Judging a Book by its Back Cover: Spoken/Informal Register as Found in Happily-Ever-After Women's Novel Blurbs

Apisak Pupipat[1]
Titirut Rungkaew[2]
Lampoon Meeparp[3]
[1, 2] Thammasat University, Thailand
[3] Ubon Ratchathani University, Thailand
Corresponding author's email: apisak.p@arts.tu.ac.th

Abstract

This paper investigates features of a spoken/informal register as found in happily-ever-after women's novel blurbs. Two motivational forces drove the paper: Book blurbs are a crucial marketing and informational tool for the publishing industry, and there is a lack of studies focusing on what linguistic features they actually entail. Accordingly, we investigated (1) the most salient linguistic features of classic book blurbs vs. mass-marketed books blurbs, and (2) what differences, if any, they exhibit in terms of linguistic features. The study had two main phases: First, we collected 80 blurbs from happily-ever-after women's English-language novels: 40 from classic novels and 40 from mass-marketed novels. Second, we analyzed each blurb for the presence of 14 linguistic features that are known to be indicators of spoken/informal language, as per the approaches of many corpus linguists, especially Douglas Biber. Results indicated that the top three spoken/informal features were intensifiers (29.37%), present tense forms (23.51%) and coordinating conjunctions (16.69%). With the exception of past tenses forms and complex conjunctions, mass-marketed blurbs exhibited more instances of spoken/informal language choices than the classic blurbs. Based on our findings, we argue that more awareness of the linguistic nature of these promotional texts can be enhanced in discourse analysts, as well as ESL/EFL and literature instructors, and publishers.

> Oh, hi. I'm so glad you decided to turn the book over. As you probably know, this is normally where authors put nice quotes from fancy people praising their book. I'm a little uncomfortable with that. It feels like a gimmick to get people to buy it and I don't believe in cheap tricks like that. Besides, I know you're way too smart and beautiful to fall for that kind of stuff." (Ellen DeGeneres (2011) *Seriously… I'm Kidding*, back cover)

Introduction

The US book industry, one of the biggest in the world, is still alive and thriving. According to Chris Kolmar (August 17, 2022), it earned almost US$26 million in revenue in 2020 (www.zippia.com/advice/us-book-industry-statistics/). Moreover, to Dimitrije Curcic (October 9, 2022), romance novels, the most popular fiction genre now, has created a US$1.44 billion industry (https://wordsrated.com/romance-novel-sales-statistics/). In fact, Goodreads's Katherine Fiorillo has come up with the 22 Best Books of 2022 List, where all of the authors were female and at least 17 or 77.27% of the novels had female protagonists, both women and teenage girls (www.businessinsider.com/guides/learning/most-popular-books-2022).

For the novel—"a prose narrative on a large scale" (Hornstein et al., 2002, p. 515)—a crucial factor that helps boost sales is presumably *the blurb* (Bhatia, 2014; Toner, 2017), "a short description of a book… written by the people who have produced it, that is intended to attract your attention and make you want to buy it" (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 2015, p. 157).

Romance novels can be categorized into two groups: The literary classic and the popular mass-marketed book. The classic novel (henceforth, "CL") can be defined as "a book that readers keep rereading… [since it] returns to life on every rereading" (Mulan, 2006, p. 2). This is due to its being didactic with universal themes, exquisite-to-ordinary-to-dialectal prose, effective and diverse storytelling techniques (a usually unpredictable ending), and believable characters that create compassion in the reader and invite (slow) re-readings that are open to multiple interpretations (Crystal, 2010; Eagleton, 2013; Hammond & Regan, 2006; MacKay, 2011). In contrast, we deduce that a mass-marketed novel (henceforth, "MM") is fiction with the chief

purpose of entertaining (an escapism) rather than teaching, with the main audience being women: its main theme is one of love between a woman (the protagonist) and a man, using various familiar light-hearted tropes (e.g., forced proximity, love triangles, rags to riches tales, a girl's internal struggle with her appearance, and/or an external struggle with a cruel boss). Moreover, they often include loveable yet unrealistic plots, stock characters, ordinary everyday language (with little use of figurative language), and usually ending on a happily-ever-after conclusion. Often, MM is also called a romantic comedy or rom-com. Ultimately, while CLs strive for literary merit, the MMs usually go for commercial success.

Informal/Spoken Register and Its Characteristics

The words *informal* and *spoken* were chosen as the title of the paper since they were more general and inclusive although the backbone of this study was mainly Biber's (1988) and Biber et al.'s involvement dimension (1999, 2021), as well as, to a lesser extent, Carter and McCarthy's (2006), and Carter et al.'s (2011) spoken and written English grammar and Johnstone's (2018) relatively unplanned discourse—all of which will be taken here to mean roughly the same thing. (The topic of formal/written register based on the same blurb corpus will be elaborated in another paper.)

According to McArthur et al. (2018), *informal* refers to "a situation or a use of language that is common, non-official, familiar, casual and often colloquial, and contrasts in these senses with formal" (p. 315), such as the contrast between "Lend us a hand, would you?" and "Would you be so good as to help me?" (p. 315). The informal register is often related to spoken discourse or speech since talk tends to be more unplanned, dynamic, transient, repetitive, fragmented, context dependent, and inter-personal; while the formal register of written discourse is more planned, static, permanent, logical, integrated, decontextualized and contractual (Hughes & Reed, 2017; Paltridge, 2012; Schiffrin, 2014).

In the past, the study of the spoken register, which was often seen as "sloppy", full of errors and had no rules, was ignored, in favor of written discourse (Crystal, 2010). For example, the study of grammar was initially based on written texts until the acknowledgement that

studying speech is an equally valid endeavor. While informal spoken genres include instances of talk, gossip and telephone conversations, formal written ones include textbook chapters, master's theses, scientific papers, and business contracts.

Evidence from Fiction Blurb Studies and Corpus-Based Spoken/Informal Grammars

Blurbs

Two observations can be made on blurb research—a blurb being a type of promotional genre (Bhatia, 2014). First, most studies on blurbs seem to revolve exclusively around genre/move analysis. Only a small handful have investigated particular linguistic features while also trying to link the features to rhetorical moves, (e.g., Gea-Valor, 2005). To the best of our knowledge, there appears to be only one paper that focuses solely on the linguistic features found in blurbs: Bacić (2021). Second, a large number of blurb-based research has focused on academic textbooks from various disciplines (i.e., the formal register). Only a few concentrated on fiction, e.g. Önder (2013). We might also add that two constraints of these studies seemed to be found in their research method: Many did not have adequate data in each group of blurbs (less than 20 samples) and some did not provide the books and publishers used in the study. This study remedies the situation (see next section on methodology).

Here, six relevant studies will be reviewed, arranged chronologically. Gea-Valor (2005) investigated more than 60 new online fiction blurbs from four major publishers, published from 2002 to 2003. Besides extensively analyzing the moves, she discovered that, similar to advertising discourse, these blurbs used five linguistic features, with 2-4 being used to build writer-reader relationships:

1. *Complimenting* the book or author with, with/without hedging (probably, one of + superlative), "X is a page-turner," "A is (probably) the world's greatest storyteller."

