



**Appraisal Resources in Book Reviews:  
A Study of Cross-Gender Variations**

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**Abstract**

Writing a book review is an instance of evaluative academic writing where the writer is involved in an interaction with the author and the reader, evaluates the viewpoints stated in the book and voices his own position and stance in a dialogue with the reader. Working within the framework of Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory as an effective tool for studying the essential resources employed in this interaction and evaluation, the present study examined 60 book reviews from the Humanities academic journals written by native male and female writers, and tried to investigate the type and frequency of the three Appraisal categories (Attitude, Engagement, Graduation). The findings indicate that both writer groups made extensive use of these resources in their writings. However, the male book review writers exceeded the female writers in all the three categories. In addition, the Attitude resources were used the most and The Engagement resources were the least employed resources. The implications of the study for teaching writing skills and developing materials and tasks for writing courses at academic levels are mentioned in detail.

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## 1 Introduction

A review critically evaluates a text, book, article, event, etc. It is an argumentative genre where the writer states his attitude and evaluation of the target work. The main objective of a book review, as a type of academic text, is to introduce a new book to the public readership and critically evaluate the academic accomplishment of a scholar in an academic field.

The principal characteristic feature of a review is that it is a commentary, and not just a summary, with a special emphasis on critical assessment of the content and value of a given work. Thus, as *Oinas and Leppälä (2013)* state, reviews do not just summarize or praise books. They give the reader a brief summary of the work including subject description and the goal, and also provide evaluative remarks. The review writer makes an argument and enters into discussion with the author and the addresses. The reviewer can agree or disagree, offer his reaction and appreciation, and recommend the work as noteworthy or poor in its knowledge, structure, or judgments.

*Tobin (2003)* prescribed a technique to evaluate a book. Accordingly, the reviewer can decide if the book, in question, presents new insights for the reader or provides a new understanding for an already known event, or, at least, combines old materials in a new way. There might be no ultimate technique to writing a review, but some critical assessment is essential before embarking on writing. Writing a review is a process of raising an argument and supporting it within an organized structure. When writing a review, the writer should try to attend to the following issues:

- The book writer's nationality, political inclinations, interests, personal and historical settings, and other bio-data.
- The key argument, the main idea or the chief accomplishment of the book.
- The theme of the book and whether the writer is able to address all facets of it in a balanced manner as well as the approach adopted by the writer.
- Whether the writer is able to support convincingly the argument and if the conclusions and assumptions are well-backed and are not contradictory to other similar books or common sense.
- Whether the book enhances our understanding and appreciation of the theme and whether reviewer recommends it to the public readership.
- Try to avoid hasty and unfair judgments. The reviewer should try to review the book under consideration, not the book he wished the writer had written, and present a sensible argument, which can be proved, on the value of the book for the audience.

Book reviews are important for the books, authors, and readers. Book reviews draw attention to a specific book, provide the ground for the appreciation of that work. They recommend the book to public readership, and thus, they pave the way for the scholarly community to admire the significance of that new publication in the discipline. Moreover, book reviews contribute to the visibility, prominence, and credibility of the authors. They help the author refine his/her intellectual capability and improve a given argument. Therefore, they play a role in the career

promotion of the author. The authors can also better realize what the other members of the same speech community want and, therefore, can understand the addressee better. In addition, book reviews assist the readers in familiarizing them with the content, style, academic value, and the merits and demerits of the new work, and, therefore, save their time by providing them with help to find the right book that best fits their purpose.

On the other hand, the writers of book reviews need to maneuver around their position in association with the field and their prospective addressees. Employing the appraisal theory (Martin & White, 2005), the present study is an attempt to explore the way these writers use different types of appraisal resources to develop academic knowledge via text and in interaction with other knowledge and other members of the same speech community.

## 2 Review of the literature

*Evaluation* is at the heart and forefront of book reviews. The writers of book reviews attempt to evaluate the academic contribution of a writer in a scholarly community and give readers information about a given academic work. In the same way, both Motta-Roth (1998) and Itakura and Tsui (2011) consider evaluation as the main function of book reviews. They hold that book reviews assess the writer's academic values and merits and, thus, exert an impact on the reputation of the writer. In Babaii's (2011) view, book review is a long-lasting scholarly genre which is ideal for exploring criticism in academic settings. Suarez and Moreno (2008), too, highlight the evaluation function of book review genre of the value of a certain work to the development of the field.

Most research works on the book review genre, in the literature, are mainly concerned with cross-linguistic variations, and focus on language differences that are partially due to cultural disparities. Some comparative studies, also, have been done in various disciplines to compare and contrast variations in features within and across different fields including applied linguistics.

A large number of research projects have been conducted to investigate academic writing in light of Appraisal framework. While, as Babaii (2011) rightly states, book review is an ideal text type for exploring criticism in academic context, it remains as an unexplored area. However, recently, book review genre has gained significance and attention from scholars and researchers in that field (Hyland & Diani, 2009). In line with Hyland and Diani (2009), Hunston and Thompson (2000), too, argue that book reviews have witnessed more prominence. The book review genre, although ignored in applied linguistics research (Hyland, 2000, Junqueira, 2013), currently holds a special place in most academic journals across various disciplines as it is a praiseworthy endeavor to study evaluative language characteristics in any academic genre, in terms of structure, variables, gender, language background, inter-cultural as well as inter-disciplinary variables, and reveal writer's admiration or criticism on recently published academic works.

As stated above, the book review genre in academic context has been a neglected area and few studies have yet been conducted on evaluative language features in this genre. Oinas and Leppälä (2013), for example, hold that writing book reviews, seemingly, is not anyone's first priority. It is just what the author does after doing all the important things. This might happen

due to, as Stilwell (2003) rightly states, economic reasons that fail to assign equal weight to book reviews as to other academic text types, or to poor citation count (East, 2011).

Motta-Roth (1998), for example, studied 180 (chemistry, economics, and linguistics) book reviews in terms of rhetorical moves using Swales' (1990) framework. She found four moves: introducing the book, outlining the book, highlighting parts of the book, and providing closing evaluation of the book. Regarding moves analysis, Suarez and Moreno (2008) scrutinized 40 Spanish and English literary book reviews and identified new steps within the recognized moves. They decided that academic book reviews are a cross-culturally distinct genre. Furthermore, while, English book reviews tended to use more negative comments, Spanish book reviews used less critical remarks and negative comments in their evaluation of the books under review. In another cross-cultural study of the rhetorical features of linguistics book reviews in Brazilian Portuguese and English, Junqueira (2013) found that, except for the third evaluative move, the academic book reviews involved the moves which Motta-Roth (1998) recognized. Furthermore, it was revealed that, although the English reviews mentioned more the weaknesses and deficiencies of the books concerned and thus, more critical in tone, this was less commonly observed in Brazilian Portuguese book reviews.

