below 0.40 reflects poor agreement, 0.40 to 0.59 indicates fair agreement, 0.60 to 0.74 suggests good agreement, and scores of 0.75 or higher denote excellent reliability. Any discrepancies remaining after this comparison were addressed through discussions between the researcher and the independent coder, reaching a consensus to guarantee the accuracy and consistency of the coding across the dataset. In this study, Cohen's Kappa coefficient was 0.84, which shows excellent reliability between coders.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1 Result

#### 3.1.1 Frequency of Moves in the BRAs

Data analysis results on the extent to which authors employ rhetorical moves in Book Review Articles (BRAs) published in high-impact journals within the language-related field are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Frequency of Moves in the BRPs

Move	Frequency	Percentage	Category
Move 1 Introducing the Book	48	100	Obligatory
Move 2 Summarizing the Content	48	100	Obligatory
Move 3 Evaluating the Book	48	100	Obligatory
Move 4 Issuing a Final Opinion	45	94	Conventional

As noted above, Move 1 – Introducing the book, Move 2 – Summarizing the content, and Move 3 – Evaluating the Book were the most frequent moves observed in the corpus. While Move 4 – Issuing a Final Opinion was the least frequent move observed in the corpus. To have a more comprehensive insight into the percentage of occurrence, the move frequency in each journal source of the corpus is shown in Figure 1 below.

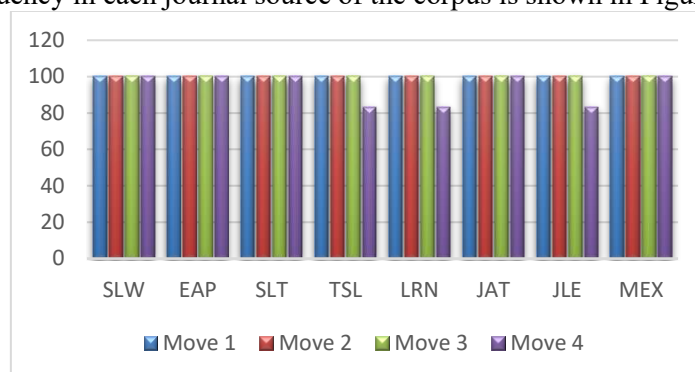


Figure 1. Frequency of Moves in BRAs

Figure 1 shows that, among eight source journals of the corpus, five include all Moves in BRAs, while three others treat Move 1 – Introducing the Book, Move 2 – Summarizing the Content, and Move 3 – Evaluating the Book as compulsory and Move 4 – Issuing a Final Opinion as conventional in BRAs.

### 3.1.2 Frequency of Steps in the BRAs

The second data analysis illustrates variations in the extent authors use steps in BRAs published in high-impact journals within language-related field. To provide a comprehensive overview, Table 5 presents the frequency and percentage of Moves with all Steps found in the corpus of this study.

Table 4. Frequency of Steps in the Corpus

Moves and Steps	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Move 1	Introducing the Book		
Step 1	Making topic generalizations.	42	88%
Step 2	Defining the general topic of the book.	48	100%
Step 3	Informing about the author.	30	63%
Step 4	Informing about potential readership.	29	60%
Step 5	Informing the origin of the book.	16	33%
Step 6	Inserting book in the field.	42	88%
Move 2	Summarizing Content		
Step 1	Describing the overall organization.	43	90%
Step 2	Presenting the topics of the book.	46	96%
Step 3	Discussing the content of the book.	45	94%
Step 4	Reporting the methodology.	5	10%
Step 5	Citing extra-text material.	11	23%
Move 3	Evaluating the Book		
Step 1	Providing general assessment.	48	100%
Step 2	Providing focused assessment.	25	52%
Step 3	Presenting suggestions for improvement.	20	42%
Move 4	Issuing a Final Opinion		
Step 1	Recommending/Disqualifying the book.	45	94%
Step 2	Expressing wishes for future publication.	1	2%

The data presented in the table reveal that Move 1 Step 2 – Defining the general topic of the book and Move 3 Step 1 – Providing general assessment were the most frequent steps in the corpus. In contrast, Move 4 Step 2 – Expressing wishes for future publication (2%) and Move 2 Step 4- Reporting the methodology (10%) were observed far less frequently in the corpus.

