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# Toward a Model for Analyzing the Rhetorical Move Structure of the Master Thesis Introductions in Applied Linguistics

Research Article

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## Abstract

Genres are characterized by their purposes (Bhatia, 2014). Accordingly, the MA thesis and research articles (RAs) differ in their communicative purposes (Károly, 2009). The former aims to examine students' research capability, while the latter aims to communicate research among scholars to spread knowledge. Nonetheless, since Swales's (1990) CARS model, no model has been developed for studying the MA thesis introductions regarding their rhetorical move structure (RMS), particularly in the ELF context. This paper addresses the gap and contributes to the field of genre analysis by creating a model for representing and analyzing the RMS of MA thesis introductions in applied linguistics, taking the CARS Model as a starting point. The proposed model is created by systematically and critically reviewing existing theories and empirical research on the topic. Subsequently, a pilot study involving 10 MA theses from a Hungarian university was conducted to test the reliability and validity of the model and make necessary refinements. The results showed that some sub-moves, such as "Stating research focus," "Stating study framework," "Stating historical context," "Stating research relevance," "Methodological gap," and "Quotation/hook," are missing from the model and were added. The proposed model holds implications for understanding the RMS and provides a tool for researchers to analyze MA thesis introductions, particularly in Applied linguistics. Such studies are important pedagogically for teachers as well to understand the students' writing with the view of communicative functions.

**Keywords:** EFL context, introductions, MA theses, Scene model, rhetorical moves

## 1. Introduction

Various researchers have investigated the rhetorical move structure (henceforth RMS) of various genres (Pashapour et al., 2018; Sheldon, 2011). This form of textual analysis examines moves, representing "a coherent communicative function in a written or spoken discourse" (Swales, 2004, p. 228). Examining the RMS of a text informs and enriches pedagogy and the competitive field of research (Rahman et al., 2017; Swales, 2004). Writers, particularly those using English as a foreign or second language, face difficulties understanding the rhetorical structure and conventions of academic genres, including lexical syntactic choices (Swales, 1990). Training writers to understand the communicative purposes and moves of such genres could help them become more conscious about their writing tasks (Pujiyanti et al., 2018).

Since Swales's (1990) creation of the CARS model for analyzing the introduction of research articles (RAs), many studies have been carried out to investigate other sections of RAs, including abstracts (Darabad, 2016; Rashidi & Meihami, 2018), literature reviews (Khoo et al., 2011; Rabie & Boraie, 2021), methods (Lim, 2006; Zhang & Wannaruk, 2016), discussions (Amirian et al., 2008; Peacock, 2002), and conclusions (Amnuai & Wannaruk, 2013; Loi et al., 2016). Nevertheless, introductions have received the most extensive attention in this research area due to their crucial role in establishing a link between previous research on the topic and the new work being presented (Bhatia, 1993).

Other studies have focused on other genres, mainly Ph.D. dissertations (e.g., Bunton, 2002; Kawase, 2018) and MA theses (e.g., (e.g., Chen & Kuo, 2012; Ebadi et al., 2019; Pujiyanti et al., 2018). In these studies, it has been found that the RMS of a text varies depending on the discipline, genre, or context to which it is applied (Choe & Hwang, 2014; Ebadi et al., 2019; Samraj, 2008). While Swales's CARS model (1990, 2004) has been predominantly used to analyze MA theses (Choe & Hwang, 2014; Chen & Kuo, 2012; Cheung, 2012), others have adopted Bunton's (2002) modified CARS model for PhD dissertations (e.g., Chen & Kuo, 2012; Pujiyanti et al., 2018). Samraj (2008) introduced a revised version of the CARS model specifically for examining MA theses written in the English-speaking world, focusing on fields such as philosophy, biology, and linguistics. As she stated, she adapted her model based on the results of other studies, including Bunton (2002).

Therefore, in this paper, it is assumed that there is a need to systematically develop a model to study the MA thesis genre in the EFL context. The proposed model is supposed to cater to the generic (MA thesis), disciplinary (i.e., English Applied Linguistics), and contextual (i.e., the Hungarian context) features of this specific kind of introduction. The importance of the thesis genre arises from its unique role in students' studies, as they must write a thesis to obtain their degree. Many students find writing their thesis difficult, especially if English is not their mother tongue (Nguyen & Pramoolsook, 2015). The Hungarian context was selected for this research as it represents a multicultural EFL context that has not been sufficiently explored in regard to the research area and perspective outlined above. Conducting research in this context may provide valuable insights for other EFL contexts. The field of Applied Linguistics (AL) was chosen due to its role in English language teaching (ELT) and studies on English for academic purposes (EAP). Thus, it is a "diverse and contested area" (Ruying & Allison, 2004, p. 266) for research, particularly in ELT.

The present paper aims to propose a theoretical and empirically grounded model to study the RMS of MA thesis introductions in the field of AL, using Swales's (1990, 2004) CARS Model as a starting point. The proposed model is both theory-based, drawing from relevant theories and findings from

previous research in the field, as well as empirically grounded, as evidenced by the initial pilot study on ten MA theses written in the Hungarian university under scrutiny. The study is guided by two main research questions:

1. How can the RMS of EFL MA thesis introductions in the field of applied linguistics be modelled theoretically?

2. What changes need to be made to the theoretical model based on its initial empirical application?

By addressing the questions above, this study seeks to provide comprehensive insights into the rhetorical structure of MA thesis introductions and to shed light on the Hungarian EFL context.

The first part of this article is dedicated to the theoretical background, including the rhetorical function of introductions, genre and RMS analysis, and Swales's CARS model and previous research, ending with the proposed Scene Model. The second part presents the pilot study, encompassing details about the corpus, procedures of analysis, results, and discussions, concluding with the revised Scene Model. Finally, the paper ends with the conclusion, implications, limitations, and suggestions for future studies.

## 2. Theoretical Background

This section consists of three sub-sections addressing the following topics: the rhetorical functions of introductions, genre and RMS analysis, the CARS model, and previous research. The first section justifies the investigation into introductions and the rhetorical functions that distinguish them from other thesis sections, such as literature reviews. The RMS analysis section will provide background information on the concept of genre and a type of analysis (i.e., RMS) that can be used to study the rhetorical structure of a given genre. Next, a critical overview of Swales's (1990, 2004) CARS model and the empirical research carried out using the model will be discussed, ending with the proposed model (i.e., the Scene Model).

### 2.1 Rhetorical Functions of Introductions

Introductions have attracted the interest of researchers more than other thesis sections, such as literature reviews (Al-Qahtani, 2006). This may be explained by the special rhetorical functions that introductions fulfill in academic genres. First, introductions are usually the first section of a paper, and they present the research to the readers (Pashapour et al., 2018). They also establish a link between previous research on a particular topic and the writer's own research on the topic (Bhatia, 1993). According to Swales (1990), the introduction section is the space where the writers show their position in the research field. Moreover, writers can specify the aim of their research and its value (Arrington & Rose, 1987).