In another cross-cultural comparative study of Japanese and English book reviews on the management of criticism in linguistics book reviews, Itakura and Tsui (2011) noticed that while English review writers used admiration more commonly to make rapport and build solidarity, Japanese review writers tended to employ self-denigration and apology more often. Concerning Japanese book reviews, accordingly, the writers used rhetorical questions, self-denigration, recasting problems as a possibility for later research and assigning problems to the next generations.

In the study by Hyland (2004), 160 (science, humanities, and the social sciences) book reviews from 28 academic journals were examined. The findings show that in soft sciences, evaluations were more discursive, more detailed, and longer. In addition, while, soft sciences' book reviews contained more criticism than praise, hard sciences' book reviews had a higher number of praise evaluations. He concluded that the various roles the book reviews play determine these cross-disciplinary variations.

Analyzing 54 book reviews published in major physics journals from the perspective of Appraisal theory, Babaii (2011) found that the book reviews contained more impersonal criticism and tended to be more objective. However, the existence of such personal elements as sarcasm, mockery, and blunt criticism contradicts with the claims of impersonality and objectivity made by hard science practitioners. She argues that the established authority of the book review writers in the discipline made them present severe criticism with taking no heed of the potential consequences of their critical remarks.

In a comparative cross-cultural (Spanish, French, and English) study of medical book reviews in terms of criticism, Salager-Meyer and Alcaraz Ariza (2004) found that Spanish book review writers used a higher number of critical remarks. Furthermore, French and Spanish book review writers tended to use more mitigation tools to alleviate critical comments. Meanwhile, English review writers used a larger number of direct criticisms. Their results also indicated that French review writers used a more authoritative and expert style of presenting critical

comments whereas Spanish review writers used more satirical language. Nevertheless, the English review authors presented critical comments as personal views.

Liping (2005), as cited in Loghmani, Ghonsooly, and Ghazanfari, (2019), in an Engagement analysis based on the appraisal theory, studied the subtle evaluation techniques of the English academic book review. He examined 10 linguistic book reviews in terms of the intravocalize resources in the Evaluation phase and noticed a variation in the frequency of those resources. Accordingly, the most frequently intravocalize resources used were Counter expectation, Concurrence, and Evidence. He found that Denial and Likelihood were used the most, but Hearsay and Pronouncement were used the least. Furthermore, he noticed that Proclaim and Endorsement were mostly used to give praise, disclaim to give criticism, and Entertain and Hearsay did not tend towards either praise or criticism.

### **3 Methodology**

#### **3.1 Material**

In the present study, a corpus including various book reviews were selected in order to explore cross-gender differences in the use of appraisal resources used by the writers. The corpus includes book reviews written by native male and female authors and contains a total number of 60 book reviews. Thus, from among the 60 book reviews, 30 book reviews were written by males and the other 30 reviews by females.

There are some selection criteria for the inclusion of the book reviews. First, it was tried to choose reviews from similar academic discipline, i.e. humanities including psychology, sociology, art, and linguistics. Second, the area for the selection is the 2010s to avoid diachronic variations in frequency and type of appraisal resources. Third, we only selected single-writer book reviews so as to avoid stylistic variations between review writers. Finally, the length of the book review is a matter of concern. It was decided to ignore too short or too long reviews, and therefore, the average word count for the book reviews selected for the study is 1025 words.

#### **3.2 Analytical Framework**

The “Appraisal Model” was first suggested by Iedema, Feez, and White (1994). It is an addition to Halliday’s (1994) interpersonal metafunctions in systemic functional linguistics and is mainly concerned with the prerequisites for the reading and writing conventions in media, science, art, literature, history, and technology. Later on, drawing on Halliday’s (1994) systemic functional linguistics, Martin and White (2005) proposed “Appraisal Theory”. This Theory tries to explore the levels of semantics (Martin & White, 2005) and differentiates between kinds of attitude (personal affect, judgment of people and appreciation of objects), and explains how writers use language to communicate their engagement with other writers, and to amplify or diminish the strength of their attitudes and engagements (Read & Carroll, 2012).

Appraisal Theory includes three major categories: Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation. According to Martin and White (2005),

ATTITUDE is concerned with our feelings, including emotional reactions, judgments of behavior and evaluation of things. ENGAGEMENT deals with sourcing attitudes and the play of voice around opinions in discourse. GRADUATION attends to grading phenomena whereby feelings are amplified and categories blurred (p. 35).

<b>Appraisal Resources</b>	<b>Engagement</b>	<b>Monogloss:</b> Authors do not recognize alternative voices
		<b>Heterogloss:</b> Authors recognize alternative positions
	<b>Attitude</b>	<b>Affect:</b> Un/Happiness, In/Security, In/Satisfaction
		<b>Judgment:</b> Social Esteem, Social Sanction
		<b>Appreciation:</b> Reaction, Composition, Social Valuation
	<b>Graduation</b>	<b>Force:</b> Raise/ Lower
<b>Focus:</b> Sharpen/ Soften		

**Table 1:** Overview of the Appraisal Theory

Appraisal Theory is concerned with the context and linguistic resources people utilize to indicate their evaluation of the utterances, and their opinions towards the communicative participants. It is also concerned with the use of various interpersonal means from a dialogic viewpoint (Martin & White, 2005). In particular, it is concerned with the language that states writers' emotions or value judgments about their own propositions or propositions from external sources, and their engagement with external propositions as well. In White's view (2001a), Appraisal theory studies concentrate on interpersonal meaning both in individual utterances and as the text unfolds cumulatively.

### 3.3 Instrumentation

The Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005) which is rooted in Halliday's Systemic Functional linguistics was used for data analysis. Accordingly, the discourse markers which contribute to the realization of writers' attitude and positions towards the meanings presented via the text were carefully examined. In the qualitative phase, the instances of engagement, attitude, and graduation resources were identified and coded in the texts under investigation. For higher degree of accuracy, each text was coded and double-checked manually two times in two-month intervals by the researchers in order to establish reliability and validity. The results of the quantitative phase were presented in tables each of which indicated the writers' position and preference for different types of appraisal resources. In the quantitative phase, the data obtained in the qualitative phase was analyzed and explanations were provided for each category. As the length of the texts were not the same, a frequency per 1000 words was considered for each category.

The results obtained for each field and writer group were compared and contrasted with regard to the variable under investigation to discover the possible similarities and differences among different texts and different writers as well.

### 3.4 Data analysis procedure

Working within the framework of the Appraisal framework (Martin & White, 2005), data were collected by identifying and recording discursial markers and analyzed against the Appraisal theory.

