# Rhetorical Move Structure of Literature Book Prefaces in English and Persian

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**Abstract**

*Genre analysis dealing with how people use language in particular discourse communities has become the focus of research in the last two decades (Tahririan & Jalilifar, 2004). Considering the importance attributed to genre studies, the present research was conducted to report on a move analysis of literature book prefaces in English and Persian. The obligatory moves in the English corpus were found to be: General statement about or general description of the book/ The purpose/ Information about the chapters or other volumes and the obligatory moves in Persian prefaces were found to be: the significance of the topic/ general explanation about the topic/ Thanking others and expressing gratitude to people who have helped in the process of writing the book (acknowledgements).*

*Key terms: Genre, genre analysis, move*

## 1. Introduction

Since 1990s, when for the first time Swales identified communicative moves of the genre of research article introductions and presented his Create A Research Space (CARS) model, there has been an increasing attention to the structure of other academic genres. This interest has its roots in the international role of English in scientific communication and the rapid growth of the number of non-native researchers who need to learn conventions of academic writing in order to join international academic discourse communities. In Dudley-Evans' (1986) words: "This interest has been motivated by pedagogical concerns, in particular the need to provide satisfactory models and descriptions of academic and scientific texts to enhance the ability of non-native students to understand and produce them" (p. 136).

After Swales' (1990) work, many other researchers tried to apply his suggested framework to other genres; research articles (RAs), review articles, editorials, book reviews, and letters to the editor are some of these analyzed genres among many others. In the present research, the macro-structure of the genre of preface is the focus. Like other studies within the genre approach to language description, it attempts to explain how members of a particular discourse community achieve their communicative purposes. The general aim of this genre analysis, in fact, according to Henry and Roseberry (2001) is "to identify the moves and strategies of a genre" (p. 154).

## 2. Literature Review

Genre analysis has followed three main traditions including the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) approach in which genre studies have been seriously emphasized (Toledo, 2005). The ESP approach to genre analysis was introduced by Swales in 1990s with his seminal work on research article introductions. Within this approach, whereby learners' and teachers' attention are drawn to communicative purposes of texts rather than their surface features (Hüttner, Smith, & Mehlmauer-Larcher, 2009), different genre studies have been carried out. Researchers have focused on various academic and non-academic genres and have tried to examine either their macro-structure in terms of their constituting 'moves or steps' or their common lexico-grammatical features. Among many others, some of the academic genres examined by researchers up to now include different sections of research articles: abstracts (Cross & Oppenheim, 2005; Hyland, 2000; Lores, 2004; Martín-Martín, 2003), introductions (Habibi, 2008; Hirano, 2009; Ozturk, 2007; Rubio, 2011), discussions (Atai & Fallah, 2005; Biria & Tahririan, 1997; Nwugo, 1997; Peacock, 2002), different parts of theses and dissertations such as acknowledgements (Golpour Lasaky, 2011; Hyland, 2004) and the literature review chapter (Kwan, 2006), the genre of book reviews (Moreno & Saurez, 2008), book blurb (Valor, 2005), conference proposals (Halleck & Connor, 2006), and syllabus (Afros & Schryer, 2009). In most of these studies, researchers have tried to examine the

generic structure of the aforementioned genres in order to provide a detailed picture of their constituting discourse elements. Despite all these attempts, it seems that the existing literature suffers from a gap in genre studies which is related to the fact that introductory genres such as book prefaces have been left untouched. Following previous scholars, especially Swales (1990), this research is conducted within the ESP approach; the researcher intends to investigate the genre of book prefaces which despite its importance has been the focus of little empirical research. The area of concern in this analysis is, therefore, to contribute to the growing body of research in the area of genre analysis by occupying the aforementioned niche and examining a genre which has not received the attention it deserves. So as was mentioned by Henry (2007), like other genre studies of ESP approach, the researcher aims at identifying obligatory and optional moves.

### 3. The purpose of the study

Nowadays, genre is believed to be a kind of sociolinguistic activity in which members of a particular community take part. From a language teaching perspective, too, a genre is considered as consisting of a series of moves. While prefaces are one of the important parts that the majority of books include, there has been little investigation on their move structure, Prefaces are important because they help the reader to have an overview of the book, to get some information about the different parts of it, and thus to decide which parts correspond to their purpose in mind and worth reading.  The significance of the present study lies in the fact that it can show how much flexibility the genre allows regarding obligatory and optional moves. through which awareness of discipline-specific move structure can be increased and also a discipline-specific move structure model can be prepared.

    This study through which awareness of discipline-specific move structure can be increased is to shed light on:
a-    The generic structure of both Persian and English literature book prefaces
b-    The similarities and differences in the move structure of this genre in these two languages

### 4. Research Question

This text- based, exploratory study serves mainly to examine the moves of book prefaces written by authors in the two languages of Persian and English. More specifically this study strives to answer the following question:
How are Persian and English literature books different  in terms of the moves included in their preface sections?