2. *Elliptical syntactic patterns*, i.e. subject-less or verbless sentences: "(X is) Enchanting!"

3. *Imperatives*, sometimes including a reason: "Writer A is great, so read her."

4. *Address form "you,"* e.g. "The book that will definitely make <u>you</u> shed tears," and

5. *"Curiosity arousers"* can be seen in two aspects: rhetorical questions (e.g. Will she have to remain single all her lonely life?) and excerpts from the novel.

Gea-Valor & Ros (2009), a unique diachronic study of literary blurbs published by major company Penguin taken from the late 1940s, analyzed the development of move structures and linguistic features. Besides talking briefly about the blurbs' visual attractions, they mentioned five aspects: Superlatives ("Gaskell's <u>best</u> work," p. 212), boosters or intensifiers in the form of positive adjectives ("sensitive," "powerful," astonishing"), "one of the most" + string of adjectives resembling advertising discourse ("<u>One of the most moving and poetic</u> of Hardy's novels"), elliptical structures (subject-less sentence "[Ø] Impresses me more deeply with every read"; strings of adjectives "Redeeming, splendid, headlong," p. 213), and curiosity arousers at the end of the book description ("Who will survive amidst the corruption…?" p. 214).

Önder (2013) compared 95 best-sellers from Amazon UK and Okuoku Turkey, from 1999 to 2011 (40 English blurbs and 55 Turkish blurbs from online sources). Positive linguistic features to praise the book and author found included nouns ("bestseller," "genius," "masterpiece"), verbs ("award," "achieve"), adjectives ("brilliant," "compelling," "poignant," "the best"), and adverbs ("brilliantly," "utterly"). Although the study did not outrightly quantify the features, persuasive adjectives and nouns (to a lesser extent) seemed to be the most frequently mentioned ones.

Küçüksakarya (2016), in a genre analysis of 10 Turkish novel blurbs published from 1999 to 2014, found high frequency of nouns ("human," "life"), adjectives ("colorful," "funny," "impressive," "luxurious," "young") and conjunctions (no example provided). Also, in terms of the verb tenses, there was more use of present progressive, present simple, past simple and active voice. Finally, ellipsis and second-person pronoun "you" were found, too.

Jimenez and Fernandez-Dalona (2020), analyzing 20 popular Filipino fiction books taken from Goodreads from 1980 to the present, found that they were more informative than promotional. However, Filipino blurb writers often used positive evaluative adjectives

("a must-read"), superlatives ("author's strongest stories"), intensifiers ("wildly," "deeply"), elliptical structure ("Definitely a political novel"), first- and second-person pronouns ("us," "you"), rhetorical questions ("Will they be the living proof that opposites really attract?"), and imperatives (a Filipino language example).

Bacić (2021), probably the most comprehensive paper on linguistic features of fiction and linguistics academic book blurbs available, reiterated the fact that "fiction blurbs mainly replicating the conciseness of spoken language and academic blurbs closely resembling formal written language" (p. 117). To her, fiction blurbs had several characteristics that pertained to informal speech: First, a high number of *phrasal coordinators* ("Wonderfully romantic and sumptuously atmospheric," p. 122); second, some *discourse coordinators* or sentences beginning with "but," "and," and "because"; third, *subject ellipses* ("[The handbook] explains why administrators promulgate instructional programs," p. 123), *subject-and-verb ellipses* or *stand-alone sentence fragments* ("A strikingly fresh thriller," p. 126), and *fragments* in the form of incomplete clauses and sentences with three dots: "Before long they will learn that life has other ideas…" (p. 124); and, finally, curiosity arousers relating to *questions* ("Suddenly, their hearts are in turmoil. Has the perfect love each now remembers been given back to them?" p. 125).

Spoken/Informal Features

According to Biber et al. (2021), conversation through face-to-face interactions primarily takes place in a shared context, avoids elaboration or specification of meaning, and is interactive, expressive of politeness, emotion, and attitude; it also takes place in real time, has a restricted and repetitive repertoire, employs a vernacular range of expression yet has a lack of functional explanation (Biber et al., 2021, p. xxvi). The following features were taken from Biber (1988), Biber et al. (1999, 2021), Carter and McCarthy (2006), Carter et al. (2011), Larsen-Freeman and Celce-Murcia (2016), Johnstone (2018), and McArthur et al. (2018), and they are the backbone of the present study.

1. *Contractions*, a shortened form of a phrase such as "can't" from "cannot," "aren't" from "are not" or "I'm" from "I am."

2. *Present Tenses* vs. *Past Tenses*, here, there are of two types:

2.1 Present Tenses are used for events, actions and states that happen at the time of speaking, future events (e.g., "Somsak <u>reads</u> a bestseller every day) and also past narratives that are retold in an informal way, i.e. *the narrative present* or *historical present* (e.g., "When the play <u>starts</u>, Jum <u>stares</u> out the window aimlessly. She <u>notices</u>…."). This is "to produce a more vivid description, as if the events were being enacted at the time of speech" (Biber et al., 1999, p. 454) and "to emphasise their continued existence, relevance and availability at the present time" (Carter & McCarthy, 2006, p. 599), thus blurbs often use the present simple.

2.2 Past Tenses, refer to events that happened in the past (e.g., "Jum <u>went</u> shopping yesterday.") In particular, the past simple refers to "definite past time clearly separated from the moment of speaking" (Carter & McCarthy, 2006, p. 609) and usually with no explicit time marker since the reader can deduct from the linguistic or physical context.

3. *First-person* vs. *second-person pronouns*: "Please follow <u>me</u> unless <u>you</u>'re tired."

4. *Questions*: Yes/No questions ("Didn't Holly love Gerry?") vs. Question tags ("Susan is pregnant, <u>isn't she?</u> vs. WH questions ("Who wrote *The Party Crasher*?")

5. *First-name diminutives*, such as shortening a first name: "Elizabeth" → "Beth," "Betty," "Betsy," "Elise," "Liz," "Lizzy"

6. *Intensifiers* (or boosters) (Pupipat, 2018; Siribud, 2016) with six types:

6.1 Common devices: "a <u>very</u> steamy novel," "an <u>extremely</u> sexy supermodel"

6.2 Maximizers, using extremes which can be both ends (e.g., "the <u>perfect</u> author," "Jum <u>always/never</u> reads *Safe Haven*.")

6.3 Comparatives and superlatives: "This is <u>worse</u>," "the <u>best</u> rom-com writer."

6.4 Lexical coloring: "a <u>gorgeous</u> lady," "Somchai <u>adores</u> Jum."

6.5 Figurative language, such as metaphors or similes: "A dinosaur kept alive by its great location"—when talking sarcastically about an old hotel in Bangkok (Pupipat, 2018, p. 136)

6.6 Punctuations: All caps ("<u>SO</u> fun"), dashes ("She was good—great at work"), and so on.

7. *Hedges*, which are used to show modesty and get the hearer's trust from the speaker's showing imperfection (e.g., "Malee is <u>probably</u> the best of all.")