## 4 Results and Discussion

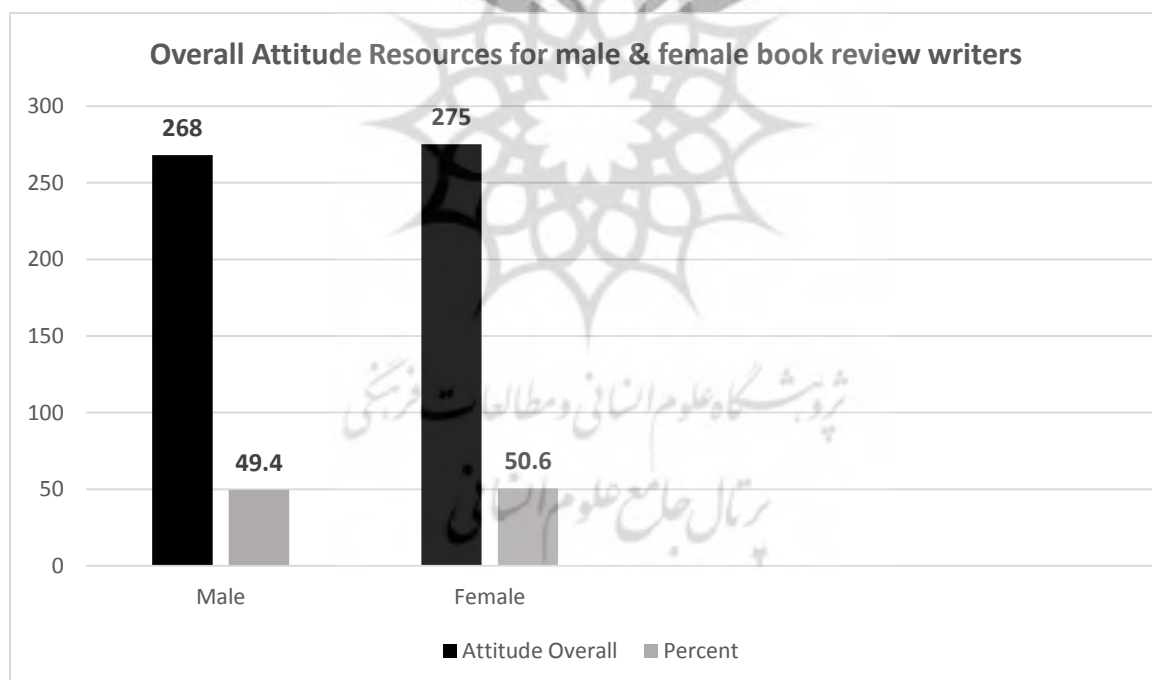
The analysis of the data, using the frequency index, reveals important facts about native male and female writing styles and variations in their authorship. There are some similarities and differences among these writers which is the concern of the current study. The Appraisals, by way of frequency, from the most frequent to the least are: Attitude, Graduation, and

Engagement, respectively. The overall frequency of Attitude resources is far more than the other two categories (Graduation and Engagement) and both writer groups have used these resources the most (69 percent), and the frequency of Engagement resources is the least of all (12.5 percent), while the Graduation resources occupy the middle position (18 percent). As the Appraisal framework comprises different fields and subfields, the discussion, therefore, will be brought forward for each category and subcategories:

*Attitude* is concerned with feelings, including emotional reactions, judgments of behavior, and evaluation of phenomena. *Engagement* deals with sourcing attitudes and the play of voices around opinions in discourse. *Graduation* attends to grading phenomena, whereby feelings are amplified and categories blurred (Martin & White, 2005). Thus, the resources allow the exploration of interpersonal meaning at semantic discourse level and the analysis of the writer's positioning of the phenomena within a particular context.

#### 4.1 Attitude

As could be seen in Table 1, Attitude itself is subdivided into three categories namely, *Affect*, *Judgment*, and *Appreciation*. The analysis of the data indicates that both male and female writers are at a similar level in using Attitude subcategories (Affect, Engagement, Appreciation) (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** Overall Attitude Resources for male & female book review writers

Regarding *Affect* resources, native male book review writers did not use as many resources as the female writers, and female writers surpassed the male reviewers. As Figure 2 displays, native female authors tended to use Affect resources as twice more than native male authors. Thus, female writers show more affective feelings towards the works of the writers whose books they reviewed. In other words, the female writers felt more at ease to express their affects

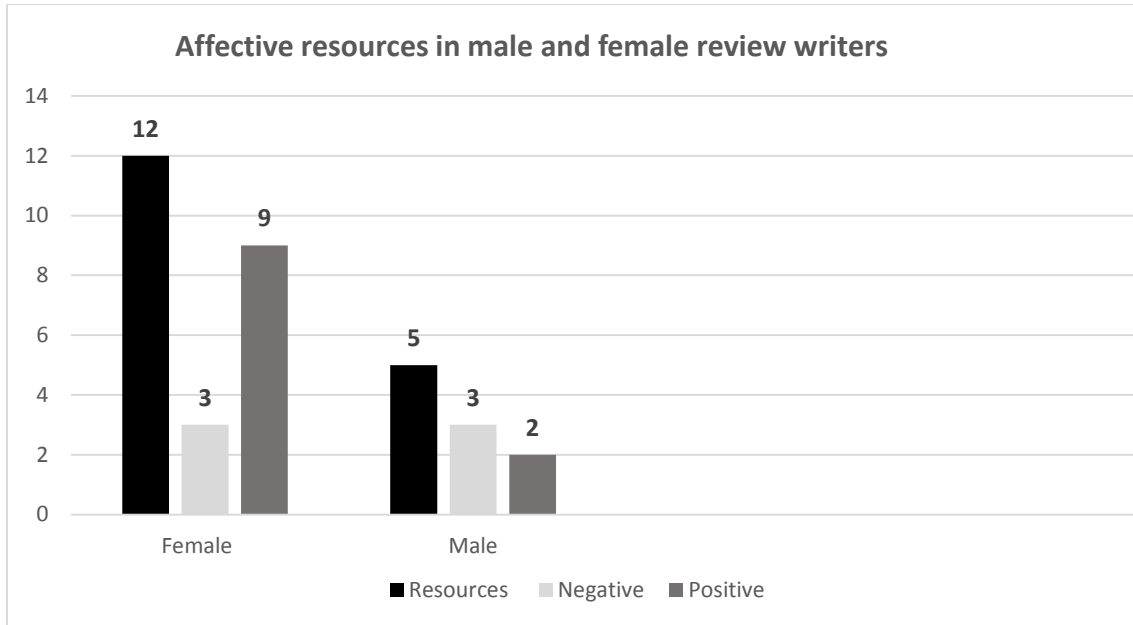
and emotions in reference to the books being evaluated. The following examples are extracted from the data:

- *I was deeply inspired by his account.* (Attitude, Affect, Female)
- *It's a disappointment that he is blind to the context.* (Attitude, Affect, Female)
- *I loved the writing style and treatment manner.* (Attitude, Affect, Female)
- *It is a surprise to see him wrangling in favor of authority.* (Attitude, Affect, Male)
- *I was impressed to notice a sense of honesty in his introspective exploration of the inner self.* (Attitude, Affect, Male)
- *I loved the serene solitude of a sensitive soul pondering over what we ignore in our lives of social vanity.* (Attitude, Affect, Male)
- *It's a pity that the market work diminished some of women's self-esteem and social respect.* (Attitude, Affect, Female)
- *I am optimistic about the deprived class taking over the problem of socially valued economic and leadership roles.* (Attitude, Affect, Male)
- *I am somewhat disappointed by the concluding section on 'futures'.* (Attitude, Affect, Female)

As the above extracts exemplify, both male and female writers express their own impressions, anger, love, disappointment, sorrow, and excitement towards the phenomenon they are evaluating. Therefore, these writers are quick to use various resources, to state their attitude towards the issues, which could better imply their impressions whether directly or indirectly and positively or negatively.