Despite the importance of writing adequate introductions, writers often experience challenges when it comes to producing this section (Swales, 1990). These challenges may arise from the many alternative forms that introductions may take. Writers should decide on the type and amount of background information to present to the readers. Writers must also consider the first impression they give to the audience, who decide whether or not a piece of research is worth reading. In

introductions, writers need to clearly demonstrate the gap in the research field to justify their research. As Feak and Swales (2011, p. 2) stated, this section should "provide a context in which your reason for exploring your topic is apparent and in which topic appears to be worth pursuing".

For the above-mentioned reasons, the number of studies focusing on introductions has increased since Swales's (1990) work on research articles, and investigations into introductions have provided insight into the production of other sections. For example, Kwan (2006) analyzed the literature review sections of PhD dissertations, drawing comparisons with Bunton's (2002) revised CARS model for PhD thesis introductions. He found that the moves of literature reviews resemble those of introductions, with some variations in the patterns and elements of the moves. Therefore, introductions become the window overlooking other sections.

### 2.2 Genre and RMS Analysis

The word genre has etymological roots in French and Latin, meaning "kind" or "genus." Genus refers to classes or groups, such as families, and has been used in scientific fields "to classify the species into a certain class due to its typical similar characteristics" (Dirgeyasa, 2016, p. 45). The root of the word genre is the same as the word gender (Cohen, 1986). Both terms refer to the notion of classification into categories. In genres, this classification occurs according to genre conventions; in other words, genres are grouped into categories based on their standard features. According to Biber (1988), "genre categories are determined on the basis of external criteria relating to the speaker's purpose and topic; they are assigned on the basis of use rather than on the basis of form" (p. 171).

In genre studies, there has been no consensus on defining the term genre. This may result from the fuzziness of the term, as it is not easy to determine its boundaries (Swales, 1990). Scholars from the three genre schools, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), New Rhetoric (NR), and English for Specific Purposes (ESP), perceive genre differently (Hyland, 2004). All of them believe that genres are attached to social practices, that is, to communicative functions (Tardy, 2019); nevertheless, they differ in their focus. Those approaching the subject from a Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) view describe the genre as "a staged, goal-oriented social process" (Martin, 1992, p. 505). As such, SFL focuses on the writer's ability to achieve goal-oriented, communicative purposes by following specific steps or stages that are embedded and affected by the context. Researchers in the New Rhetoric (NR) school also highlight the significance of connecting the notion of a genre with social purposes and context; however, they argue that genres are "flexible, plastic, and free" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 79). To clarify, since genres are social products, they change as the rules and conventions of the society around them change.

The English for specific purposes (ESP) is the third school that perceives genres in terms of their communitive purposes and the discourse communities. Swales's (1990), who represents this school, defines genre as:

> A class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of **communicative purposes**. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent **discourse community**, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the **schematic structure** of the discourse and influences and constrains the choice of **content** and **style**. (p. 58; emphases mine)

In his definition, genres have communicative purposes, which form the basis for differentiating between genres. Changing the purpose of writing a particular genre can result in a new genre. For instance, the purpose of writing a seminar paper is to assess students' knowledge and understanding of the topics that were presented during the semester. If the purpose becomes sharing the paper journals for publication purposes, then a seminar paper would change to a research article genre. In short, the ESP school views genre as a "conventionalized communicative event" (Bhatia, 1996, p. 46). This paper adopts Swales's definition of the genre since it accounts for its linguistic and social aspects.

Understanding the features of a given genre can be achieved by examining how its information/content is structured. Swales (1990) refers to the units that are utilized for such examination as "moves." The move is "a discoursal or rhetorical unit that performs a coherent communicative function in a written or spoken discourse" (Swales, 2004, p. 228). The move thus has a communicative function, and each move usually subsumes several steps/sub-moves (Swales, 1990). The move may include only one step (e.g., Move 1 in the 2004 version of the CARS model; Ruiying & Allison, 2003).

The rhetorical move structure is a type of genre analysis that was introduced by Swales (1981). The analysis is assigned to the parts (moves) of a text, and these parts convey communicative functions. Researchers have analyzed not just the structure of moves and their steps but also the linguistic expressions and lexico-grammatical features associated with them (e.g., Ädel, 2014; Cortes, 2013; Cotos et al., 2016; Flowerdew & Forest, 2009; Li et al., 2020). Such studies offered valuable information and contributed to the fields of ESP/EAP. Also, they gave insights into writing courses and teaching composition to graduate and undergraduate students.

In their study, Cotos et al. (2016) analyzed a corpus of 900 research articles, encompassing 30 articles published across various disciplines. They created a model that was used to inform students about the discussion/conclusion section of the research article genre. They noted that the various journals and discipline requirements affect the information structure. Moreover, their model informed the reading materials that were created to give information about the moves and their corresponding steps. The students were asked to interact through Moodle and have forum-based discussions with each other. The researchers also asked the students to do a rhetorical composition analysis relevant to their field, annotating the linguistic expressions used in the moves/steps. They emphasized the importance of such instruction in raising student's awareness of academic genres in their fields.

From a cross-cultural inquiry, the RMS analysis was used to inform pedagogy and scholars about the conventions of academic writing in various cultures and languages (e.g., Duszak, 1994; Ebadi et al., 2019; Ryvitytė, 2003; Sheldon, 2011). Such information is valuable for teachers to help them provide clear instruction and better understand the challenges students face while writing in English (Ebadi et al., 2019). Sheldon (2011) studied 18 research articles in each group: English L1, English L2, and Spanish L1. She found that English L1 writers, on the one hand, used the steps and moves more confidently than the two other groups. On the other hand, unlike English L1, the other groups used to specify details about their research, for example, to summarize their methods. Contrary to previous studies on the Spanish language (e.g., Martín-Martín, 2005), her study revealed that the "Establishing the niche" move was not ignored by Spanish writers; interculturality and the influence of English might be potential causes, as she stated. She explained that audience expectations

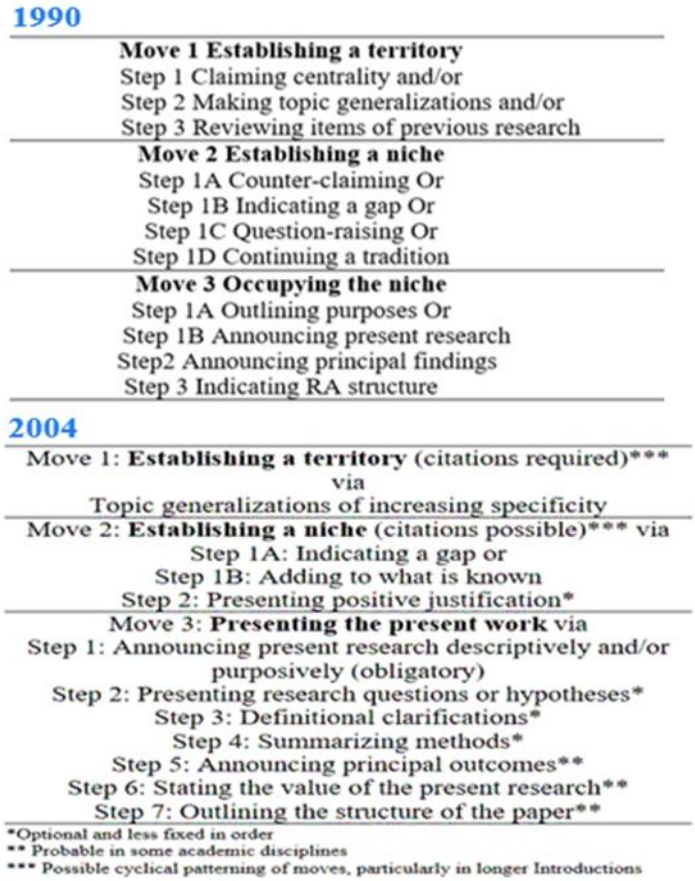
impacted the writers' decisions to use or avoid some steps. English authors have international readers, while Spanish writers have more national audiences. In that case, English writers used to clarify their research terminology and indicate their research questions more than the two other groups. In short, although the research unveiled positive results regarding the Spanish writers' awareness of English conventions, particularly in Move 2, the English L2 authors transferred some Spanish writing conventions (i.e., Spanish) while writing in English. The same was found about Polish writers in Duszak's (1994) research, where she stated that Polish writers "transmit discoursal patterns typical of their own tongue but alien to English" (p. 291).