Although Move 1 - Introducing the Book is categorized as obligatory, however, not all steps in this move were used by authors in BRAs published in high-impact journals within language-related field. Step 2 - Defining the general topic of the book (M1S2) was the most frequent or obligatory category (100%), indicating that all authors consistently began their reviews by clearly introducing the book's main subject to provide readers with essential context. Next, Step 1 – Making topic generalization (M1S1) and Step 6 – Inserting the book in the field (M1S6) were at conventional category (88%) used by the authors in introducing the book. Meanwhile, the least frequent was Step 5 – Informing the origin of the book. Below is an example of M1S2 taken from the corpus of this study.

Excerpt 5:

*In this recent publication, Foundational Principles of Task-based Language Teaching, **Martin East** adeptly navigates through the theoretical bases, implementation, and assessment of TLBT. (SLT 2)*

M1S1 and M1S6 appeared 42 times in the corpus. The former step is essential in presenting general contextual information about the reviewed book, while the latter is important in focusing on the role of the book for its contribution to a specific field or area of knowledge. Below are the examples taken from the corpus.

Excerpt 6:

***Realizing the importance** of “the best-loved self” while teaching and learning, a group of professors in the US introduced this concept to pre-service teachers in universities, provided professional development for in-service teachers, and conducted research. (LRN 1)*

The example above intends to present recent evidence in the field, indicating the importance of the book. While the following example focuses on the contribution of the book to a certain field or area of knowledge.

Excerpt 7:

*English Language Proficiency Testing in Asia: A New Paradigm Bridging Global and Local Contexts is a byproduct of the English assessors and scholars' endeavor to ameliorate the localizing tests **in EFL scenarios** as a consequence of the borderless workforce shifting. (LRN 6)*

This second move was also considered obligatory in BRAs published in high-impact journals within the language-related field, however, none of the step was obligatory. There were only three steps in the conventional category: Step 2 – Presenting the topic of the book (96%), Step 3 – Discussing the content of the book (94%), and Step 1 – Describing the overall organization (90%). While the least frequent was Step 4 – Reporting the methodology with 10% of occurrence. Below is an example of M2S2 realization taken from the corpus of this study.

Excerpt 8:

***Part I (Chapters 1-2), the author presents** an overview of English history and establishes its relevancy to the current status of English. **Chapter 1 brings to the fore** the need for a discussion of significant changes in English. **Chapter 2 provides** a discussion of English globally through multi-facet changes ranging from demographic, geographic to structural changes of English. (JAT 6)*

Step 3 - Discussing the content of the book was the next most widely used by the authors, indicating that the reviewers intended to ensure readers have a clear understanding of the content or topic in each section before expositing deeper analytical insight into the book. The following is an example of M2S3:

Excerpt 9:



***Compared with the more theoretical content of the previous two sections, the final part of the book presents experience-based advice and suggestions that are both practical and relevant.*** (EAP 6)

Step 1 - Describing the overall organization was the next most widely used by the authors, indicating that providing readers with a clear understanding of the book's structure is considered essential for effective book reviews. This emphasis on organizational description aids readers in navigating the book's content and assessing its logical progression. The following is an example of M2S1:

Excerpt 10:

***The book is subdivided into fifteen chapters, which are preceded by the series editors' foreword, acknowledgements, a list of contributors and a list of illustrations, and followed by a subject index.*** (SLT 5)

The third move was also considered obligatory in BRAs published in high-impact journals within language-related field. However only one step in the obligatory category (Step 1 – Providing general assessment, while two other steps were in the optional category (Step 2 – Providing focused assessment and Step 3 – Presenting suggestions for improvement). These findings suggest that reviewers may place greater emphasis on criticizing or praising the book as an entire work rather than assessing on particular part of the book. Below are two examples of M3S1 realization, one negative and one positive assessment, taken from the corpus of this study.

Excerpt 11:

***Overall, the book beautifully presents the interconnectedness between translation and translanguaging providing examples from a broad range of languages and aspects.*** (MEX 1)

Excerpt 12:

***Admittedly, the book does not delve deeply into all these areas.*** (EAP 2)

The last move was the only one considered as conventional in BRAs published in high-impact journals within language-related field. It was notably observed that Step 1 – Recommending/Disqualifying the book, occurred 45 times and was categorized as conventional (94%), whereas Step 2 – Expressing wishes for future publication appeared only once (2%). This indicates that reviewers primarily focused on giving their judgment about the book's quality and contribution through recommendations or disqualifications, rather than expressing wishes for future publication by the author or publisher. Below is an example of M4S1 realization taken from the corpus of this study.