### 5. Methodology

#### 5.1. The corpus

The corpus of the study was made of 40 literature book prefaces, twenty of which were in English and twenty others in Persian. The year of publication for English books varied from 1965 to 2006 and for Persian books from 1348 to 1386. In English books, the number of pages dedicated to preface varied from 1 to 4 and in Persian books from 1 to 5 pages. In order to have a more homogenous corpus, all prefaces that were translated versions were omitted.

#### 5.2. Analytical Framework

The analytical approach chosen for this study was that of genre analysis following Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993).

#### 5.3. Procedure

Having selected the corpus, the researcher analyzed each preface separately and identified the moves. In this study, move was defined as "discourse or rhetorical unit that performs a coherent communicative function in a written or spoken discourse." (Swales, 2004, p. 229). To identify and code the moves, as suggested by Ansary and Babaii (2005), the researcher tried to use linguistic clues that authors usually employ as well as boundary markers and typographical cues. Besides, the researcher tried to identify moves not only according to the physical clues and identification of key words but also according to the content and communicative purpose each segment fulfilled. The cut-off frequency of 60% of occurrence was also established to determine obligatory and optional moves. In order to eliminate analyst bias and to establish inter-coder agreement, 25% of the data were randomly chosen and analyzed by a second rater.

**6. Results**

*Moves: (English books)*

1- *General statement or general description of the book:*
(General statement) <u>Example1</u>: In recent years, women have been increasingly associated with the Arthurian tradition. From the historical retellings of the legendary stories to the original re-workings of them, from the versions set in Arthur's day to those set in modern times, from fantasy and science fiction to mystery and children's literature, contemporary Arthurian novels by women have garnered critical attention and gained popular acclaim.
(General description) <u>Example 2</u>: This book defines and discusses terms, critical theories and movements, and points of view that are commonly used to classify, analyze, interpret, and write the history of works of literature.

2- *The significance of the book*:
<u>Example1</u>: Given the amount and the scope of recent popular Arthurian women's fiction, it is surprising that there is so little awareness among readers and scholars alike of the significant earlier and ongoing tradition of Arthurian literature by women.
<u>Example2</u>: Large areas of drama history have been left untouched.

3- *The purpose:*
<u>Example1</u>: This series *aims* to disseminate the best of recent criticism and to show that it is possible to re-read the canonical texts of literature in new and challenging ways.
<u>Example2</u>: The *aim*, here, is to provide clear, well- illustrated accounts of the full range of terminology currently in use, and to evolve histories of its changing usage.
<u>Example3</u>: The book *seeks* to give the student a sufficient grasp of the nature and variety of literary works…

4- *The type of audience:*
<u>Example1</u>: Although the book is intended primarily for *students in schools and universities*, I hope that it will help *anyone interested in literature*…
<u>Example2</u>: Literature, sound, and sense is intended for the *student* who is beginning a serious study of imaginative literature.
<u>Example3</u>: This book has been written *for those who are interested in reading about drama for the first time, and who want to know something more of the meaning and purpose of drama, and of its development in other countries.*

5- *Description of content, book chapters and other volumes of the book:*
<u>Example1</u>: Each *section* begins with a simple discussion of the element of the form and is illustrated, throughout, by carefully chosen stories, poems, and plays. Each section also includes additional selections for further reading.
<u>Example2</u>: For students who are preparing for examinations in English literature, I have included exploratory *exercises* at the end of each *chapter*. *Chapter 8* contains practical advice for students preparing for "unseen" or" practical criticism" papers …
<u>Example3</u>: A Glossary of Literary Terms consists of *succinct essays in the alphabetic order of the title word or phrase*. Terms that are related but subsidiary, or that designate subclasses, are treated under the title heading of the primary or generic term; also words that are often used in conjunction or as mutually defining contraries are discussed in the same entry.
<u>Example4</u>: Each *volume* in the series will attempt an objective position of significant developments in its field up to the present as well as an account of its author's own views of the matter.

6- *More explanation about the book:*
<u>Example1</u>: This book, then, is an introduction to both literary theory and a history of theory. But it is a history in which what has become historical is simultaneously actual…
<u>Example2</u>: The series is designed so that the books in it can be used independently of the others in the series. Many intermediate or advanced learners may be able to begin with the third or fourth books….

➢ *Less frequent moves:* hope expression, suggestions, and acknowledgement.
- *Hope expression:*
<u>Example1</u>: The enterprising reader will, I *hope,* forgive me if he has to use his dictionaries as much as I did.

**Example2**: It is to be *hoped* that this book will help those who are keen to develop national drama to realize the important part which drama can play in a civilized society, and to take inspiration and encouragement from the efforts and achievements of other lands where dramatic traditions have been established.