Swales (1990) highlighted the "pedagogic value in sensitizing students to rhetorical effects and to the rhetorical structures that tend to recur in genre-specific texts" (p. 213). Such knowledge can raise students' awareness of the conventions of English academic writing and thus enable them to operate and participate appropriately in the discourse community of their field (Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002). As other studies have shown (e.g., Ebadi et al., 2019; Pujiyanti et al., 2018), RMS analysis can be used for developing teaching materials, enabling supervisors to inform their students of the genre features of texts (e.g., MA theses).

### 2.3 Swales's CARS Model and Previous Research

Swales's (1990, 2004) CARS Model (see Figure 1) was initially developed for analyzing the RMS of RA introductions with the aim of informing non-native English students of how to write and read English RAs (Moreno & Swales, 2018). The model has two levels of analysis: moves and steps. Moves, as mentioned above, have a communicative function, which is achieved in the text and represent "a functional, not a formal unit" (Swales, 2004, p. 228). This means that a move is recognized based on its function and not by grammatical categories. The second level, referred to as steps or strategies (in Bhatia, 1993), are the constituents of moves and are instrumental in their identification. The first term, "step," reflects the order and obligation of these constituents, whereas the term "strategies" suggests the opposite (Lin, 2014). In the present study, the term "sub-move" (SM) is deemed more appropriate, as it does not presuppose the obligatory nature or a certain order of the moves' constituents. The CARS model (1990, 2004) has demonstrated robustness at the move level in both RAs (in Afshar et al., 2018; Rahman et al., 2017; Sheldon, 2011; Wannaruk & Amnuai, 2016) and MA theses (e.g., in (Cheung, 2012; Károly, 2007; Samraj, 2008); however, modifications were made at the sub-move level.

Figure 1. CARS Model from 1990 to 2004



**1990**

**Move 1 Establishing a territory**
Step 1 Claiming centrality and/or
Step 2 Making topic generalizations and/or
Step 3 Reviewing items of previous research

**Move 2 Establishing a niche**
Step 1A Counter-claiming Or
Step 1B Indicating a gap Or
Step 1C Question-raising Or
Step 1D Continuing a tradition

**Move 3 Occupying the niche**
Step 1A Outlining purposes Or
Step 1B Announcing present research
Step2 Announcing principal findings
Step 3 Indicating RA structure

**2004**

Move 1: **Establishing a territory** (citations required)***
via
Topic generalizations of increasing specificity

Move 2: **Establishing a niche** (citations possible)*** via
Step 1A: Indicating a gap or
Step 1B: Adding to what is known
Step 2: Presenting positive justification*

Move 3: **Presenting the present work** via
Step 1: Announcing present research descriptively and/or purposively (obligatory)
Step 2: Presenting research questions or hypotheses*
Step 3: Definitional clarifications*
Step 4: Summarizing methods*
Step 5: Announcing principal outcomes**
Step 6: Stating the value of the present research**
Step 7: Outlining the structure of the paper**

*Optional and less fixed in order
** Probable in some academic disciplines
*** Possible cyclical patterning of moves, particularly in longer Introductions

The following sections critically review the developments in the CARS model, focusing on the moves and their sub-moves; in addition, the findings of previous research on RAs and MA thesis genres, namely in applied linguistics, will be compared. Table 1 shows a chronological list of the previous empirical studies, starting from the most recent. These studies were selected due to their focus on applied linguistics and because they represent the four key trends in genre research: investigating particular contexts (e.g., Indonesian in Pujiyanti et al., 2018; English in (Rahman et al., 2017), cross-cultural variation (e.g., Ebadi et al., 2019; Wannaruk & Amnuai, 2016), cross-disciplinary variation (e.g., Cheung, 2012; Samraj, 2008), and contrasting experiences with novice writers (e.g., Choe & Hwang, 2014; Károly, 2007). While the majority of these studies adopted the CARS model (1990, 2004), some utilized other models, such as Bunton's (2002) Ph.D. Thesis model and Chen and Kuo's (2019) Coding Scheme.

Before reviewing the literature, I thoroughly examined the guideline documents of the Hungarian university in question to understand the expectations placed on the students regarding the MA thesis. The decision aligns with Bhatia's view (2004) that RMS is not only constrained by the text but also by the context in which it is written. MA students write their theses according to departmental requirements (i.e., the English Applied Linguistics Department). As the documents were published publicly on the university website, no permission was required for their use, though the name of the university remains confidential in this research. References will be made to these guidelines in the literature review.

Table 1. Empirical Research on RMS of Introductions in Applied Linguistic

| **Author (s)** | **Context** | **Focus** | **Number of introductions examined in AL** | **Adopted Model** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ebadi et al. (2019) | Iraqi and international | MA theses | 60 theses: 30 in each group | Chen and Kuo's (2019) Coding Scheme |
| Afshar et al., (2018) | | RAs | | Swales (2004) |
| Pashapour et al., (2018) | Iranian English | RAs | 60 RAs: 30 RAs in each corpus | Swales (2004) |
| Pujiyanti et al., (2018) | Indonesian | MA theses | 20 MA theses | Bunton (2002) |
| Rahman et al., (2017) | English | RAs | 20 RAs | Swales (1990 and 2004) |
| Wannaruk & Amnuai (2016) | Thai and international | RAs | 60 RAs: 30 RAs in each corpus | Swales (2004) |
| Choe & Hwang (2014) | Korean | MA thesis | 200 (50 from each category) | Swales' (1990) CARS model |
| | | Ph.D. dissertations | | |
| | | Expert RAs | | |
| Chen & Kuo (2012) | International | MA theses | 20 MA theses | Bunton (2002) |
| Cheung (2012) | Singapore | MA theses | 11 MA theses | Swales' (1990) CARS model |
| Sheldon (2011) | Castilian, Spanish and English | RAs | 54 RAs: 18 English L1, 18 Spanish, and 18 English L2 | Swales (2004) |
| Hirano (2009) | Brazilian Portuguese and English | RAs | 20 RAs | Swales' (1990) CARS model |
| Ozturk (2007) | Turkish | RAs | 20 RAs | Swales' (1990) CARS model |
| Károly (2007) | Hungarina | Expert RAs | 20 RAs | Swales' (1990) CARS model |
| | | MA theses | 20 MA theses | |
| Keshavarz et al., (2007) | Iranian and international | RAs | 60 RAs: 30 RAs in each corpus | Swales (1990) |
| Samraj (2008) | USA | MA theses | 8 MA theses | Swales (1990, 2004) |
| Árvay& Tankó (2004) | Hungarian and English | RAs | 40 RAs: 20 in each corpus | Swales' (1990) CARS model |
| Ryvitytė (2003) | Lithuanian and English | Ras | 20 RAs | Swales' (1990) CARS model |
| Duszak (1994) | Polish and English | Ras | 40 RAs: 20 in each corpus | Swales' (1990) CARS model |