Excerpt 13:

***Autonomy in Language Education: Theory, Research and Practice, is a must-read book because it adds multiple voices from diverse settings, offers different methodological frameworks and provides profound implications for teaching and learning autonomy.*** (JLE 5)

The only Step 2 – Expressing wishes for future publication is presented below.

Excerpt 14:

***Perhaps, because the intent of the book was not to provide methods or discuss the technologies per se but to explore the usefulness and implications of using these technologies, this is not done; however, a great companion or handbook that could accompany the main text would be an excellent addition to this book.*** (SLW 6)

### 3.1.3 Authors' Strategies in Evaluating the Reviewed Books

The analysis results on how authors of BRAs published in high-impact journals within language-related field evaluate the reviewed books are presented in the figure below.

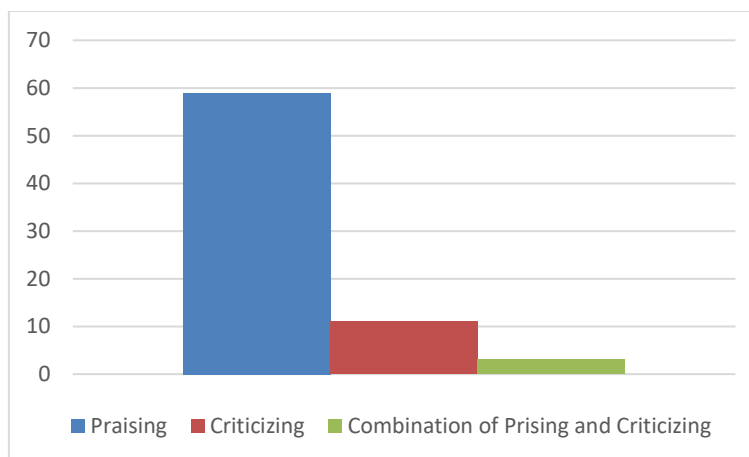


Figure 2. Frequency of Evaluation Strategy

Figure 2 shows that the authors predominantly employed praise more frequently than criticism in their evaluations of the books. Specifically, when providing a general assessment of the entire book, 94% of the BRAs in the corpus (45 cases) indicated expressions of praise, and only 6% of BRAs (3 cases) offered critical evaluations. In contrast, focused assessments on specific parts of the books revealed a lower but still significant proportion of praise, with 56% (14 cases) of BRAs indicating positive assessments, 32% (8 cases) providing criticism on specific parts of the book, and 12% (3 cases) combining both praise and criticism on particular parts of the books. Below is an example taken from the corpus of this study.

Excerpt 15:

*This new section title, together with the other three section titles (i.e., understanding writing, researching writing, and teaching writing), makes **the book's structure more logical and coherent**. ... The only critique is that **the two subsections, to some extent, overlap** in terms of writing resources. (SLW 3)*

In evaluating the books, whether through positive or negative assessment, authors generally addressed at least one specific aspect or focus of evaluation and did not confine their assessment to a single sentence. Data analysis on Move 3 – Evaluating the book, revealed a total of 60 sentences that express general assessments and 42 sentences that provide focused assessments. Among six foci of evaluation, the authors employed only four when assessing the books. The foci related to Author and Publishing were not identified in the corpus. The focus on content through general assessment was the most frequently used evaluation strategy in Move 3 Step 1 – Providing general assessment (47%), while the focus on content through specific assessment was the most frequently used strategy in Move 3 Step 2 – Providing focused assessment (52%). Other strategies for providing general assessment included evaluating specific content, style, readership, and text. Below is an example of the general assessment focusing on content that evaluates the coverage or how comprehensively the book addresses the topic.

Excerpt 16:

*Overall, this volume provides **a comprehensive selection** of innovative approaches to learning-oriented language assessment. (JAT 2)*

The following example presents a general assessment focusing on style, which evaluates the organization of the book, and on readership, which assesses the value or relevance of the book to audience, all within a single sentence.

Excerpt 17:

*The book's **well-organized and reasonable structural design** is a significant advantage, allowing readers to easily navigate the book and access the information they need. Ultimately, **the book's structure is a notable strength**, making it a valuable resource for those interested in the subject matter.* (JLE 1)

The following example presents a general assessment focusing on style, which evaluates the readability of the book, and on text, which evaluates the extent of the book, all within a single sentence.