8. *Conjunctions*: simple conjunctions ("and," "but," "so," "too") and complex conjunctions ("moreover," "however")

9. *Noun clauses*: *That*-clause ("<u>That Liz is stingy</u> we all know.") & *WH*-clause ("I know how you feel.")

10. *Phrasal verbs*, which include "a verb combined with an adverb or a preposition, or sometimes both, to give a new meaning," (e.g., "call off" vs. "cancel" [*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 2015, p. 1154]) and *idioms*, which are "a group of words whose meaning is different from the meanings of the individual words" (p. 779), such as "Let the cat out of the bag" (= to tell a secret unintentionally)

11. *Informal words*: "things," "stuff," "guy," "kids," vid" (for "video")

12. *Ellipses*: Subject-and-Verb-less Phrases "(The novel is) <u>stunning</u>"; and, Fragments like adverbials ("Jum went there. <u>Because she wanted to see him</u>.")

Despite all this, it seemed that no research had been conducted on informal register found in women's novel blurbs, especially the ones with a happy ending. In response to this limitation, we did a study precisely on the topic with the following two research questions:

a. What were the most salient linguistic features of blurbs found in classic literature versus mass-marketed literature?

b. Which blurb type, if either, appeared to be closer to a spoken (informal) register?

Method

The data were 80 blurbs from happily-ever-after English-language novels with female protagonists: 40 from classic literature (CL) and 40 from mass-marketed literature (MM) (see lists in Appendices.). The selection criteria used were as follows:

- For both, the novel must contain a blurb at the back cover, not on the jacket(s) or online.

- The novel (mainly about love) was written (or translated into) in English with a woman as the protagonist and with a happy ending as can be detected in the verbal or non-verbal signs in the last pages. Books not included were children's or young adults' novels, and auto-biographies.

- It was a single volume (i.e., one novel per book, thus the whole one blurb was devoted to the novel).

- While the CLs were written before 2000, the MMs were written between 2000 and 2022. The classics began with England's first novel: Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722), running up to Allende's *Daughter of Fortune* (1999).

- To be unbiased, a variety of authors for both types were employed, thus only one to two works chosen for most novelists. For the classics, there were two exceptions: Austen and Gaskell, due to their importance. Another way to reduce the unbiased nature of the classic data was to have as diverse publishers as possible in order for the publisher's preferred style or template of blurb writing would not influence the data pool.

- For the mass-marketed, two titles were taken from the more popular writers (i.e., those who garnered major awards or whose novels were adapted for the screen): Ahern, Bushnell, Cabot, Colgan, Hoover, Keyes, Kinsella, Moyes, Roberts, Sparks, Steel, and Weiner. The rest of the MM authors would get only one book chosen.

- We included the book description, its history, the author's life and achievements, internal praises (often embedded in the author's life), and external praises, which were positive reviews. We excluded the publisher's name/logo and website, the author's social media contacts, photo(s) and other works, book genre, ISBN, information on introductory notes, translator, cover page (often pictures), e-book and audiobook, and film(s) based on the book.

Table 1 describes the corpus.

Table 1

Number of words of each type of blurb

Novel type	No. of blurbs	No. of words	Longest blurb (words)	Shortest blurb (words)	Mean length of blurb
CL	40	6,132	292	74	153
MM	40	7,608	231	80	190
Total	80	13,740			

In terms of data analysis, the three researchers came up with a frequency count of the 14 linguistic features found above. Results were reported in percentages. To maintain accuracy, the results were cross-checked by the three of us regularly during and after the analysis. Contradictions were discussed and consensus won out.

Results and Discussion

To answer research question 1, Table 2 presents an overview of the linguistic features, ranking from the highest to the lowest:

Table 2

Overview of linguistic features, from highest to lowest

Feature	CL	MM	TOTAL
1. Intensifiers	411 (38%)	671 (62%)	1,082 (29.37%)
2. Present Tenses	320 (37%)	546 (63%)	866 (23.51%)
3. Simple Conjunctions	279 (45%)	336 (55%)	615 (16.69%)
4. Phrasal Verbs & Idioms	70 (23%)	236 (77%)	306 (8.31%)
5. Ellipses	28 (21%)	108 (79%)	136 (3.69%)
6. Informal Words	9 (7%)	118 (93%)	127 (3.45%)
7. Past Tenses	75 (60%)	49 (40%)	124 (3.37%)
8. Hedges	40 (36%)	72 (64%)	112 (3.04%)
9. Contractions	17 (17%)	83 (83%)	99 (2.69%)
10. 1st-person pro. & 2nd-person pro.	31 (41%)	44 (59%)	75 (2.04%)
11. N Clauses	16 (22%)	56 (78%)	72 (1.95%)
12. Questions: Yes/No Q, Q tags & WH Q	7 (20%)	28 (80%)	35 (0.95%)
13. Complex Conjunctions	23 (72%)	9 (28%)	32 (0.87%)
14. First-name Diminutives	0 (0%)	3 (100%)	3 (0.08%)
Total			3,684 (100%)

Table 2 presents 14 linguistic features, ranking from the highest to the lowest: The most salient linguistic features as seen in the CL and MM blurbs were Intensifiers (29.37%), Present Tenses (23.51%), and Simple Conjunctions (16.69%).

Of all the 14 features, 12 showed higher numbers in the MM, with the exception of the Past Tenses and Complex Conjunctions. Here, we can detect five key results: The first consisted of the MM being as much as four times (or more) more than that of the CL. These included seven features: Informal Words (with the MM's 93% vs. CL's 7%), Phrasal Verbs/Idioms (77% vs. 23%), Ellipses (79% vs. 21%), Contractions (83% vs. 17%), Noun Clauses (78% vs. 22%), and Questions (80% vs. 20%). And, probably we can include First-name diminutives here with the MM's 100% vs. the CL's 0% despite the minimal instances found. The second group comprised the MM being double the size of the CL or close to. Here, there was only one feature: Hedges (MM's 64% vs. CL's 36%). The third group consisted of the features with the MM's being three-fifths of the total data against the CL's two-fifths. They included two features: Intensifiers (with MM's 62% vs. CL's 38%) and Present Tenses (63% vs. 37%). The fourth group had similar numbers in the two types despite the MM's larger numbers. They included two features: Simple Conjunctions (with the MM's 55% vs. CL's 45%) and First-person Pronouns and Second-person Pronouns (59% vs. 41%). And, finally, the fifth group comprised two results with the CL being larger than the MM: Past Tenses (CL's 60% vs. MM's 40%) and Complex Conjunctions (CL's 72% vs. MM's 28%). The first showed the CL's Past Tenses being three-fifths while the MM's two-fifths; the second demonstrated that the CL's Complex Conjunctions being a little more than double the MM's.