- *Suggestions:*

**Example**: All I can do is to ask the reader who reads to the end to re-read Part One and to resist thinking of all the names and novels I have decided or forgotten to include.

- *Acknowledgements:*

**Example**: It would be impossible to express all indebtedness, but for personal advice, criticism, and assistance I wish especially to thank my wife, Catherine Perrine …

**Table 1:** Frequency and percentage of identified moves in English book prefaces

| Move | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| 1- General statement/ description | 15 | 75 % |
| 2- The significance | 8 | 40 % |
| 3- The purpose | 18 | 90 % |
| 4- Type of reader | 11 | 55 % |
| 5- Information about the chapters or other volumes | 12 | 60 % |
| 6- More explanation | 11 | 55 % |

As table 1 displays, the following are obligatory moves in English literature book prefaces. (The percentage of their appearance is more than 60):

1- <u>General statement about or general description of the book</u>: A little description of the book in general lines.
2- <u>The purpose</u>: A little explanation about what the readers will gain if they read the book.
3- <u>Information about the chapters or other volumes</u>

According to this table, the rest of the identified moves i.e. the significance, the type of reader, information about the chapters or other volumes and more explanation are optional.

*Moves: (Persian books)*

1- *The Significance:*

مثل: در حل حاضر بدون اگاهی از مبانی و اصول زبان شناسی انجام تحقیقی مبسوط و پژوهشی جامع در اغلب زمینه های علوم انسانی امری دشوار و تقریبا نا ممکن است.

مثل: نقص اثر موجود و عدم اشراف بعضی از مدعیان و نقصان منابع صاحب این قلم را بر ان داشت تا جزوه ی درس ادبیات معاصر را به نشر بسپارد.

2- *The Purpose:*

مثل: مقصود از تالیف این کتاب این است که دانشجویان رشته های مختلف دانشگاهی با انواع نوشته ها از قبیل مقاله داستان رمان گزارش و ... بیشتر اشنا شوند.

مثل: هدف اساسی از تنظیم کتاب حاضر اشنا کردن دانشجویان این رشته با مقدمات و مطالب عمده ی زبان شناسی است.

3- *The type of reader:*

مثل: کتاب حاضر نوشته شده است تا هم دانشجویان رشته ی زبان و ادبیات پارسی را در رده های کارشناسی ارشد و دکتری به کار اید و هم دوستان شاهنامه و خواستاران اشنایی ژرفتر و افزونتر با این نامه ی نامور را به یکبارگی.

مثل: مخاطب این مختصر در درجه ی اول دانشجویان ادبیات فارسی و علاقه مندانی در این حدود هستند.

مثل: توصیفی که از ساختار زبان فارسی در این کتاب عرضه میشود برای تدریس در دبستان یا دبیرستان نیست. این توصیفی است فنی از ساختمان زبان فارسی که در درجه ی اول برای خواننده ی اشنا به زبانشناسی نوشته شده است.

4- *Description of content, book chapters and other volumes of the book:*

مثل: دو فصل پایانی کتاب به بررسی نثر و نظم و نویسندگان و شاعران در این دوره میپردازد.

مثل: فصل دیگر این کتاب گزارشی مختصر از برخی واژه ها نامها و نشانه هایی است که در گزیده ی اشعار غالب مورد اشارت قرار گرفته است و میتواند در کسب اندیشه های شاعر خواننده را یاری گر باشد.

5- *Generalstatement or description:*

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مثل: در این مجموعه بخشهایی از پنج کتاب و رساله ی حکیم ناصر بن خسرو قبادیانی بلخی برای مطالعه ی علاقه مندان
اورده شده است.

مثل: هر یک از سروده های این مجموعه بیانگر رویدادی سیاسی یا دربردارنده ی طنز یا لطیفه ای با بار سیاسی است...

6- *Shortcomings:*

مثل: میتواند بود که در بازاورد مطالب لغزشی رخ داده باشد که بیگمان بر خوانندگان سخن سنج این کتاب پوشیده نخواهد ماند و به اسانی میتوانندش تصحیح کرد.

مثل: از انجایی که شاید این اولین دستور ساختمانی زبان فارسی باشد که با اسلوب نوین زبان شناسی عرضه میشود بدون تردید معایبی دارد ولی در ابتدای این لغزش ها اجتناب ناپذیر است امید است با تذکر صاحب نظران عیوب ان برطرف گردد:

7- *Acknowledgement:*

مثل: در خاتمه جای دارد از جناب اقای..... مدیر محترم موسسه ی انتشاراتی ...که موجبات چاپ و نشر این اثر را فراهم کرده اند صمیمانه سپاسگذاری کنم.