Excerpt 18:

*One of **the major strengths of the book lies in its remarkable readability**. Martin East adeptly incorporates the intricacies of TBLT within around 200 pages.* (SLT 2)

In addition to evaluating specific content, some other strategies used for providing focused assessment (M3S2) included evaluating general content, style, and readership. The following examples indicate the focused assessment of content which evaluates the coverage or how comprehensively the book addresses the topic.

Excerpt 19:

*Third, **the part under each chapter** called "suggestions for further reading" **is considered not effective** because it does not provide any information on why the list of literature may be important to the readers.* (JAT 1)

The following example presents a focused assessment of readership, which evaluates the value or relevance of the book to its target audience, and on specific content, which evaluates the insight of the book, all within a single sentence.

Excerpt 20:

*Summing up, Chapter 5 serves as **a valuable resource for language teachers** seeking to enhance their CALL teaching practices. By providing practical guidance and insights into best practices, this chapter offers a valuable contribution to the field of CALL teacher education.* (JLE 1)

The following example presents a focused assessment on style, which evaluate clarity or easiness to understand specific part of the book.

Excerpt 21:

***The glossary** provided at the end of the book is also **a great way to help teachers** who might be unfamiliar with some terminology.* (MEX 5)

#### 3.1.4 Authors' Strategies in Presenting a Final Opinion on the Reviewed Books

Data analysis of how authors of BRAs published in high-impact journals within language-related field present their final opinion on the reviewed books revealed that among 45 occurrences of Move 4 Step 1 – Recommending/Disqualifying, all were recommendations, with no disqualifications observed. It was also found that authors predominantly presented recommendations implicitly 25 times (56%) and explicitly 20 times (44%) are presented in the figure below.

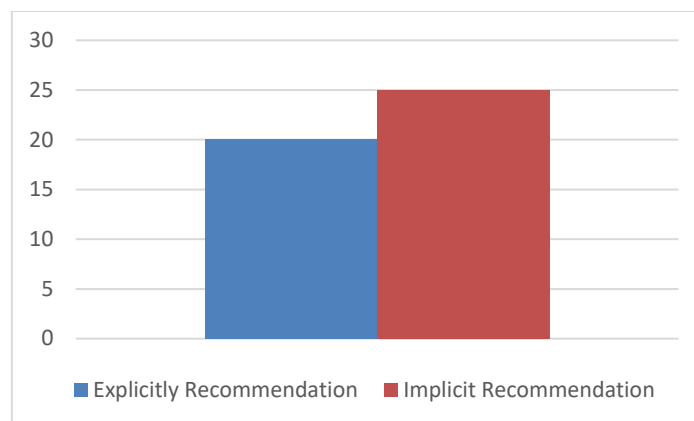


Figure 3. Frequency of Final Opinion Strategy

Implicit recommendations imply a positive judgment about the book without directly stating it, often through phrases highlighting the book's value, relevance, or usefulness, allowing readers to infer the recommendation. Below is an example of a final opinion that implicitly recommends the book.

Excerpt 22:

*This book is therefore **a very good companion for teachers, students and instructors interested in academic literacy development.*** (EAP 4)

The example above conveys a positive judgment of the book by describing it as a valuable and supportive resource. The phrase "very good companion," implies that the book is practical and useful as a guide or reference. Although it does not directly say "I recommend," it encourages the target audience to consider the book as a helpful resource. Other implicit recommendations found in the corpus used words or phrases such as "the book appeal to", "the book can be a welcome introduction for", "will attract and be useful", "particularly valuable", "will surely benefit", "undoubtedly a concise guide", "becoming highly relevant and applicable", "useful reference and inspiration", and "would definitely be helpful".

In contrast, explicit recommendations clearly and directly state the reviewer's endorsement, using unambiguous language such as "I recommend this book" or "This book is essential reading," leaving no doubt about the positive judgment. Below is an example of a final opinion that explicitly recommends the book as worthy of reading.

Excerpt 23:

*In conclusion, this publication **is highly recommended for EMI providers, educators and teacher-researchers.*** (TSL 1)

This recommendation provides a strong and clear endorsement of the publication. It explicitly states that the publication is highly recommended, indicating a positive and confident evaluation. By beginning with "In conclusion," the reviewer signals that this is their final judgment. Other recommendations observed in the corpus used words or phrases such as "recommend", "strongly recommend", "certainly recommend", "a good book", "an essential book for you", or "highly suggest that you pick this volume up".