### 2.3.1 Move 1: Establishing a Territory

In the first move in the CARS model, the writer demonstrates their knowledge of the research field and relevant previous studies, effectively situating their research within that field. As illustrated in Figure 1, Move 1 has been changed in the 2004 version of the CARS model to include only one obligatory constituent, "Topic generalization of increasing specificity", which involves the writer presenting general information about the research field, often supported by citations. Swales (2004) implemented this change to address confusion among researchers, as the steps in the original version were not easily distinguishable. The 1990 version of the CARS model comprised three sub-moves:

- "Claiming centrality": The writer underscores the importance of the research field and the topic of inquiry. For example, "**Recently**, there **has been** a spate of interest in how to . . ." (Swales, 1990, p. 144, emphasis mine). This sub-move was noted to have grammatical and linguistics signals, such as time relevance and the use of the present perfect. However, it is important to again emphasize that moves have cognitive elements, and thus focusing solely on form might lead to misunderstandings. Out of the 18 studies listed in Table 1, only Cheung (2012) and Samraj (2008) have further subdivided this step into centrality in the real world or the research world. While it may be argued that such a distinction is unnecessary, as students might not be aware of such specifications, the sub-move appears to be important in both the RA and MA thesis genres. In RAs, authors highlight the significance of the research field to persuade journals and readers, whereas students illustrate the importance of the research area to gain approval from the department or examination committee on the relevance of their thesis.

- "Making topic generalizations": The writer makes general statements either about phenomena or knowledge/practice in the field, for example, "There is now much evidence to support the hypothesis that…" (Swales, 1990, p. 146).

- "Reviewing items of previous research": The writer gives specific references to other researchers' findings and claims. They may use integral citations, as in "Sang et al. (1972) found that X was", or non-integral citations, as in "X was impaired (Sang et al., 1972)" (Swales, 1990, p. 150).

When writing an MA thesis, it is essential for students to showcase their knowledge of both previous research and practices within their research field. The thesis guideline documents stipulate that students must demonstrate their familiarity with previous studies conducted on the topic in addition to identifying the research area. Adnan (2008) highlighted that merging the steps into a single step might cause researchers to overlook the techniques that writers adopt in executing Move 1. As such, it is important to maintain distinct steps (Cheung, 2012; Choe & Hwang, 2014; Ebadi et al., 2019; Pujiyanti et al., 2018).

Other sub-moves have also been identified, such as "Defining terms", when the writer provides definitions of key terms in the research field (Ebadi et al., 2019; Károly, 2007; Pashapour et al., 2018; Pujiyanti et al., 2018). Another sub-move, "Bringing examples," was identified, involving the writer using specific examples to elaborate on the given topic (Árvay & Tankó, 2004; Károly, 2007). These sub-moves appear to be more tailored to the MA thesis genre than to RAs, possibly because students strive for clarity by providing examples and defining terms. On the other hand, those writing RA

introductions may not find this necessary, given that they are publishing in specialized journals read by an experienced discourse community of reviewers and readers in their field. As such, the sub-moves "Claiming centrality," "Making topic generalizations," "Reviewing items of previous research," "Defining terms," and "Bringing examples" may be utilized by students to "Establish a territory". Therefore, considering the unique requirements of the MA thesis, it may be beneficial to change the label of Move 1, "Establish a Territory. " Given that students are required to demonstrate familiarity with and identify the research area, renaming Move 1 to "Identifying the Research Field" seems warranted.

### 2.3.2 Move 2: Establishing a Niche

Move 2, the second in Swales's CARS model entails the identification of a lack of previous research or theoretical exploration regarding a particular issue. According to Swales (1990), this rhetorical move is recognized at least by one of the four following sub-moves:

- "Counter-claiming": The writer challenges what has been established in previous research. An example of this sub-move is provided by Swales (1990): "However, the use of … results in such a degree of spherical aberration that radical design changes have become necessary." (p. 142). This sub-move has not been identified in the MA thesis genre (Chen & Kuo, 2012; Cheung, 2012; Choe & Hwang, 2014; Ebadi et al., 2019; Károly, 2007; Pujiyanti et al., 2018; Samraj, 2008) but has been observed in the RA genre (Árvay & Tankó, 2004; Hirano, 2009; Keshavarz et al., 2007; Ozturk, 2007). This disparity may be attributed to students' reluctance to criticize established and senior researchers in their field.

- "Indicating a gap": The writer highlights an unaddressed gap or problem in the existing research, as in the following example: "However, the use of . . . results in a significant number of spherical aberrations" (Swales, 1990, p. 142). Negative verbs (e.g., "limited" and "suffer") or adjectives (e.g., "expensive") may be used to indicate a gap. In research on both genres, this sub-move has been found to be the most common ways of indicating a gap (Cheung, 2012; Károly, 2007; Rahman et al., 2017; Samraj, 2008; Sheldon, 2011; Wannaruk & Amnuai, 2016).

- "Question-raising": In this sub-move, the writer calls into questions, either directly or indirectly, the arguments or findings of previous research to suggest further research, as exemplified in this example sentence: "However, it is not clear whether the use of … can be modified to reduce spherical aberration to acceptable levels." (Swales, 1990, p. 142). This sub-move was merged with the "Indicating a gap" sub-move in two studies on the MA thesis genre (Cheung, 2012; Samraj, 2008). Researchers have also found that raising questions was uncommon in the MA thesis genre. For instance, Ebadi et al. (2019) found it in only four MA theses, and Károly (2007) found it in 5 MA Hungarian theses. Researchers who have investigated the RA genre generally do not specify the way the gap is created (as in Swales' CARS, 2004), leading to this sub-move being subsumed under "indicating a gap" in several studies (e.g., in Rahman et al., 2017; Sheldon, 2011; Wannaruk & Amnuai, 2016).

- "Continuing a tradition." / "Adding to what is known.": In this sub-move, the writer indicates that their work is an extension of what has already been addressed in the literature and continues the work of previous researchers on a particular topic, as seen in this example

from Swales (1990): "The remaining issue is to find a way of better controlling spherical aberration" (p. 142). This is viewed as the weak version of "indicating a gap" as it does not involve criticism of previous research. It can also be signaled with the word *therefore* instead of, *however*. In some studies, this sub-move was either not found (e.g., Rahman et al., 2017) or identified in only one MA thesis (Károly, 2007).