مثل: در اینجا بایسته میداند که بار دیگر سپاس بیکران خود را به روان پاک حضرت استاد ...رییس فقید انجمن ادبی ایران و استاد دانشمند بزرگوار جناب اقای دکتر ....که همواره نگارنده را راهنمایی فرموده اند تقدیم دارد.

8- *Expressing hope:*

مثل: امید است که با استعانت از خوانندگان محترم که نظراتشان نیز برای مولف ارزنده و مغتنم است مجموعه ی حاضر در چاپ های بعدی بتواند با تصویر هایی متناسب با سروده ها عرضه گردد.

مثل: ... امید وار است که دانش اموزان . دانشجویان و سایر علاقه مندان به مطالعه نمونه هایی از اثر ناصر خسرو در درک مطلب با دشواری رو به رو نشوند و با پی بردن به نوع اندیشه و میزان دانش و بینش این سخنور گرانقدر با بزرگان ادب فارسی و اثر جاویدشان اشنایی فزونتری یابند.

➢ _Less frequent moves:_ Brief explanation about previous works on the topic, explanations about signs and acronyms, and materials collection

- *Explanation about previous works:*

مثل: تاریخ ادبیات در دوره ی بازگشت که با کمی تسامح سالهای بین سقوط صفویه تا استقرار مشروطیه را در بر میگیرد به صورتی جامع مورد بحث محققان و توجه استادان واقع نشده و به ویژه در دوره ی افشاریه و زندیه تحقیق جامعی صورت نگرفته است.

- *Explanations about signs and acronyms:*

مثل: حروف ط.ب. خ. ق که در بالای هر غزل به شیوه ی مرحوم ..... نهاده شده است نشان میدهد که هر غزلی از این گزینه در نسخه های چاپی و نسخه های متاخر در ضمن کدام مجموعه از طیبات و بدایع و خواتیم و غزلیات قدیم امده است.

- *Materials collection:*

مثل: انچه در این کتاب عرضه میشود بر اساس تجزیه و تحلیل یازده هزار جمله ی فارسی امروزیست که از کتابها. مجلات. روز نامه ها و نوشته های مختلف استخراج شده است. علاوه بر این از گفت و گوی دوستان و معاشران خود نیز الهام گرفته ام و از شم زبانی خود نیز به عنوان یک فارسی زبان استفاده کرده ام.

**Table 2:** Frequency and percentage of identified moves in Persian book prefaces

| | Move | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1- | Significance | 13 | % 65 |
| 2- | The purpose | 8 | % 40 |
| 3- | Type of reader | 10 | % 50 |
| 4- | Chapter description | 6 | % 30 |
| 5- | General statement or description | 16 | % 80 |
| 6- | Shortcomings | 8 | % 40 |
| 7- | Acknowledgement | 12 | % 60 |
| 8- | Hope expression | 8 | % 40 |

As table 2 indicates, the following moves seem to be obligatory in Persian book prefaces:

1- <u>The significance of the topic</u>

2- <u>General statement or description</u>
3- <u>(Acknowledgments) Thanking others and expressing gratitude to people who have helped in the process of writing the book</u>

## 7. Conclusion

As the results showed, the only common main move between English and Persian book prefaces was general statement about or description of the content of the book. In both languages, the authors gave some explanations about the content in general lines. It seems that the authors of both languages are aware of the fact that providing their readers with a background will help them in better comprehension of the text. Through such general descriptions, they just try to set the scene and make the readers prepared. Beside this similarity, there were some differences between English and Persian prefaces. For example, in Persian prefaces the use of quotations from famous people and Arabic expressions were common which can show the influence of Islamic religion and culture on these authors. They also used poems to start and finish their speech. The language in Persian books was much more formal and the use of complex sentences was more frequent. Another important difference refers to the fact that the majority of Iranian writers talked about the probable shortcomings in their work and asked their readers to help them improve those shortcomings and mistakes. It can show that in Iran, the process of book publication is not that much exact and although a book is published, there may remain some errors. Moreover, although in English prefaces, the move of acknowledgment was not as frequent as it was in Persian books, in 90 percent of the books in which this move was present, a separate part was given for acknowledgement, in Persian books, it was attached to the preface. This can be an indicator that thanking others for their support is really important to English people to the extent that they express it in another separate part. But that is not the case for Iranians and they do not consider acknowledgement as an independent genre.

The findings of this study reinforce the notion that move structure of a genre may vary to some extent in different languages. It calls for more attention to the genre of preface and can be considered as an awareness- raising tool which can increase awareness of discipline- specific move structure and also prepare a discipline- specific move structure model: Explanations about the structure and content of the book Explanations about the structure and content of the book.

The present study examined move structure of literature book prefaces in English and Persian. The corpus was of a limited size, so further research can be conducted with the same research question in a larger corpus. The move structure of the same genre can also be investigated in disciplines other than literature.

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