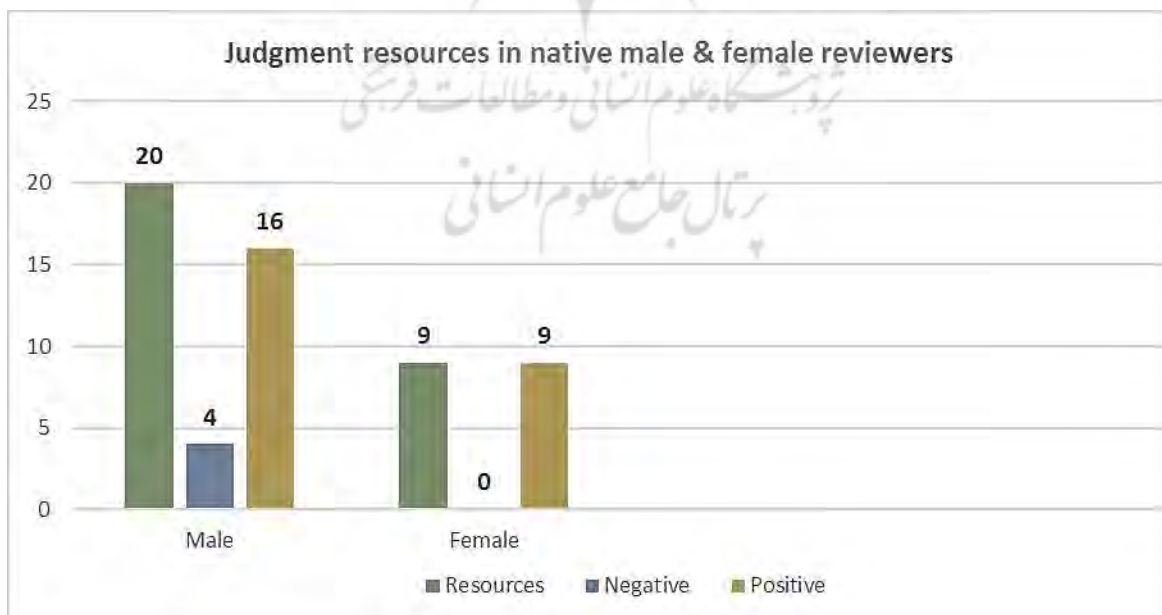
Meanwhile, female reviewers also used more, nearly all, affective *positive* resources in comparison to the male reviewers. It refers to the fact that female reviewers were more honest and candid, than males, in expressing their feelings and emotions towards the works concerned. Therefore, it could be inferred that these writers were more straightforward in their treatment and felt more comfortable to plainly state their affective reactions to the books. The reason behind this could be that, as is normally the case, women are more at ease with expressing their emotional and can speak about their feelings more frankly as compared to men.





**Figure 2:** Affective resources in male and female review writers

*Judgment* is the second subcategory of Attitude. It is concerned with the evaluation of human character or behavior according to ethics or other social norms. Contrary to the Affect part of Attitude where female reviewers were more prominent, male writers used more Judgment resources (see Figure 3). It is notable to mention that male writers, unlike female writers, used these resources twice more than those used by the females. They could easily pass judgment on humans and express their evaluations on the writers whose books they were reviewing. This might be due to the fact that men, by nature, are franker and less under the constraints of the circumstances. Figure 3 illustrates the distribution, frequency, and the type (positive and negative) of Judgment resources across male and female writers.



**Figure 3:** Judgment resources in male and female book reviews

In addition to using more Judgment resources, male writers also tended to express their evaluations openly and they were quick to pass their value judgments towards the phenomenon in question explicitly and without ambiguity. Although female review writers used Judgment resources to some extent, they failed to express their evaluations directly. That is, they are less straightforward in expressing their judgments; rather they convey their evaluation through mechanisms of implication.

Another point worthy to be considered here is that male writer used *negative* Judgment resources in their evaluations, too. Even though they used more positive resources in their reviews, they did not hesitate to use the negatives when they fit their purpose. In contrast to male writers, female writers used only positive judgment resources to the exclusion of the negative judgment resources. Some extracts to exemplify Judgment, as used in the book reviews, are as follows:

- *He is an astute observer of the sinister motive behind the shiny exterior*". (Attitude, Judgment, Female)
- *She can be a little crabby at times*". (Attitude, Judgment, Female)
- *He is friendly and a man of forceful personality*". (Attitude, Judgment, Female)
- *Almost all his family members were famous and well-educated*". (Attitude, Judgment, Male)
- *But he was notoriously too stubborn to go and claim his honorary degree*. (Attitude, Judgment, Male)
- *He was self-complacent about the intense emotional quality of his works*. (Attitude, Judgment, Male)
- *He is an eminent writer and thinker and one of the most quoted in his field*. (Attitude, Judgment, Male)
- *As a child, she was brave enough to stand for her right and stop the bully*. (Attitude, Judgment, Male)