- "Expressed needs/ desires/ interests" (Swales, 1990, p. 156): This sub-move was added as a subtler way to indicate a research gap. In this way, the writer articulates the need to investigate a particular topic or problem deemed significant. In previous empirical studies, this sub-move was also labeled "Indicating a need/problem". It was found to be prominent in the MA thesis genre (Chen & Kuo, 2012; Cheung, 2012; Ebadi et al., 2019; Pujiyanti et al., 2018; Samraj, 2008). In contrast, studies on RAs did not mention this sub-move as separate from "Indicating a gap."

Swales (2004) indicated that "Counter-claiming," "Indicating a gap," and "Question-raising" are very close in function. Recognizing the difficulties that researchers faced in differentiating these sub-moves during the annotation process, he merged them into one step: "Indicating a gap." However, this decision may not be conducive to the study of the MA thesis genre, considering that Move 2 appeared to reflect cultural influences and the specific ways students address gaps in previous research. To give an example, three studies conducted in Korean (Choe & Hwang, 2014), Iraqi (Ebadi et al., 2019), and English (Samraj, 2008) contexts revealed variations in how students address gaps in previous research. Choe and Hwang (2014) observed a less assertive version of Move 2, where students avoided criticism of previous research, choosing to instead refer to the educational situation in Korea. The author explained that this approach might reflect the collectivist nature of Korean culture, which emphasizes group belonging over direct criticism. Conversely, Ebadi et al. (2019) found that Iraqi students predominantly used "Indicating a gap" with both sub-moves (i.e., "Counter-claiming" and "Question-raising"), suggesting a more confrontational stance towards other researchers. In the American context, (Samraj, 2008) found that students chose "Indicating a gap" and "Indicating a problem in the real world" as their most frequent sub-moves. These cross-cultural differences offer insights for educators to understand the underlying cultural factors that influence students' strengths or weaknesses in English academic writing.

Therefore, it remains crucial to distinguish between these sub-moves; however, clear definitions are imperative for this purpose. One way to do that is by examining the specific sub-moves writers use to establish their research gaps. Taking this approach, Lim (2012) studied social sciences Ras to investigate how writers express research gaps, Identifying four sub-moves:

- "Highlighting the complete absence of research, bearing a specific characteristic"
- "Stressing insufficient research in a specific aspect"
- "Revealing a limitation in previous research"
- "Contrasting conflicting previous research findings," akin to "Counter-claiming." This particular sub-move, however, was not identified in the MA thesis genre.

After indicating the research gap using one of the aforementioned methods, the following optional sub-move often follows:

- "Providing justification": In this sub-move, the writer presents their justification for investigating the research gap. This was found by Samraj (2002) and added as an optional sub-move in the revised version of the CARS model (Swales, 2004). In her research, Samraj (2008) found that this sub-move appeared the most in Linguistics and biology theses compared to those in philosophy. An example from Linguistics is shown below:

- This thesis is significant because Thai is one of the rarely taught ''exotic'' languages, a ''less commonly taught language'' (LCTL). This is exemplified by the lack of attention by linguists and the lack of recent research. However, for people who plan to visit Thailand for personal pleasure or business purposes, not only can learning Thai be fun and challenging, but also knowing Thai will make their visit to Thailand much easier. (Samraj, 2008, p. 62).

A similar sub-move, "Stating motivation", was found in Károly's (2007) study on MA Hungarian theses. This sub-move was identified in seven MA theses but was absent in RAs, and involves expressing the personal or professional motivation for conducting the research, as seen in the following example: "My curiosity about Waldorf pedagogy was sparked by a friend of mine whose mother studied at the Waldorf Teacher Training Centre a few years ago." (Károly, 2007, p.356). Such statements represent the way in which students strive to explain the rationale behind their research topic. As the distinction between these two sub-moves may blur, it is important to clarify them for a better understanding of the rhetorical action performed by the students. As the "Stating motivation" relates to the student's (i.e., the writer's) personal or professional life, one could argue that it presents a weaker version of justification. Therefore, it is beneficial to maintain these as two separate sub-moves. "Providing justification" typically requires citing literature to provide evidence for the research rationale, distinguishing it from the more personal nature of the "stating motivation" sub-move.

### 2.3.3 Move 3: Presenting the Present Work

In Move 3, the writer primarily aims to address the issues or gaps identified in Move 2 by introducing their research. The rhetorical function of this move is to present a solution or response to the previously stated research gap. Swales (2004) indicated that the constituents of this move may vary by discipline. The sub-moves of Move 3 are listed below:

1. "Announcing present research descriptively, purposively": Swales (2004) merged "Outlining purposes" and "Announcing present research" into this single sub-move. In the context of MA theses, this was classified as "Outlining aims," and the sub-move appeared as an obligatory element in applied linguistics texts (Chen & Kuo, 2012; Cheung, 2012; Choe & Hwang, 2014; Ebadi et al., 2019; Károly, 2007; Pujiyanti et al., 2018; Samraj, 2008).

2. "Presenting research questions or hypotheses": This sub-move did not appear in two previous studies examining texts in the field of applied linguistics (e.g., Choe & Hwang, 2014; Samraj, 2008). Swales (2004) marked it as optional and less fixed in order in comparison to other sub-moves. It is assumed here that this sub-move is particularly relevant for students, as clearly articulating their research questions or hypotheses helps to emphasize the focus of their research to the reader. However, since MA theses have a literature review section, some students might opt to delay their research questions until after the review.

3. "Definitional clarifications" (or "Analytical details" as termed by Árvay & Tankó, 2004). In this optional sub-move, the writer defines key terms related to their research or provides details that are related to their analysis, for example, "… we won't be considering here 'term (constituent) negation', which necessarily maintains existential/factive commitments" (Árvay & Tankó, 2004, p. 80).

4. "Summarizing methods": The writer summarizes their research design, data collection, analysis, participants, or sampling procedures.

5. "Stating the value of the present research": In the MA thesis genre, it may be argued that the value of the research lies in the implications of the student's research.

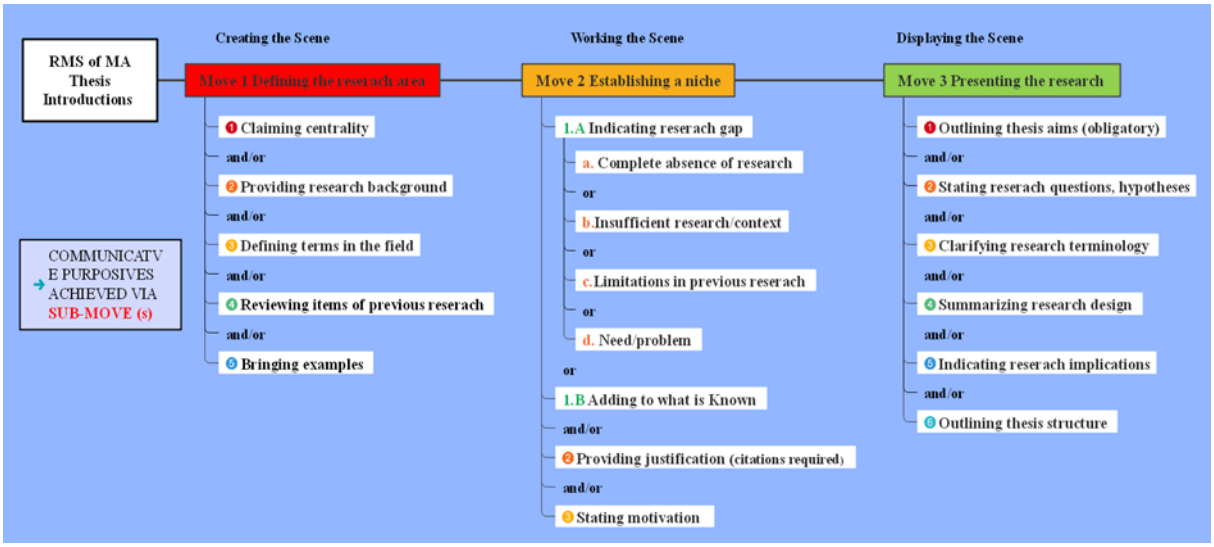
While the MA thesis writing guidelines do not specify how students should introduce their research, the term "implications" was used in the description of the MA thesis.