Finally, the examination of phrases and sentences used by authors in concluding paragraphs revealed that six recommendations were accompanied by mentions of limitations or shortcomings of the reviewed book. Below is an example of a final opinion recommending the book despite indicating limitations/shortcomings.

Excerpt 24:

*Albeit of the drawbacks, the current book can be considered a valuable resource for educations, curriculum planners, school managers, policymakers and student- and seasoned researchers interested in Content-language instruction. (LRN 5)*

### 3.2 Discussion

The first research question asks how authors use rhetorical patterns (Moves and Steps) in their BRAs published in high-impact journals within language-related field. The findings reveal that four moves consistently appear in the rhetorical structure of BRAs published in high-impact journals within language-related field. Notably, three moves were in the obligatory category (Move 1 - Introducing the Book, Move 2 - Summarizing the content, and Move 3 – Evaluating the Book) and one move was conventional (Move 4 – Issuing a Final Opinion). These results indicate that the established model chosen for analyzing BRAs at the move level aligns with those employed by authors in their practices in the discourse. These results may demonstrate that (Carvalho, 2020) model, which identified these four rhetorical moves across decades, remains well-suited for analyzing BRAs in high-impact language-related journals and reflects ongoing adaptation within the genre's practice. Despite variation in naming, the same number of moves is also noted in earlier frameworks proposed by (Motta-Roth, 1995) and (Bezerra, 2001), from which it can be inferred that there is a shared underlying rhetorical structure in academic book reviews, highlighting a consistent convention within the genre across time and studies. The existence of this shared four common structural move was also reported by Bal-Gezegin (2015) in her research of book reviews published in English and Turkish journals across disciplines. Specifically, the existence of Move 1 and Move 2 is consistent with prior research done by Nodoushan & Montazeran (2012), which identified introducing the book and outlining the book as two obligatory moves in book reviews from applied linguistic journals between 2004 and 2010 written by native and non-native. The finding on Move 4 is also in accordance with the frequency of occurrence observed by Arabmofrad et al. (2023) which identified providing closing evaluation of the book as the least frequent (in conventional category) move in book reviews published in two linguistics journals between 2012-2022. However, the findings contrast with those of Jalilifar & Tanavar (2015), who reported that there were no obligatory moves in book reviews between 1980 and 2009, except for Move 4 during the period of 1980-1989. They also reported that Move 1 and Move 4 were the most frequently appeared, while Move 2 and Move 3 occurred less frequently.

The findings also reveal that there are only two obligatory steps (M1S2 – Defining the general topic of the book and M3S1 – Providing general assessment) and six conventional steps (M2S2 – Presenting the topic of the book, M2S3 – Discussing the content of the book, M4S1 – Recommending/Disqualifying the book, M2S1 – Describing the overall organization, M1S1 – Making topic generalizations, M1S6 – Inserting book in the field). These results possibly indicate that, out of sixteen steps suggested by the model, authors of BRAs consistently use a few key steps to introduce, summarize, evaluate, and present final opinion on the reviewed books, while other steps are used more flexibly depending on the reviewers' purpose and style. More specifically, when introducing the book, authors focus on informing the readers about the topic addressed by the book, providing general contextual information related to the theme, and focusing on the book's role and contribution to a particular field or discipline. They seldom provide information about its origin, such as the publication period, editors, translators, and publishing house details. When summarizing the content of the book, authors typically provide an overview of its organization, describing the theme of individual chapters or sections, and exposing a more in-depth analytical discussion of the content. The low occurrence of methodological reporting may indicate that reviewers assume their audience is either already familiar with the research methods or that such details are less critical in the context of book reviews. When evaluating the book, authors prefer to assess it as a whole rather than focusing on specific parts or individual chapters, indicating that reviewers consistently emphasize providing readers with a clear and concise impression of the work. More detailed or specific evaluative comments are less commonly included, suggesting that reviewers may focus on general judgments rather than in-depth critical analysis. The last, when issuing a final opinion, authors consider it more important to provide a clear statement of recommendation or disqualification regarding the book,

rather than expressing hope for future publications, indicating a focus on the current work's value and contribution rather than on potential future developments.