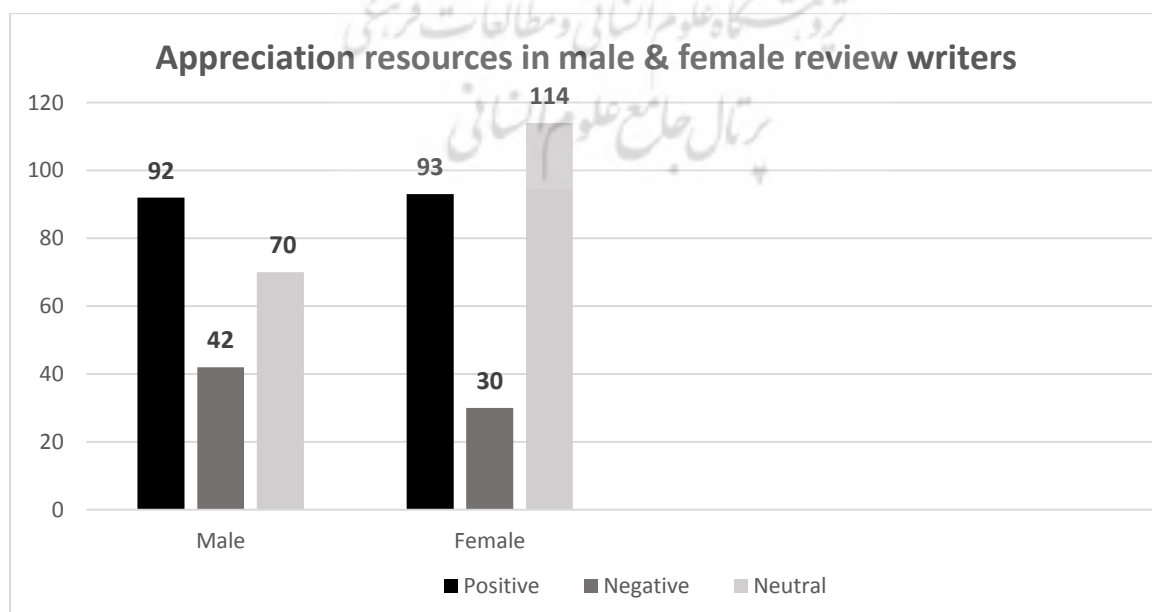
As the above extracts illustrate, both male and female writers express their own judgments towards the authors, characters, and people they are evaluating. Based on Figure 3, these writers use various resources, to state their judgmental attitude towards the writers whether directly or indirectly and positively or negatively.

**Appreciation** is the next subfield in Attitude. It entails the assessment of artifacts, entities, happenings and other state of affairs by reference to esthetics and other systems of social valuation (Martin & White, 2005). Appreciation is the field where both male and female review writers lavish extravagantly in their treatment (see Figure 4). They make use of these resources in the reviews so much that the other resources appear as bagatelle. The huge number of *adjectives* they have used in the reviews make us draw the conclusion that this is the most overtly used field in the whole framework. Both review writers use adjectives so extensively and tremendously, in comparison to the other resources, that the other fields look insignificant.

These adjectives comprise an extremely wide range of adjectives taken from politics, philosophy, psychology, sociology, religion and linguistics as well. Some of these adjectives

have a high frequency index and enjoy a differential range of repetition in each group. These adjectives convey positive, negative, and neutral senses. They imply, in various degrees, anger, hatred, hostility, disappointment, and lack of concern. The followings are extracts to exemplify the point:

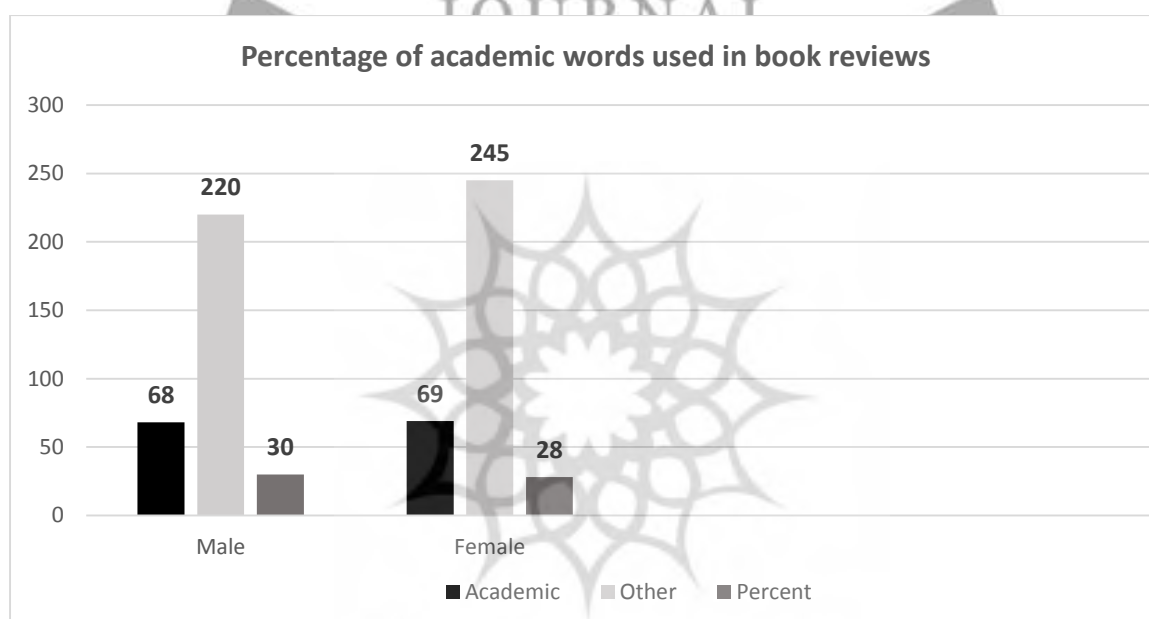
- *At the book's thrillingly climax, Obama vanquishes two enemies*". (Attitude, Appreciation, Male)
- *His sensational ascent was accompanied by a nagging question*". (Attitude, Appreciation, Male)
- *It is a compelling insight into the 'paradox of power' experience*". (Attitude, Appreciation, Male)
- *We engage in constructive social labor in distant geographies*". (Attitude, Appreciation, Male)
- *Muslim feminists have found the work of Christian women theologians helpful and encouraging*. (Attitude, Appreciation, Female)
- *The most challenging Qur'anic text for Muslim women is so notorious that within the literature is often referred to as 4.34*. (Attitude, Appreciation, Female)
- *The most attractive feature of this book is that Hidayatullah cares so much about her subject*. (Attitude, Appreciation, Female)
- *Land of the Cosmic Race is a richly-detailed ethnographic account of the powerful role that race and color play in organizing the lives of Mexicans*. (Attitude, Appreciation, Female)
- *Carefully presented and self-consciously written, this is an excellent book for anyone with an interest in Mexican racial politics*. (Attitude, Appreciation, Female)
- *This is a well-written and engaging book, which draws together a range of interesting perspectives on the politics of climate change*. (Attitude, Appreciation, Female)



**Figure 4:** Appreciation resources in male & female review writers

Another point to be mentioned here is the number of academic words, *adjectives*, both writers used in their book reviews is the same. Although female writers used more adjectives compared to male writers, both of them used an equal number of academic adjectives. Thus, one issue raised here is that even though female writers outperformed male writers in this regard, they failed to employ the same number of academic words, i.e., adjectives, as did their counterpart male writers (See Figure 5).

In addition, both writer groups have made use of an equal number of appreciation resources in terms of positive values. However, it is the male writers who used more negative Appreciation resources and less neutral values in comparison to female writers. As noted earlier (for Affect resources), male writers used both positive and negative values in their evaluations and are more balanced in their judgments toward both people and objects, but female writers are too conservative in using negative values in their assessments as it is challenging.