6. "Outlining the structure of the paper": This sub-move occurred consistently in the applied linguistics texts, irrespective of the genre. Therefore, it appears to be specific to the discipline. For the context of the present study, this label should be changed to "Outlining thesis structure".

7. "Announcing principal outcomes": This sub-move did not appear in the 11 applied linguistics MA theses examined and was present in only two studies on RAs (Pashapour et al., 2018; Sheldon, 2011).

Based on the above review and discussion of existing research, Figure 2 illustrates the proposed theoretical model, referred to as the Scene Model. The choice of the name is derived from the primary rhetorical function of introductions in academic writing: setting the research scene for the readers. This rhetorical function is more salient for students than the competitive context of research articles, which is the focus of the CARS model. Metaphorically, writing an introduction resembles the work of an editor on a scene in a film or video. The initial stage involves logging and organizing all the relevant scenes or clips. The scenes then proceed to the rough-cut stage, at this point, the editor locates and addresses issues in the clips or incorporates additional scenes to add to what has already been assembled. The last stage of video editing is the final cut, after which the scene or video is published or released. This aligns with presenting/publishing the research as a solution to the research gap (presented at the top of Figure 2). The Scene Model takes the following into consideration: (a) the changes that occurred since Swales's (1990) CARS model, (b) the findings of previous research in connection with the applied linguistics field, and (c) the features of the MA thesis, which set it apart as a distinct genre from the RA genre. The model also includes new labels based on the functions of the MA thesis genre.

Figure 2. The Scene Model Representing the RMS of MA Thesis Introductions in Applied Linguistics




## 3. Research Methodology

This section aims to outline the pilot study conducted for the proposed Scene Model. Its purpose was to ensure the validity and reliability of the model in depicting the RMS of MA thesis introductions. First, the section begins with a detailed description of the study corpus. Next, the procedures for analyzing the corpus will be presented. The last section will conclude with a discussion on the reliability and validity measures employed in annotating the moves and sub-moves.

### 3.1 The Corpus

The first step in the pilot study was obtaining the necessary permission from the Department of English Applied Linguistics at a Hungarian university to access their database of MA theses. Since the database belongs to the same Department, only MA theses written in applied linguistics were analyzed. Another criterion included the selection of empirical theses only (i.e., those based on empirical data collected and analyzed by the students). The decision to specify the thesis type for inclusion was driven by two main factors. First, the database contained a larger number of empirical MA theses than theoretical ones, suggesting a possible preference for empirical research in the field of applied linguistics. Second, as observed by Árvay and Tankó (2004), the nature of data in theoretical research might influence the rhetorical move structure (RMS) of their introductions. The selected MA Theses were written between 2018 and 2022; during this period, the MA thesis writing guidelines of the English Applied Linguistics Department remained unchanged, thus guaranteeing greater consistency and credibility in the study (i.e., by ruling out potential effects resulting from a change in the thesis writing guidelines).

Two smaller thesis introduction corpora were compiled, each comprising five introductions selected randomly and written by Hungarian and Arabic L1 students. These groups of writers were chosen due to a lack of existing research comparing their English writing performance in the Hungarian EFL context. These two groups come from markedly distinct cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds; thus, researching them provides valuable insights for those working in culturally

diverse EFL settings. Additionally, choosing two groups increases the possibility of encountering RMS variations, offering a richer context for the validation of the model.

The Hungarian introductions corpus (HIC) contains 2,057 words, whereas the Arabic introductions corpus (AIC) contains 3,494 words. Thus, the pilot corpus comprises a total of 5,551 words. The average length of the Hungarian introductions is 411.4, whereas the average length of the Arabic introductions is 698.8. As shown in Table 2, one of the introductions (see AI4) in the AIC was notably long, containing 1176.

Table 2. Statistics of the HIC and AIC

| Introductions | No. of words | No. of sentences | No. of paragraphs |
|---|---|---|---|
| HI1 | 477 | 17 | 3 |
| HI2 | 608 | 18 | 3 |
| HI3 | 352 | 13 | 3 |
| HI4 | 151 | 9 | 1 |
| HI5 | 469 | 9 | 2 |
| **Avg.** | **411.4** | **13.2** | **2.4** |
| AI1 | 316 | 12 | 2 |
| AI2 | 661 | 22 | 6 |
| AI3 | 796 | 20 | 5 |
| AI4 | 1176 | 36 | 9 |
| AI5 | 545 | 20 | 6 |
| **Avg.** | **698.8** | **22** | **5.6** |

### 3.2 Procedures of Analysis

The analysis aimed to test the reliability and validity of the model and suggest modifications based on the empirical results. Both qualitative and quantitative analysis was carried out. The qualitative analysis was focused on identifying structural patterns, moves, and sub-moves in the two sub-corpora, while the quantitative analysis investigated the obligatory, conventional, and optional moves and sub-moves. Following the methodology used by Kanoksilapatham's (2005) and Pujiyanti et al. (2018), moves and sub-moves that occurred in all introductions (i.e., 100%) were classified as obligatory. Those with an occurrence between 60-99% were deemed conventional, and those with less than 60% were classified as optional. These frequencies were counted for the pilot corpus and the two subcorpora (i.e., the HIC and AIC). The quantitative analysis also incorporates the word count per move and sub-move to gauge their relative prominence within the corpus.

The procedures were as follows: After compiling the corpus, a top-down analytical approach was adopted (Biber et al., 2007). First, each MA thesis introduction was thoroughly read to comprehend its content. Next, the introductions were read again with the aim of breaking the text into smaller meaningful units, or "moves". Each unit carries a rhetorical function, as in the example "presenting the research". No grammatical units, such as sentences, phrases, or clauses, were defined before the analysis, rendering the annotating unit as "the functional segment of text" (Cotos et al., 2017, p. 95). Key discourse markers, such as linguistics signals and vocabulary, were highlighted in each unit. The moves and sub-moves were then manually tagged (see Appendix A for sample analysis). The

quantitative analysis of the occurrences and word counts of the moves and sub-moves was then conducted.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the coding process, an independent co-coder was enlisted to code the corpus. Prior to the coding task, the co-coder underwent several training sessions on move analysis and was provided with definitions and examples of the moves and sub-moves. A comparison between the co-coder's annotations and my own revealed an 82% agreement rate. Discrepancies between our codings were negotiated until a consensus was reached.