To answer research question 2, the overall picture showed that almost all of the features showed a tendency to be more frequent in the MMs, except the Past Tenses and Complex Conjunctions, whereas there was a negative figure for the CL. Since these 12 features were characteristic of the spoken/informal register, we can say with some certainty that the MM reflected the spoken/informal dimension. In contrast, almost all of the CL features were on the opposite side, thus showing that the CL revealed glimpses of the written/formal register, especially for the Past Tenses

and Complex Conjunctions. All this concurs with Biber (1988), Biber et al. (1999, 2021), Carter and McCarthy (2006), and Carter et al. (2011), who saw these 12 features reflecting the informal register. One blurb study by Bacić (2021) also reflected: "with fiction blurbs mainly replicating the conciseness of spoken language and academic blurbs closely resembling formal written language" (p. 117).

In terms of the individual features, the three that ranked top were Intensifiers (29.37%), Present Tenses (23.51%) and Simple Conjunctions (16.69%). For clarity, the Present Tenses and Simple Conjunctions will be discussed together with Past Tenses and Complex Conjunctions, respectively.

1. Intensifiers enjoyed the top rank for both types of blurbs, especially the MM (62%). They can be divided into six types:

a. *Lexical Coloring*, the most popular, could be seen in four groups:

- Adjectives, the most popular here: "Dazzling…Magical… An extraordinary work" (CL4); "the compelling story of a woman" (CL7); "Diana's glamorous, sophisticated, single lady life" (MM23); "This 48-karat beach read is crazy fun" (MM6)

- Nouns: "a masterpiece of historical fiction" (CL6); "by Nobel Prize laureate Toni Morrison" (CL4); "Nora Robert is a superstar" (MM21); "acts of sabotage" (MM39)

- Verbs: "to shatter everything" (CL12); "bombarding her day and night" (CL35); "Taylor Jenkins Reid soars with *Malibu Rising*" (MM15); "a tale that will obsess you" (MM27)

- Adverbs: "a completely original work" (CL14); "its darkly funny" (CL32); "madly in love" (MM13); "gloriously romantic" (MM17); "tremendously fun" (MM29).

b. *Maximizers* were reflected in "Nobody concerned with the novel in our century can afford not to read it." (CL14); "Everyone looks upon shy, self-effacing Fanny Price" (CL18); "Maggie Walsh has always done everything right" (MM3); "the #1 New York Times bestselling author" (MM9); "the ultimate dressing-up box" (MM35).

c. *Comparatives/Superlatives* were also used: "its darker side" (CL3); "a lot worse" (MM20); "Daisy's simpler existence" (MM23);

"the most memorable sisters in American literature" (CL16); "Tan's greatest gift" (CL35); "the all-time most impossible boss in the history of impossible bosses" (MM26).

d. *Common Devices* included "so completely" (CL3); "utterly confused (CL15); "such a touchstone of our times" (MM8); "much worse" (MM20); "Very warmest wishes" (MM36).

e. *Figurative Language*, especially in the MM: "a story as powerful as Exodus and as intimate as a lullaby" (CL4); "She was doing with language something like what Jimi Hendrix does with a guitar" (CL26); "Like reading the cleverest cream cake of words" (MM10); "She is the George Bernard Shaw if not the George Eliot of chick lit" (MM20)

f. *Graphology* can be seen in

- Big Caps: "ONE OF THE BBC'S 100 NOVELS THAT SHAPED OUR WORLD" (CL33); "NOW A MAJOR MOTION PICTURE" (MM18)

- Dashes: "she falls from grace—plummets might be more fitting—then…" (CL22); "Every family occasion is a party—until the day the secrets spill out" (MM10)

- Quotation marks: "Responding to the need for a 'girls' 'book'…" (CL16), "a new style of 'sensation' writing" (CL37)

- Hashtags: "#viagraworks" and "#sexinyoursixties" (MM32).

To discuss, Intensifiers became the most prominent of all the features here probably because both types of blurbs were concerned with advertising language which is essentially emotive, vying for potential customers' attention (Crystal, 2019; Goddard, 2002). The fact that intensifiers or boosters are a crucial factor in blurbs is in line with several blurb studies: Gea-Valor (2005), Gea-Valor and Ros (2009), Önder (2013), Küçüksakarya (2016), and Jimenez and Fernandez-Dalona (2020). Instead of finding Sarcasm/Rhetorical Questions like in the TripAdvisor's negative reviews of hotels found in Pupipat (2018) which might have destroyed the good rapport between the publisher and the customer, we found a few *Foreign Expressions* category in both types: "Orlando is an amusing and eccentric *jeu d'esprit*…" (CL26); "the joie de vivre of Paris" (MM12); "having a tête-à- tête with his ex" (MM12).

Intensifiers were found a lot more in the MM probably because the MM publishers were attempting to convince the reader to buy the book while the CL probably did not have to do much since their books were already installed in the literary canon and on the list of high-school and university students.

Finally, we might take notice of the newer CL that tended to have a lot more intensifiers than the average CL which normally would not exceed 10 instances per blurb. They included *The Hundred Secret Senses* (29 instances), *Beloved* (25 instances), *Daughter of Fortune* (24 instances), *The Color Purpose* (16 instances) and *Meridian* (14 instances)[1]. We would like to argue that since they had not been inculcated into the canon, they had to vie for the customer's attention so as to be bought.

2. Present Tenses vs. Past Tenses

Table 3
CL's & MM's present tenses vs. past tenses

	Present Tenses	Past Tenses	Total
CL	320 (81.01%)	75 (18.98%)	395
MM	546 (91.76%)	49 (8.23%)	595
Total	866 (87.47%)	124 (12.52%)	990

According to Table 3, for both the CL and MM, Present Tenses were the more prevalent than the Past Tenses: 866 (87.47%) vs. 124 (12.52%), or about seven times as much. Previously from Table 2, we mentioned that more Present Tenses were found in the MM: 546 (63%) vs. 320 (37%). Here, Table 3 shows that within the MM, they occurred more: 546 (91.76%) vs. 49 (8.23%), or about 11 times more;

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[1] One exception here was *The Joy Luck Club* with only five intensifiers. We would posit that perhaps it is already an established novel, with all the accolades, especially being made into a 1993 Hollywood feature film and winning the National Board of Review prize.

and, within the CL: 320 (81.01%) vs. 75 (18.98%), or about four times more. These figures were consistent with several scholars' findings (Aarts, 2011; Biber et al., 1999; Carter & McCarthy, 2006), who stated that the present tenses create an imaginary sense of freshness or relevance, thus allowing the potential customer to connect with the experience, as opposed to the Past Tenses. Therefore, even with a classic novel, the customer will be able to relive the experience as if it were happening right in front of him. It seems that no blurb studies above mentioned the Present Tenses.