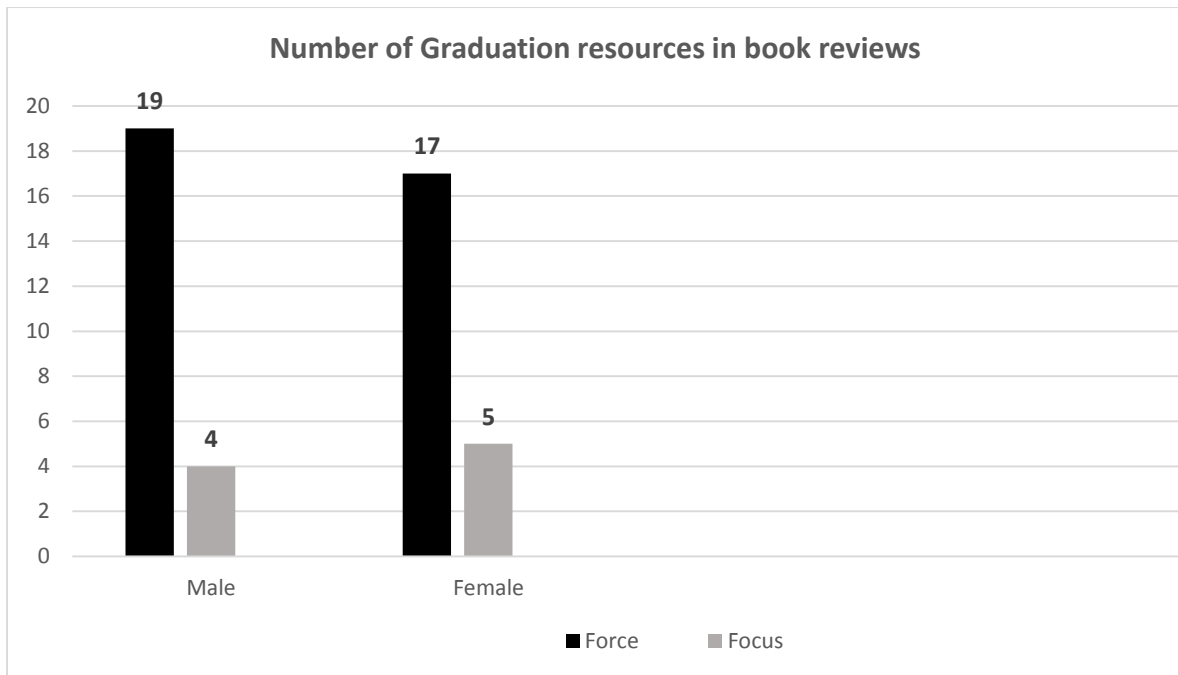


**Figure 5:** Percentage of academic words used in book reviews

#### 4.2 Graduation

A major factor of variation in interactive meaning making is the degree of a speaker's personal involvement in the propositions conveyed in the text. The Appraisal theory conceives of this function by reference to two concepts: Force and Focus. According to Martin and White (2005), *force* is meanings by which propositions are strengthened or mitigated and *focus* is meanings by which the boundaries of semantic categories can be blurred or sharpened.

Concerning Graduation resources, both male and female writers used more Force than Focus resources. It is interesting, however, that the number of these (Force) resources is roughly the same for both writers, but the frequency index is different across them. It is notable to add that male writers are in a higher position in both the number and frequency of Force resources. The frequency of Focus resources, however, is in favor of female writers. Figure 6 below best visualizes the issue:



**Figure 6:** Number of Graduation resources in book reviews

The following extracts are taken to exemplify Graduation resources in the analyzed book reviews:

- *The authors very briefly refer to George Papandreou's government*". (Graduation, Force, Male)
- *Throughout the book, the authors make a rather persuasive case*". (Graduation, Force, Male)
- *The effort to withdraw from it was a complete failure*". (Graduation, Focus, Female)
- *Tyranny and genocide are not aberrations from modernity, but are rather possible logical conclusions of it.* (Graduation, Force, Female)
- *Without a clear way towards achieving this ideal, in reality his and Obirek's conversation concludes 'without conclusions.* (Graduation, Focus, Female)
- *If extremely successful, it ends up controlling something closer to an entire economy.* (Graduation, Force, Female)
- *The inability to effectively hold the corporate contractor to account for it is a failure.* (Graduation, Focus, Male)
- *The problem with automated decision-making systems is not primarily an issue affecting a few tragic cases.* (Graduation, Force, Male)

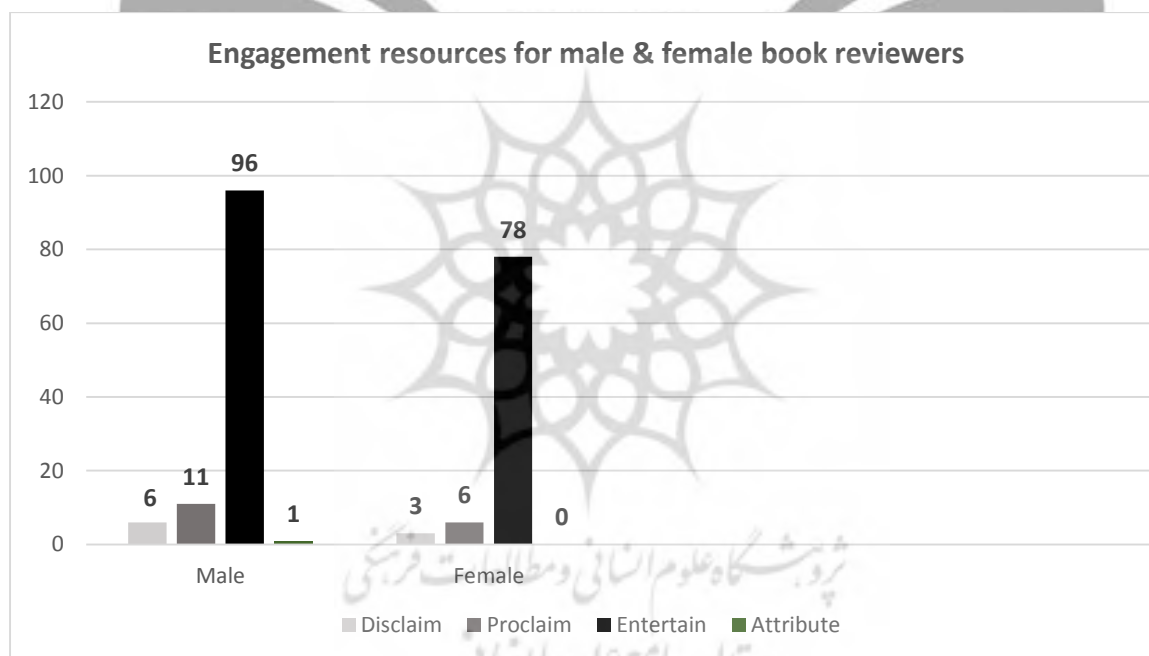
### 4.3 Engagement

Language is not necessarily a mental form, or an utterance devoid of context, but it is social interaction. **Engagement** entails that, as Bakhtin (1981) states, human verbal communication is dialogic and it involves taking position with reference to subject, context, and participants' points of view. It deals with the linguistic resources which help the speaker or writer to involve

in a dialogue with the people addressed or the stances taken in the discourse. Engagement is the positioning of the writer's stance in regard to other voices in the communicative setting.