## 4. Results and Discussions

The results of the pilot study show that certain aspects of the Scene Model need to be revised. First, the model failed to account for some of the sub-moves that appeared in the MA thesis genre. Another failure is related to SM2: "Providing justification". This sub-move occurred without citations in one thesis when the student justified her gap for investigating the NCCs documents, stating that these documents affect education in Hungary:

> "The NCCs, being the documents that need to be consulted when designing and modifying FL teaching in Hungary, affect Hungarian FL education directly."

The results of the pilot study will be presented in detail as follows. First, the occurrences, word count per move, and sub-moves will be presented to categorize the moves and sub-moves as obligatory, conventional, or optional. The subsequent section will discuss and provide examples of the sub-moves that were unidentified by the Scene Model. Following that, a sub-section will illustrate the move structure pattern that appears in the pilot corpus. Finally, the section ends with a description of the revised Scene Model.

### 4.1 Occurrences of Moves and Sub-moves

Table 3 shows the occurrences of the moves and sub-moves. The following observations were noted regarding the occurrence of the sub-moves in the corpus:

1. All introductions in the corpus contained the three main moves, except for one instance where Move 1, "Defining the research area" was absent. There were three sub-moves that were not identified in the corpus: (1) M2/ SM1A.a "Complete absence of research," (2) M2/SM1.B "Adding to what is known," and (3) M2/SM3 "Stating motivation".
2. The only obligatory sub-move in the corpus was SM1.A "Identifying a gap" (also found in Pashapour et al., 2018). This may be explained by the MA thesis writing guidelines present in the Hungarian context, which stipulates that students must mention or clarify the issue addressed by their research.
3. Optional sub-moves appeared the most in Move 3, where students utilized various communicative functions to present their research.
4. None of the theses stated their findings, which aligns with the assumptions of the Scene Model.
5. In the AIC, two sub-moves emerged as obligatory: "Outlining thesis aims" and "Outlining thesis structure"

6. Hungarian students often identified more than one gap in their introductions. This was noted in the case of two introductions. The example below from one introduction illustrates how the students communicated the gap in two distinct ways:

Table 3. Occurrences of Moves and Sub-moves

| | Occurrences | | | | | | Categorization | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | HIC | % | AIC | % | Corpus | % | HIC | AIC | Corpus |
| **Move 1** | | | | | | | | | |
| **Quotation**** | 0 | 0% | 1 | 20% | 1 | 10% | Optional | Optional | Optional |
| SM1 | 2 | 40% | 4 | 80% | 6 | 60% | Optional | Conventional | Conventional |
| SM2 | 3 | 60% | 4 | 80% | 7 | 70% | Conventional | Conventional | Conventional |
| SM3 | 1 | 20% | 3 | 60% | 4 | 40% | Optional | Conventional | Optional |
| SM4 | 2 | 40% | 4 | 80% | 6 | 60% | Optional | Conventional | Conventional |
| SM5 | 1 | 20% | 1 | 20% | 2 | 20% | Optional | Optional | Optional |
| **Move 2** | | | | | | | | | |
| SM1A via: | | | | | | | | | |
| A.a | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | | | |
| A.b | 4 | 80% | 3 | 60% | 7 | 70% | | | |
| A.c | 1 | 20% | 0 | 0% | 1 | 10% | | | |
| A.d | 2 | 40% | 2 | 40% | 4 | 40% | | | |
| A.e ** | 1 | 20% | 0 | 0% | 1 | 10% | | | |
| Σ ΣM1A | 8 | 160% | 5 | 100% | 13 | 130% | Obligatory | Obligatory | Obligatory |
| SM1B | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | - | - | - |
| SM2 | 1 | 20% | 1 | 20% | 2 | 20% | Optional | Optional | Optional |
| SM3 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | - | - | - |
| **Move 3** | | | | | | | | | |
| SM1 | 4 | 80% | 5 | 100% | 9 | 90% | Conventional | Obligatory | Conventional |
| SM2 | 3 | 60% | 2 | 40% | 5 | 50% | Conventional | Optional | Optional |
| SM3 | 1 | 20% | 0 | 0% | 1 | 10% | Optional | - | Optional |
| SM4 | 2 | 40% | 2 | 40% | 4 | 40% | Optional | Optional | Optional |
| SM5 | 1 | 20% | 1 | 20% | 2 | 20% | Optional | Optional | Optional |
| SM6** | 1 | 20% | 1 | 20% | 2 | 20% | Optional | Optional | Optional |
| SM7** | 1 | 20% | 0 | 0% | 1 | 10% | Optional | - | Optional |
| SM8** | 1 | 20% | 0 | 0% | 1 | 10% | Optional | - | Optional |
| SM9** | 1 | 20% | 0 | 0% | 1 | 10% | Optional | - | Optional |
| SM10 | 4 | 80% | 5 | 100% | 9 | 90% | Conventional | Obligatory | Conventional |

**Sub-moves were identified in the pilot corpus but not in the Scene Model

## 4.2 Word Count per Moves and Sub-moves

The result shows that Move 1 is the highest in terms of word count, totaling 2261 words in the pilot Corpus. The SM2 "Providing research background" constitutes 881 of the overall count. Move 3 has the second highest number of words, and its SM10 "Outlining thesis structure" has the highest word number (i.e., 860 words) among all Sub-moves across all other moves. Move 2 has the lowest number of words, with only 887 words. The SM1.A comprises 775 words, which is the highest number of

words among the other sub-moves for establishing the niche. Table 4 gives details of the word count for the three moves and their sub-moves in the two subcorpora and the corpus.

Table 4. Details of Word Count per Moves

| **Move 1 Defining the research area** | **Word Count per Move/Sub-moves** | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Quotation/Hook * | | | |
| SM 1 Claiming centrality | | | |
| SM2 Providing research background | | | |
| SM3 defining terms in the field | | | |
| SM4 Reviewing items of previous research | | | |
| SM5 Bringing examples | | | |
| | **HIC** | **AIC** | **The Corpus** |
| **Σ Μοωε1** | **N=2057** | **N=3494** | **N=5551** |
| | 0 | 31 | 31 |
| | 48 | 263 | 311 |
| | 266 | 615 | 881 |
| | 30 | 68 | 98 |
| | 164 | 542 | 706 |
| | 31 | 203 | 234 |
| | **539** | **1722** | **2261** |
| **Move 2 Establishing a niche** | | | |
| SM 1.A Indicating a gap via: | | | |
| A.a Complete absence of research | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| A.b Insufficient research/context | 108 | 210 | 318 |
| A.c Limitations in previous research | 23 | 0 | 23 |
| A.d Need | 148 | 271 | 419 |
| A.e Methodological gap** | 15 | 0 | 15 |
| *Σ Συβ–μοωε 1.A* | *294* | *481* | *775* |
| **Or** | | | |
| SM1.B Adding to what is known | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| SM2 Providing justification | 64 | 48 | 112 |
| SM3 Stating motivation | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Σ Μοωε2** | **358** | **529** | **887** |
| **Move 3 Presenting the research** | | | |
| SM1 Outlining thesis aims | 120 | 299 | 419 |
| SM2 Stating research questions, hypotheses | 247 | 114 | 361 |
| SM3 Clarifying research terminology | 48 | 0 | 48 |
| SM4 Summarizing research design | 24 | 185 | 209 |
| SM5 Indicating research implications | 105 | 30 | 135 |
| SM6 Stating research focus ** | 78 | 88 | 166 |
| SM7 Stating study Framework ** | 76 | 0 | 76 |
| SM8 Stating historical context ** | 95 | 0 | 95 |
| SM9 Stating research relevance ** | 34 | 0 | 34 |
| SM10 Outlining thesis structure | 333 | 527 | 860 |
| **Σ Μοωε3** | **1160** | **1243** | **2403** |

### 4.3 Unidentified Sub-moves in the Scene Model

The following sub-sections discuss the sub-moves that were found in the pilot corpus but not proposed in the Scene Model. These sub-moves will later be integrated into the revised Scene Model. Throughout these sections, excerpts of text highlighted in bold are mine to show the linguistic signals identified during the interpretation process of the sub-moves.