The Present Tenses, of both types, could be found in several parts of the blurb: First, the *Description of the Book* that sets the scene and states the conflict: "For twenty-eight years, things <u>have</u> been tripping along nicely for Cannie Shapiro. Sure, her mother <u>has</u> come charging out of the closet, and her father <u>has</u> long since dropped out of her world. But she <u>loves</u> her friends, her rat terrier, Nifkin, and her job… She<u>'s</u> even made a tenuous peach with her body. But the day she <u>opens</u> up a national women's magazine and <u>see</u> the words "Loving a Larger Woman" above her ex-boyfriend's byline, Cannie <u>is</u> plunged into misery." (MM9); second, the *commentaries*: "Originally published in 1847 under the pseudonym Currier Bell, *Jane Eyre* <u>is</u> Charlotte Brontë's best known novel, a Gothic masterpiece of character and emotion" (CL12); third, the *appraisals*, i.e. external praises of the novel or author: "Sparks <u>confirms</u> his gifts… in this thoughtfully researched and spellbinding story of love that <u>defies</u> time" (MM7); fourth, the *author's bio*: Born in Peru and raised in Chile, ISABEL ALLENDE <u>is</u> the acclaimed *New York Times* bestselling author of numerous books…. Her books <u>have</u> been translated into more than 42 languages and <u>have</u> sold more than 74 million copies worldwide. She <u>lives</u> in California." (CL6); finally, *Historical Present*: "Malibu: <u>August 1983</u>. It<u>'s</u> the day of Nina Riva's annual end-of summer party, and anticipation <u>is</u> at a fever pitch." (MM15).

The *Past Tenses* were occasionally used to show remote facts and historical events for both the CL and MM. From Table 3, the average number of instances for both types were predictably low (i.e., 1.22 and 1.87), but, as expected, the number of the Past Tenses found in the CL were higher. In fact, a higher number of the MM did not contain these tenses at all. As mentioned above, the reason might be that the MM

(and, to some extent, the CL) did not want to associate with the remote past which might sever the publisher-customer relationship.

The Past Tenses were used in several parts: First, to tell *a past happening*: "I <u>lost</u> my virginity in the spare bedroom to Danny Nussbaum while Mum and Dad <u>were</u> downstairs" (MM5); second, to give *actual quotes* from a classic novel: "Oh! Mamma, … how tame <u>was</u> Edward's manner in reading to us last night! I <u>felt</u> for my sister most severely. Yet she <u>bore</u> it with so much composure, she <u>seemed</u> scarcely to notice it. I <u>could</u> hardly keep my seat." (CL30); third, to give *the background*: "Mary Barton <u>was published</u> in 1848" (CL19); fourth, to add *commentary* towards the novelist's idea: "If to our eyes her vision remains limited, it <u>was</u> an honest vision, for which she <u>was</u> much criticized in her own time" (CL19); and, fifth, to *appraise the novel*: "It <u>was</u> amazing. It <u>was</u> hilarious" (MM14); and, finally, to give *credentials to the author*: "Lauren Weisberger <u>graduated</u> from Cornell University in 1999" (MM26).

In fact, it is interesting to observe one sentence (or part of it) with the past tense and the ensuing sentence with the present tense: "Louisa May Alcott (1832-88) <u>was</u> active in the temperance and women's suffrage movements of the 19th century. It <u>is</u> for her popular fiction that she <u>is</u> best remembered…" (CL10); I <u>loved</u> it so much I <u>want</u> to hand it out to strangers on the street" (MM30).

For the MM, unlike the CL, no instances were found for the actual quotes from the novel nor were there any need to give the background or any additional commentary to the novel, e.g. presenting a pioneering idea. This is to be expected due to two reasons: The MM's main objective is not to strive for excellence of prose or to present a valuable life lesson but to deliver an entertaining story as an escapist; and, the MM's shorter life since publication, from one year to 20 years old, leaves them with not much history to recount.

It is interesting to note how the publisher avoided using the Past Tenses, instead using a noun phrase: "Sera is usually a good girl. Well, except for one wild night in the backseat of a stranger's car!" (MM14) (instead of saying, "Well, except one wild night when she <u>was</u> in the backseat …," the NP "one wild night in the backseat …" was used).

3. Simple Conjunctions vs. Complex Conjunctions

Table 4

Simple Conjunctions vs. Complex Conjunctions

	Simple Conj.	Complex Conj.	Total
CL	279 (92.38%)	23 (7.61%)	302
MM	336 (97.39%)	9 (2.6%)	345
Totals	615 (95.05%)	32 (4.94%)	647

Table 4 indicates that there were a lot more Simple Conjunctions (95.05%) than Complex ones (4.94%) and, from the previous Table 2, the MM had more than the CL: 55% vs. 45%. This simple type consisted mainly of "and" and occasionally "but." They figured more prominently as phrasal coordination, with some clausal coordination and discoursal coordination, mainly with "and" and "but."

Phrasal Coordinators, with the highest occurrences in both the CL and MM: "Patience, Firmness, and Perseverance were my only weapons." (CL1); "An absolute delight—charming, sexy, and equal parts endearing and very steamy" (MM30)

Clausal Coordinators, which did not occur much at all in both types: "Sethe, its protagonist, was born a slave and escaped to Ohio, but eighteen years later she is still not free." (CL4); "their father is a wreck, and the kids have been kicked out of school and left to their own devices. Zoe has her work cut out for her and is determined to rise to the challenge" (MM25).

Discoursal Coordinators, especially for "and" and "but" that begin the sentence, appearing quite a lot in both types: "But just when she cannot bear it any more, the revelations of a tragic family open her mind to the startling truths" (CL35); "And maybe he doesn't hate her either. Or maybe this is just another game." (MM29).

To discuss, we believe that a lot more Simple Conjunctions, particularly "and" and "but," were found than the Complex ones (e.g. "in addition," "nevertheless") since the publishers wanted to save space and to sound friendly with contemporary readers. Next, more Phrasal

Coordinators appeared in both the CL and MM concurs with Bacić (2021) but not Biber et al. (2021), who claimed that Phrasal Coordinators appeared more in formal registers while Clausal Coordinators occurred more in informal ones. We presume that the MM publishers might want their books to sound a little more formal and correct, a way to balance things off. For the occurrences of Discoursal Coordinators in both types of blurbs, mentioned in Bacić (2021) but not Biber et al. (2021), the opposite phenomenon is happening here, a break-away from the strict prescriptive rule, i.e. not to start the sentence with these short simple conjunctions "and" or "but." We construe that such a phenomenon is a way to show the publishers' desire to be trendy and to emulate the natural spontaneous speech (where the interlocutor speaks and thinks simultaneously). Both are subtle ways to align with contemporary readers, all in all, to coax them to buy the book.