**Engagement**, in turn, is sub-divided into monoglossic (no reference to other positions) and heteroglossic (referring to other positions in the discourse). Heteroglossic is further divided into four key classes: attribute (presenting external voices), entertain (stating other propositions), proclaim (challenging other positions), and disclaim (rebuttal of reverse views). Amornrattanasirichok and Jaroongkhongdach (2017) consider them in terms of *dialogic contraction* (disclaim and proclaim) and *dialogic expansion* (entertain and attribute) to the degree that they limit or open up alternative voices and positions.

As Engagement resources deal with writer investment and engagement in the books being reviewed, it is obvious from the above table that male writers are more involved in the process of their review and more have extended their self into the final product to reach the target and potential audience. Thus, the reader is probably prone to find more traces of the intellectuality and style of the review writer in male writings in comparison to female writers (see Figure 7).



**Figure 7:** Engagement resources for male & female book reviewers

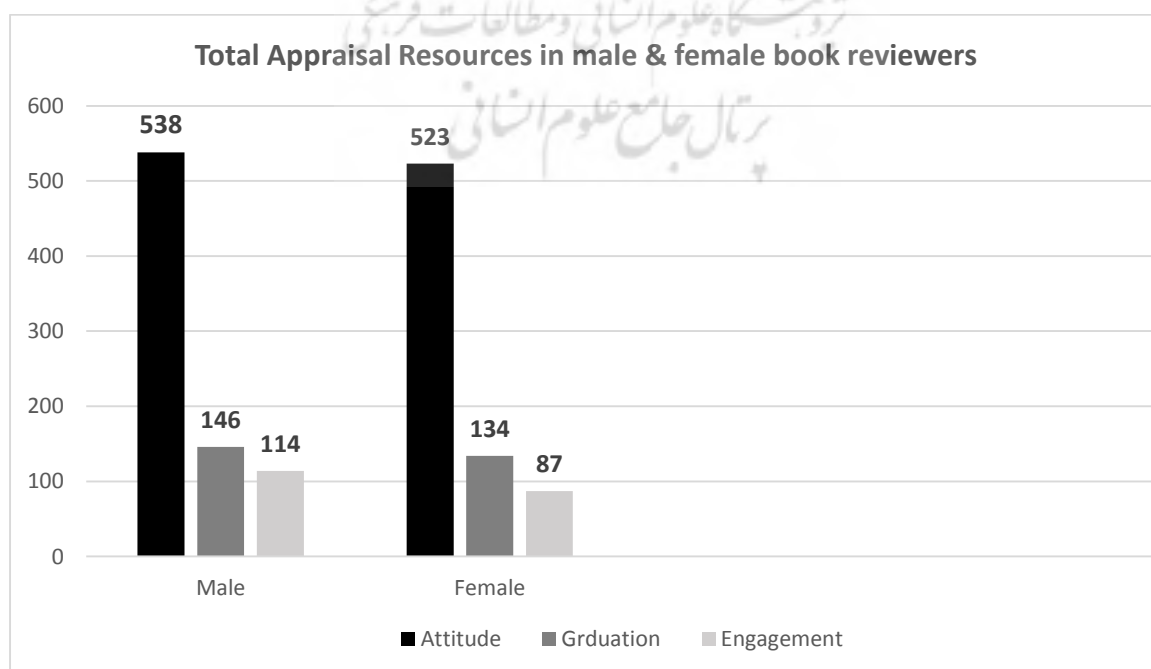
A close look at Figure 7 also reveals that from among the engagement (*heteroglossic*) resources, both male and female book reviewers used entertain resources the most. Thus, they are offering positions based on the writers' viewpoints as one of many possible views. The second most used resources are that of *proclaim* challenging alternative positions. *Disclaim* resources are the third used resources and, in using them, writers deny any alternative positions. *Attribute* resources are the least used ones. Thus, the reviewers, except for females, make little or no effort to present external positions and viewpoints. Here are some extracts by way of exemplification:

- *Faircloth's chapter is perhaps the most thrilling contribution*". (Engagement, Entertain, Male)

- *It's surprising that, in overcoming Covid-19, Trump extolled "herd mentality" rather than "herd immunity"*. (Engagement, Disclaim, Male)
- *It is, of course, Anglo-American analytic philosophy which holds this mode of reasoning in the highest possible regard"*. (Engagement, Proclaim, Female)
- *Very often, numerous cases of gendered inequality are reported in the social media"*. (Engagement, Attribute, Female)
- *This may offer security, but seems to undercut the whole rationale behind the conflict itself"*. (Engagement, Entertain, Female)
- *This is, in fact, a natural consequence for the turbulent situation"*. (Engagement, Proclaim, Male)
- *Perhaps only time will tell if, and how, the story of platform capitalism and our collective contestations unfold the economic capitalism history.* (Engagement, Entertain, Female)
- *The big set pieces are revisited, too, of course, including the early, frightful year at Harvard Law School.* (Engagement, Proclaim, Male)
- *Some hidden gems are sure to lead readers to question established cultural assumptions about breastfeeding.* (Engagement, Entertain, Female)
- *If he does feel pissed off, he just goes quiet.* (Engagement, Proclaim, Male)
- *I've never seen him snap or lose his rag with anyone," reports an admiring adviser.* (Engagement, Attribute, Male)

### 5 Findings

Book reviews are replete with appraisal resources from the onset to the end and in almost every section of book review, numerous cases of evaluation can be found. Tables 2 and 3 illustrates the type and frequency of appraisal resources in native male and female book review writers in brief. Figure 8 displays the results of the comparison.



**Figure 8:** Total Appraisal Resources in male & female book reviewers

Tables 2 and 3 present a summary of the results.