The second research question examines how authors of BRAs published in high-impact journals within language-related field evaluate the reviewed books. The findings show that the majority of authors employed a praising strategy in evaluating both the entire book (45 out of 48 cases) and specific parts of the book (14 out of 25 cases). These findings possibly indicate that authors tend to emphasize positive aspects in their reviews, especially when addressing the work in its entirety, while critical comments are more often reserved for detailed or specific section evaluation. These findings align with Moreno & Suárez (2008) who reported both English and Spanish authors were less critical in general and tended to evaluate the books positively. This lower tendency to provide negative feedback fosters a supportive environment and reflects promotional interest as a marketing tool for newly published works (Obeng-Odoom, 2014). Moreover, the results demonstrate a more nuanced evaluative strategy used by authors, reflecting publication norms and expectations in high-impact journals that tend to prefer BRAs emphasizing the significance and strengths of books, aligning with their aim to provide readers with the books' merits.

The third research question asks how authors of BRAs published in high-impact journals within language-related field present a final opinion on the reviewed books. The findings reveal that all authors in the corpus use a recommendation strategy. When presenting their final judgment, some reviewers employed a strategy of first highlighting the book's shortcomings and limitations before offering recommendations (6 out of 45 cases), whereas the majority focused primarily on emphasizing the book's overall worthiness and contribution, recommending the book completely (39 out of 45 cases). This aligns with Junqueira (2013) who found that English book reviews tend to state limitations or shortcomings before recommending the book being reviewed. It was also observed that authors use both explicit and implicit strategies when making recommendations. Explicit recommendation would involve clear, direct statements such as "I recommend this book" or "This book is essential reading." Implicit recommendation occurs when the reviewer highlights the book's increasing importance, usefulness, or suitability for a particular audience or field without directly stating "I recommend this book" or similar explicit language.

This study displayed current and broader practice of English BRAs writing published in reputable journal within language-related fields. The findings suggested a revision for rhetorical pattern showing the common and recent utilization of move and steps particularly in English BRAs within language-related field journals. Despite the persistent utilization of four moves, the utilization of steps exhibited a change which consist only eight steps: making topic generalizations, defining the general topic of the book, inserting book in the field, describing the overall organization, presenting the topic of the book, discussing the content of the book, providing general assessment, recommending/Disqualifying the book. Briefly, the findings provide a clearer understanding of how BRAs particularly written in English within language-related fields are organized and produced.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The study found that authors of BRAs published in high-impact journals within language-related field used four moves, highlight their essential role in guiding readers to establish context, provide an overview, critically assess, and finally conclude their reviews, while selectively using key steps in realizations. All authors define the general topic of the book and provide a general assessment as essential in their writings. Other steps such as presenting the topic of the book, recommending/disqualifying the book, discussing the content of the book, describing the overall organization, making topic generalizations, and inserting the book in the field were most frequently employed. In evaluating the book, the authors tend to offer praise more often than criticism. Criticism is notably less common, except in providing focused assessment within a half of the corpus. Furthermore, when presenting the book's worthiness for reading, authors more often recommend the reviewed book implicitly rather than explicitly, with some employing a strategy of indicating shortcomings before offering recommendations. Briefly, by examining the rhetorical structure, the study provides insights into the common patterns and variations

in how reviewers construct their BRAs, shedding light on the conventions and expectations that shape scholarly book reviewing in this discipline. Although numerous guidelines exist on how to write book review articles (BRAs), this study offers empirical insight into how authors practically employ various rhetorical moves and steps to achieve successful publication in high-impact journals. Ultimately, understanding these patterns of move and step selection could benefit novice writers or academics seeking their first publication in high-impact journals by helping them craft effective book review articles that meet the high expectations of both the genre and the academic community.

This study is still, of course, based on a small number of data and covers only a three-year time span. Thus, it may not fully capture the current practice and variation that may exist in writing BRAs across different journals or over longer periods of publication. Consequently, the findings cannot be generalized and compared to future research involving a larger corpus and a longer time span. It could be interesting for future studies to cover a wider corpus or even conduct a diachronic study to reveal how BRAs in the corpus evolve over time. Despite this limitation, this study could contribute to valuable insight for future discussion and research on BRAs published in high-impact journals in language-related field.

Additionally, the current study may offer several implications. First, it may provide guidelines for academics seeking publication in high-impact journals to write BRAs. This study can also provide a clear overview of the recent practice of BRAs genre published in high-impact journals within language-related field. Finally, authors of BRAs may identify potential shortcomings in their writing practices that require further evaluation and attention. However, this study is limited to explanations of BRAs in eight Scopus-indexed journals in the language-related field. Further research should be done in a larger corpus and other academic fields.

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