Complex Conjunctions, unlike their simple counterparts, did not occur much in both the CL and MM at all although there were a few instances more in the CL. This is probably due to the fact that they brought about some sense of seriousness which might be needed more in the CL: "Elinor, in contrast, copes stoically with the news" (CL30). In the rest of the paper, we will give examples and minimally discuss the other linguistic features as they were not prominent in Table 2, starting with Phrasal Verbs and Idioms.

4. Phrasal Verbs and Idioms

Phrasal Verbs and Idioms, an important element in the informal register, came in fourth in Table 2, with the MM taking the lead: 77% vs. 23%, or, on average, 6 vs. 1.75 per blurb. In fact, a few CL did not have any phrasal verbs or idioms at all. This confirms what research says, such as Larsen-Freeman and Celce-Murcia (2016), McArthur et al. (2018). The blurb research above did not appear to mention these features.

Phrasal Verbs here included "An unconventional romantic relationship leads to conventional happiness" (CL2) (results in); "ran off with Lou's ex" (MM20) (secretly left a place with someone to have an affair). *Idioms* here included "Helen is drawn into a web of white lies" (CL11) (lies used to avoid frustrating someone); "crashing the party" (MM32) (going to a party when one is not invited).

5. *Ellipses*

Table 2 shows that ellipses and fragments occurred more in the MM. This is to be expected since they often occur in informal/ spoken language, appearing in blurbs as imitations of natural sincere speech. This fact is in line with much blurb literature, e.g. Gea-Valor (2005), Gea-Valor and Ros (2009), Küçüksakarya (2016), Jimenez and Fernandez-Dalona (2020), Bacić (2021). Examples were *Subject-and-Verb-less phrases*: "an exquisite writer, wise, compassionate and extremely funny" (CL17); "(*The Hating Game* is) a wicked witty romance" (MM29); and *fragments like adverbials*: "Everyone will finish a book and no one will fall in love. Really." (MM4); Dom talking about feelings? Sitting on pillows? Communing with nature? Learning love languages? *Nope*." (MM13).

6. *Informal words*

From Table 2, we can see the minimal number of *informal words* in the CL (less than 10%), in contrast to those in the MM (93%). This is to be expected and concurs with McArthur et al (2018), as these colloquial words are the essence of the informal/spoken register. Most of these informal words were nouns (especially the word "thing(s)") and, to a lesser extent, adjectives, verbs and other. In nouns, we see "from one thing to another" (CL15); "to call your Mum" (CL36); "a bundle of notes" (MM18); "Lou's ex" (MM20); "the kids" (MM25); "dedication to the gym" (MM26). For adjectives, we have "finding a good match" (CL29); "these hip sophisticates" (MM26); "analyzing data is easy…. Handling the… dates is hard" (MM30); "endearing and (very) steamy" (MM30). For **verbs**, we listed "I got the book" (CL33); "She'll just… grab the dolls" (MM32); and, "her high hopes are dashed" (MM40). Other categories included "over three generations" (CL34); "But just when she cannot bear it any more" (CL35); "But, of course, my life never ever goes like that" (MM36); "Anyway, I often have this sense" (MM36).

7. Hedges

Table 2 reveals that there was a fair number of *hedges* (112 instances, 3.04%) and the number of hedges in the CL was about half of their MM counterpart: 36% vs. 64%. To discuss, the fact that hedges were found in fiction blurbs in the first place supports what researchers like Gea-Valor (2005) and Gea-Valor & Ros (2009) said, as part of polite strategies. The fact that they were found more in the MM, doubling the number found in the CL, might be because there was more need to be polite and humble to the MM customers as they had not yet been installed in the literary canon, unlike the CL.

Hedges found in our corpus included "*Pride and Prejudice*, which opens with <u>one of</u> the most famous sentences in English Literature" (CL29); "<u>Perhaps</u> that's the only way to find out" (MM32); "well… <u>let's just say</u> it doesn't <u>quite</u> go to plan." (MM36); "you <u>might</u> really enjoy this book" (MM36); and, "her life <u>seems</u> to be <u>almost</u> comically jinxed" (MM38).

Here, we might mention the use of punctuation for the hedging effect, e.g. "endearing and <u>(very)</u> steamy" (MM30)—again in the MM to show reservation when talking about being "steamy."

8. Contractions

Table 2 indicates that there was a number of *Contractions* in our corpus (99 instances or 2.69%) and the number of the MM for contractions were more than four times the number of the CL. This is to be expected since contractions are one salient feature of the spoken/ informal register, consistent with Biber et al. (2021) and Carter and McCarthy (2006). We can divide our data into two groups: Subject combined with a contracted V, and Verb + *n't*. Examples included "… <u>she's</u> about to meet someone…" (MM22); and, "I <u>can't</u> imagine American literature without it." (CL4).

9. First- and Second-Person Pronouns

Table 5

First- and Second-Person Pronouns in CL & MM

	1st pers. pro.	2nd pers. pro.	Total
CL	19 (61.29%)	12 (38.7%)	31
MM	25 (56.81%)	19 (43.18%)	44
Totals	44 (58.66%)	31 (41.33%)	75

Previously from Table 2, we saw that there was a handful of First- and Second-person Pronouns here (75 instances, 2.04%). In Table 5, a bit more of the former than the latter (44 instances/ 58.66% vs. 31 instances/ 41.33%) were detected, and a few more were found in the MM (19 instances/ 43.18% vs. 25 instances/ 56.81%). To discuss, the two types of pronouns, as opposed to the third-person, help create rapport and solidarity, as can be observed in sociolinguistic literature like Coulmas (2005), since they treat people as equals (Holmes & Wilson, 2017). Our results here also support the blurb studies of Küçüksakarya (2016), and Jimenez and Fernandez-Dalona (2020).

Here, we have examples of First- and Second-person Pronouns, and sentences with both: "to us last night! I felt for my sister most severely." (CL30); "I'd always lived a fairly blameless life. Up until the day I left my husband…" (MM3); "If you feel safe only with nine to five reality, you'll probably not enjoy her books." (CL15); "A fun read… leaves you feeling warm and fuzzy inside." (MM12); and, "Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain and little, I am soulless and heartless? You think wrong!" (CL12); and a longer one "I (me, Jenny, the author, not Polly, who's the character in the book, … If you're ever dreamed of tossing it all up in the air and starting over, I hope you love Summer at Little Beach Street Bakery. And if you haven't—well, you know, it has a REALLY COOL puffin in it." (MM36).

10. Noun Clauses

Table 2 shows a handful of instances of *Noun Clauses*, comparable to Contractions (i.e., 72; 1.95%), and they were more salient in the MM than the CL, as the number projects (78% vs. 22%), thus close to four times the number of MMs. This should come to us as no surprise since noun clauses are distinctive features of spoken/informal register, as suggested in Biber et al. (2021). It is interesting to note the sizeable number of cognitive verbs here, especially the first three that had at least 10 occurrences in our corpus: "discover," "know," "find out," "realize," "learn" and "figure out."