**Table 2.** Cases, Frequency and Percentage of Appraisal Resources in female book reviews

Type of Appraisals	Cases	Frequency	Percent
<b>Attitude</b>	Affect	10	3.3
	Judgment	9	2.9
	Appreciation	246	81.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>520</b>	<b>87.3</b>
<b>Graduation</b>	Force	17	5.6
	Focus	5	1.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>7.25</b>
<b>Engagement</b>	Entertain	10	3.3
	Attribution	0	0
	Proclaim	3	.99
	Disclaim	3	.99
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>5.28</b>

**Table 3.** Cases, Frequency and Percentage of Appraisal Resources in male book reviews

Type of Appraisals	Cases	Frequency	Percent
<b>Attitude</b>	Affect	4	1.36
	Judgment	17	5.78
	Appreciation	226	76.87
<b>Total</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>538</b>	<b>84.01</b>
<b>Graduation</b>	Force	19	6.46
	Focus	4	1.36
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>7.82</b>
<b>Engagement</b>	Entertain	13	4.42
	Attribution	1	.34
	Proclaim	4	1.36
	Disclaim	6	2.04
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>8.16</b>

As Tables 2 and 3 show, the overall frequency of Attitude resources is far more than the other two categories (Graduation and Engagement) and both writer groups have used these resources the most. However, it is male dominated and male writers have utilized these resources, to some extent, more. Attitude resources are the platforms where the evaluation of the books under question has, in fact, been realized in the real sense of evaluative review writing. It is worth mentioning, however, that from among Attitude resources, both writer groups, have employed Appreciation the most and Affect the least with Judgment lying in between. Thus, both reviewer groups rarely express their own positions by resorting to their own affective reactions as it is more subjective and far from being persuasive and professional

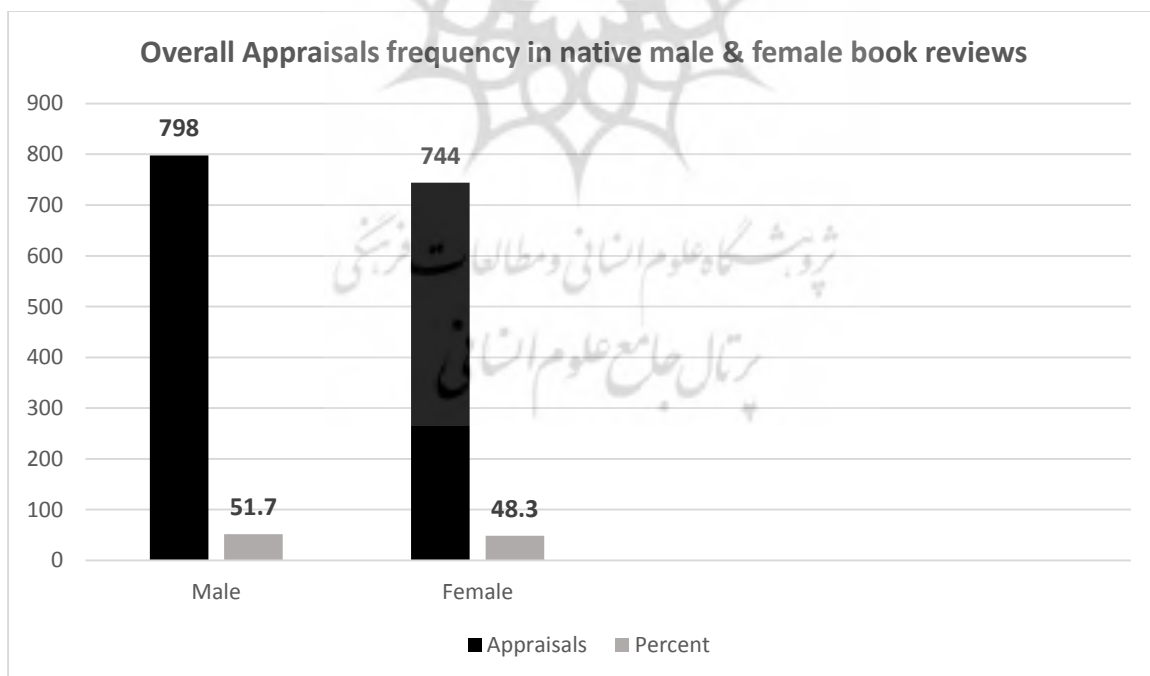


to base the evaluations on one's own emotions. They rather prefer to evaluate the books largely through the application of *appreciation* resources, evaluating the book, and *judgment* resources, evaluating the writers. The high frequency of Appreciation resources suggests that, as evaluating people is challenging, review writers tend to evaluate things more to avoid the controversy.

The second mostly used Appraisal resources are the *Graduation* resources. They indicate the degree and intensification of the reviewer's personal involvement in the positions and voices suggested in the books being reviewed. This category of the resources, too, are male dominated and male review writers have employed them more as compared to female book review writers.

In terms of Engagement resources, which deal with the speaker or writer's involvement in a dialogue with the people addressed or the stances taken in the discourse, male writers, too, have the upper hand and utilized these resources overall more than female writers.

In general, in all of the above-mentioned appraisal resources used in the book reviews, native male book review writers have outperformed female writers. Thus, it could be concluded that male book review writers are more eloquent and impressive in expressing their views and positions and provide more forceful and convincing arguments in their writings. Finally, although native male book review writers excelled female writers in the application of various individual categories and subcategories of Appraisal Resources, however, based on Figure 9, both writing groups have employed roughly an equal number of these resources and, generally speaking, there is no significant difference in the total number and percentage of the appraisals.



**Figure 9:** Overall Appraisals frequency in native male & female book review writers

## 5 Conclusions, implications and applications

The current research intended to employ Appraisal framework to study cross-gender differences in the use of appraisal resources used by native English book reviews. To this aim, the type and frequency of appraisal resources in 60 humanities book reviews written by native

English male and female writers were analyzed. Attempt was made to choose reviews from similar academic disciplines, i.e. humanities, and, to avoid diachronic variations in frequency and type of appraisal resources, the area for the selection is the 2010s. Moreover, only single-writer book reviews were selected so as to avoid stylistic variations between review writers. In addition, the average word count for the book reviews selected for the study is 1025 words. Using the framework of the Appraisal theory (Martin & White, 2005), data were collected by identifying and recording discoursal markers and analyzed against the Appraisal theory. The results indicate that appraisal resources work efficiently in aiding the review writers to convey and express their viewpoints with the authors and the public readers. However, a glance through the study shows that all these categories are male-dominated and, in all respects, native male writers have far gone beyond female authors in using appraisal resources in writing their book reviews. Thus, it could be concluded that native male book review writers are more successful in their interpersonal communication, and more impressive and forceful in their evaluations and conveying their positions to the readers.

This research could have direct bearing on teaching and learning. We can conclude that the more the learners are familiar with these resources, the greater their ability in writing good academic texts, and the better they are equipped with the necessary tools to critically analyze the writings of others in an effective way. In other words, the development of critical writing competence is intensified through the use of these resources. Therefore, teachers, learners, and all academics can benefit from the tool box that the Appraisal theory provides. It means that an awareness and a sound knowledge of evaluative functions of these resources leads to the expansion of learners' general writing ability which is of utmost significance for almost all academicians.

The findings of this study are relevant to material developers, task designers, and textbook writers, too. Proper EFL and ESL teaching and learning tasks could be developed, with an eye on these resources, for learners to aid them to reach greater writing and evaluating ability as well. Textbook writers are required to make efforts to design books and materials in a way to develop writing abilities and provide the ground for the learners, and encourage them, to boost their writing skills with an active use of these resources.

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