Unlike the MM, there were a lot more CL blurbs with no noun clauses, a rough estimate was 28 blurbs, therefore allowing us to see the formality/written register of the CL. Instances from our corpus were "Eliza soon comes to discover that her search for love has become a quest of personal freedom" (CL6); "What Lou doesn't know is she's about to meet someone who's going to turn her whole life upside down." (MM22).

11. Questions

Table 2 shows that *Questions* were a part of the big picture but did not receive all that much prominence, totaling only 35 (0.95%) of all the features. As can be expected the MM had more: 80% vs. 20%, i.e. four times more, in fact. This agrees with Biber et al. (2021) and Carter and McCarthy (2006), who indicated that questions (especially WH questions) were an essential part of informal/spoken register since they establish rapport between the interlocutors. In the blurb research above, Gea-Valor (2005), Gea-Valor and Ros (2009), Jimenez and Fernandez-Dalona (2020) saw questions as a tool to arouse customers' curiosity.

Our data indicated more WH Questions than the others, being followed by Yes/No Questions and no instances of Question Tags found here. Examples of WH Questions were "Who is going to marry Eugénie Grandet?" (CL8); "But what happens when that bad boy turns out to be her new boss?" (MM14). Examples of Yes/No Questions included "But can young love find new life in the twilight of their lives?" (CL17); "Will they make it to the wedding? And, more importantly, is this really the end of the road for Addie and Dylan?" (MM33).

12. First-Name Diminutives

Only three instances of *First-name diminutives* appeared in the whole corpus, and in MM exclusively: "Rosie and <u>Dominic</u> Vega are the perfect couple…. <u>Dom</u> is faithful and a great provider" (MM13); "When literature student <u>Anastasia</u> Steele goes to interview young entrepreneur Christian Grey… The unworldly innocent <u>Ana</u> is startled" (MM27); "but she isn't prepared for <u>Tyler</u> MacMillan. They've been ordered to work together every closely to facilitate the merger. Sophia must teach <u>Ty</u> the finger points" (MM39).

The use of First-name Diminutives as an informal feature is aligned with Carter and McCarthy (2006) and Carter et al. (2011). This feature is also widely discussed in sociolinguistic literature under address terms as politeness (Coulmas, 2005; Holmes & Wilson, 2017). As discussed above, the MM tended to need more rapport building.

Conclusion

Our corpus of 80 blurbs from classic and mass-marketed happily-ever-after women's novels pointed to the fact that the mass-marketed blurbs had higher number of informal/spoken features which indicate that they were inclined towards the informal register than their classic counterpart. These features were 12 in total. Intensifiers, Present Tenses, Simple Conjunctions ranked top, followed by Phrasal Verbs and Idioms, Ellipses, Informal Words, Past Tenses, Hedges, Contractions, First-person and Second-person Pronouns, Noun Clauses, Questions, Complex Conjunctions and First-name Diminutives. Finally, we might say that our study was an extension of Bacić (2021), who claimed that fiction blurbs, as opposed to those of academic textbooks like linguistics, tended to incline towards spoken register since they had a lot of informal features.

In terms of limitations, we can detect two in our study: the small sampling size, and the limited type of novels, i.e. happily-ever-after women's novels. Therefore, further research may want to explore a bigger corpus (more than 100 blurbs), and can incorporate sad-ending women's novels (e.g. *Anna Karenina, Madame Bovary, Tess of the D'Urbervilles*). Men's novels can be studied, e.g. those by Dickens, Hardy and Hemingway. More recent contemporary fiction by Adichie,

Roth, Roy and Lahiri can be studied. Finally, the linguistic features that can be explored may include imperatives, discourse markers and stance markers.

Concerning pedagogical implications, ESL/EFL and literature teachers can pay more attention to the spoken register, including the informal grammar and vocabulary. The former includes present tenses (including historical present, and how to use a noun phrase to replace a clause with past tenses), simple conjunctions (especially "and" and "but" at phrasal and discoursal levels), ellipses (Subject-and-Verb-less phrases, and fragments like adverbials), contractions (Subject combined with a contracted V, and Verb + *n't*), first- and second-person pronouns, noun clauses (especially those beginning with "discover," "know," and "find out"), and questions (WH questions and Yes/No Questions mainly). The latter consists of intensifiers (especially lexical coloring, maximizers, and comparatives/superlatives), phrasal verbs and idioms, informal words (e.g. "thing," "kid," "guy") and first-name diminutives. In between grammar and lexis, we have politeness devices like hedges, e.g. "might," "perhaps," "seems."

Finally, innovative grammar treatises, some blending corpus linguistic research, can be referred to, e.g. Carter and McCarthy (2006), Carter et al. (2011), Larsen-Freeman and Celce-Murcia (2016), and Biber et al. (1999, 2021).

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APPENDICES

Appendix A
A1 List of classic novels

	Title	Author	Original publication	Publisher
1.	*Agnes Grey*	Brontë, Anne	1847	Arcturus Publishing
2.	*A Room with a View*	Forster, E. M.	1908	Signet Classics
3.	*Belinda*	Edgeworth, Maria	1801	Oxford World's Classics
4.	*Beloved*	Morrison, Toni	1987	Vintage Books
5.	*Cecilia*	Burney, Frances	1782	Oxford World's Classics
6.	*Daughter of Fortune*	Allende, Isabel	1999	HarperVia
7.	*Emma*	Austen, Jane	1815	Signet Classics
8.	*Eugénie Grandet*	Balzac, Hororé de	1833	Oxford World's Classics
9.	*Gone with the Wind*	Mitchell, Margaret	1939	Pan Books
10.	*Good Wives*	Alcott, Louisa May	1869	Aegipan Press
11.	*Helen*	Edgeworth, Maria	1834	Sort Of Books
12.	*Jane Eyre*	Brontë, Charlotte	1847	Collins Classics
13.	*Jezebel's Daughter*	Collins, Wilkie	1880	Oxford World's Classics
14.	*Lady Chatterley's Lover*	Lawrence, David Herbert	1928	Bantam Classics
15.	*Lady Oracle*	Atwood, Margaret	1976	Virago
16.	*Little Women*	Alcott, Louisa May	1868	Signet Classics
17.	*Love in the Time of Cholera*	Márquez, Gabriel García Colombia	1985	Penguin Books
18.	*Mansfield Park*	Austen, Jane	1814	Arcturus Publishing
19.	*Mary Barton*	Gaskell, Elizabeth	1848	Wordsworth Classics
20.	*Meridian*	Walker, Alice	1976	Harcourt
21.	*Middlemarch*	Eliot, George	1871	Penguin Classics
22.	*Moll Flanders*	Defoe, Daniel	1722	Trans Atlantic Press
23.	*Mrs. Dalloway*	Woolf, Virginia	1925	Collins Classics
24.	*North and South*	Gaskell, Elizabeth	1855	Alma Classics
25.	*Northanger Abbey*	Austen, Jane	1817	Wordsworth Classics
26.	*Orlando*	Woolf, Virginia	1928	Alma Classics
27.	*Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded*	Richardson, Samuel	1740	Oxford U Press
28.	*Persuasion*	Austen, Jane	1817	Penguin Classics
29.	*Pride and Prejudice*	Austen, Jane	1813	Wordsworth Classics
30.	*Sense and Sensibility*	Austen, Jane	1811	Collins Classics
31.	*Shirley*	Brontë, Charlotte	1849	Wordsworth Classics
32.	*The Bell Jar*	Plath, Sylvia	1963	Faber and Faber (50th Anniversary Ed.)
33.	*The Color Purple*	Walker, Alice	1983	Weidenfeld & Nicolson
34.	*The House of the Spirits*	Allende, Isabel	1985	Vintage Classics
35.	*The Hundred Secret Senses*	Tan, Amy	1996	Flamingo (HarperCollins)

Title	Author	Original publication	Publisher
36. The Joy Luck Club	Tan, Amy	1989	Vintage
37. The Woman in White	Collins, Wilkie	1860	Alma Classics
38. Ursule Mirouët	Balzac, Hororé de	1841	Penguin Classics
39. Vanity Fair	Thackeray, William M.	1848	Alma Classics
40. Wives and Daughters	Gaskell, Elizabeth	1866/1999	Penguin Classics

A2 CL authors categorized according to nationality

Author's nationality	British	US	French	Chilean	Canadian	Colombian	Total
No. of books/ %	25 (62.5%)	9 (22.5%)	2 (5%)	2 (5%)	1 (2.5%)	1 (2.5%)	40 (100%)

A3 CL publishers

Publisher	Arcturus	Signet	Oxford	Vintage	Harper	Pan	Aegipan
No./ %	2 (5%)	3 (7.5%)	5 12.5%)	3 (7.5%)	1 (2.5%)	1 (2.5%)	1 (2.5%)

Publisher	Sort Of Books	Collins	Bantam	Virago	Penguin	Wordsworth	Harcourt
No./ %	1 (2.5%)	3 (7.5%)	1 (2.5%)	1 (2.5%)	5 12.5%)	4 (10%)	1 (2.5%)

Publisher	Trans Atlantic	Alma	Faber & Faber	Weidenfeld & Nicolson	Flamingo
No./%	1 (2.5%)	4 (10%)	1 (2.5%)	1 (2.5%)	1 (2.5%)

Appendix B
B1 List of mass-marketed novels

Title	Author	Original publication	Publisher
1. Against All Odds	Steel, Danielle	2017	Pan
2. All your Perfects	Hoover, Colleen	2018	Simon & Schuster
3. Angels	Keyes, Mariane	2002	Penguin
4. Beach Read	Henry, Emily	2020	Berkley
5. Can You Keep a Secret?	Kinsella, Sophie	2003	Black Swan
6. Crazy Rich Asians	Kwan, Kevin	2013	Anchor Books
7. Every Breath	Sparks, Nicholas	2018	Grand Central Publishing (Hachette Book)
8. 4 Blondes	Bushnell, Candace	2000	Grove Press
9. Good in Bed	Weiner, Jennifer	2001	Washington Square Press (Atria)
10. Grown Ups	Keyes, Mariane	2020	Penguin
11. How to Fall in Love	Ahern, Cecilia	2013	HarperCollins
12. I Heart Paris	Kelk, Lindsey	2010	Harper (HarperCollins)
13. Love Her or Lose Her	Bailey, Tessa	2020	Avon Books
14. Love to Hate You	Watson, Jo	2018	Headline Eternal
15. Malibu Rising	Reid, Taylor Jenkins	2021	Ballantine Books (Penguin Random House)
16. Maybe Someday	Hoover, Colleen	2014	Atria (Simon & Schuster)
17. One Night on the Island	Silver, Josie	2022	Ballantine
18. PS. I Love You	Ahern, Cecilia	2004	HarperCollins
19. Safe Haven	Sparks, Nicholas	2010	Grand Central Publishing (Hachette Book)
20. She Went All the Way	Cabot, Meg	2002	Avon
21. Stars of Fortune	Roberts, Nora	2015	Piatkus
22. Still Me	Moyes, Jojo	2018	Penguin
23. That Summer	Weiner, Jennifer	2021	Piatkus
24. The Affair	Steel, Danielle	2021	Pan
25. The Bookshop on the Shore	Colgan, Jenny	2019	William Morrow
26. The Devil Wears Prada	Weisberger, Lauren	2003	Broadway Books (Random House)
27. The 50 Shades of Grey	James, E. L.	2012	Vintage Books (Random House)
28. The Girl You Left Behind	Moyes, Jojo	2012	Penguin
29. The Hating Game	Thorne, Sally	2016	William Morrow
30. The Kiss Quotient	Hoang, Helen	2018	Corvus
31. The Love Hypothesis	Hazelwood, Ali	2021	Sphere
32. The Party Crasher	Kinsella, Sophie	2021	Bantom Press (Penguin/Random House)

Title	Author	Original publication	Publisher
33. The Road Trip	O'Leary, Beth	2021	Quercus
34. The Secret Diaries of Miranda Cheever	Quinn, Julia	2007	Piatkus
35. The Stylist	Nixon, Rosie	2016	HarperCollins
36. The Summer at Little Beach Street Bakery	Colgan, Jenny	2015	Sphere
37. The Summer Job	Dent, Lizzy	2021	Penguin
38. The Unhoneymooners	Lauren, Christina	2019	Gallery Books (Simon & Schuster)
39. The Villa	Roberts, Nora	2001	Berkley
40. Virgin River	Carr, Robyn	2020	Mira (Harlequin Books)

B2 MM authors categorized according to nationality

Author's nationality	US	British	Irish	Scottish	Canadian	South African	Italian	Total
No. of books/ %	21 (52.5%)	8 (20%)	4 (10%)	3 (7.5%)	2 (5%)	1 (2.5%)	1 (2.5%)	40 (100%)

B3 MM Publishers

Publisher	Pan	Simon & Schuster	Penguin	Berkley	Black Swan	Anchor Books	Grand Central
No./ %	2 (5%)	1 (2.5%)	5 (12.5%)	2 (5%)	1 (2.5%)	1 (2.5%)	2 (5%)

Publisher	Grove Press	Washington Sq Press	Harper Collins	Avon Books	Headline Eternal	Ballantine Books	Atria
No./ %	1 (2.5%)	1 (2.5%)	4 (10%)	2 (5%)	1 (2.5%)	2 (2.5%)	1 (2.5%)

Publisher	Piatkus	William Morrow	Broadway Books	Corvus	Bantom Press	Quercus	Sphere
No./ %	3 (7.5%)	2 (5%)	1 (2.5%)	1 (2.5%)	1 (2.5%)	1 (2.5%)	2 (5%)

Publisher	Gallery Books	Mira	Vintage	TOTAL
No./ %	1 (2.5%)	1 (2.5%)	1 (2.5%)	40 (100%)