#### 4.3.1 Methodological Gap (in the HIC)

This sub-move was observed under Move 2, where a Hungarian student highlighted a gap in the methodology of previous research. This sub-move represents an alternative approach to identifying a gap, and therefore could be incorporated under SM1. A. The following extract, taken from the HIC, exemplifies this sub-move:

> "Furthermore, these studies are quantitative ones, which means they cannot demonstrate teachers' perceptions in depth."

#### 4.3.2 Stating Research Focus (in the HIC and AIC)

This sub-move was recognized in two MA theses. The following examples are respectively from the HIC and AIC:

> "…Therefore, **this research focuses** on the effects of starting a second language with special regard to emotions and motivation."

> "This study **takes into consideration**…Ultimately, based on the importance of motivation and communication in the process of learning new languages, **this study will focus** on motivational variables and the salient role willingness to communicate in these foreign languages currently plays."

#### 4.3.3 Stating Framework of the Study (only in the HIC)

The sub-move contains information in the framework that the students follow in the thesis. The following extract was taken from the thesis where this sub-move appeared:

> In order to do so, based on **Öveges' (2014) approach** in Modern Foreign Languages in the Hungarian National Core Curricula, **the following categories are followed**: the approach and content of the Hungarian NCCs, the different age groups they address their objectives to, the general principles of the NCCs concerning foreign languages found in public education, the way of the presentation of the requirements for the foreign languages, and lastly, the percentage rate assigned to FL classes.

#### 4.3.4 Stating Historical Context/study (only in HIC)

In one thesis, the students, towards the end, explain the historical context of the NCC document used for her research:

> **"**It is also important to note that the first NCC came into effect in 1995, which was then followed by the two further reviewed versions in 2003 and 2007. Currently, the NCC of 2012 is in effect. On 31 August 2018, Oktatás 2003, a Hungarian learning science research group

established for the revision of the school education curricula, released the draft of the new Hungarian National Curriculum, the document which is the product of a one-year long research and development done by at least a hundred specialists, including psychologists, pedagogical experts, and practising teachers (Oktatás, 2003)."

#### 4.3.5 Stating Research Relevance (only in HIC)

This sub-move was found in the HIC corpus. The Hungarian student refers to the relevance of the research:

> "The study would be relevant in understanding the problems and difficulties of the emotional and motivational correlates of learning a second foreign language."

#### 4.3.6 Quotation/Hook (only in the AIC)

One thesis from the AIC has a quotation that seems to be added as a hook or trigger for the readers. It was separated from the text but occurred before Move 1. The quotation was too general, and it was not related to the topic directly.

> "Language is not a genetic gift; it is a social gift. Learning a new language is becoming a member of the club – the community of speakers of that language," Frank Smith.

### 4.4 Move Structure Pattern

As shown in Table 5, five introductions followed the original pattern proposed (M1-M2-M3). The recursive patterns in M1 and M2 were found in two thesis introductions. The two distinct patterns that were identified in the corpus are:

1. Move 3 preceded Move 2, identified two times in the HIC and once in the AIC

2. Move 2 occurred at the beginning, one case (in HI5)

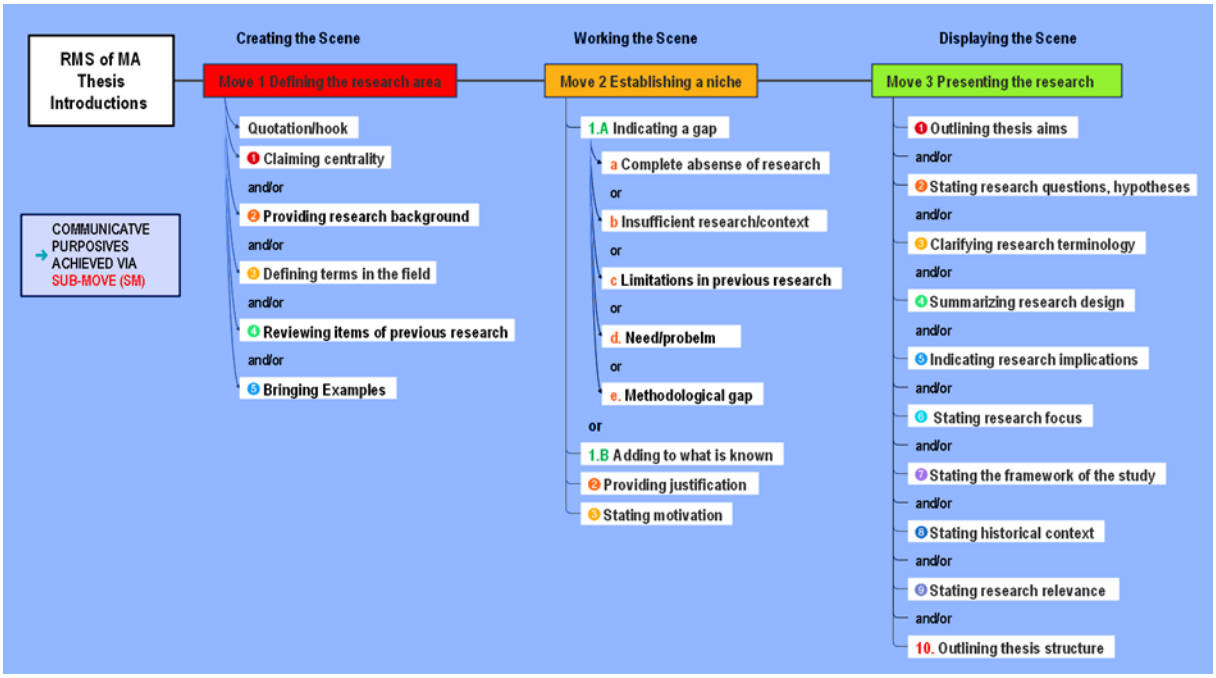
Table 5. Move Structure Patterns in the Corpus

| Introductions | Move Structure pattern |
|---|---|
| HI1 | M1-M2-M1-M3 |
| HI2 | M1-M3-M2-M3 |
| HI3 | M1-M2-M3 |
| HI4 | M1-M2-M3 |
| HI5* | M2-M3 |
| AI1 | M1-M2-M3 |
| AI2 | M1-M2-M3 |
| AI3 | M1-M2-M3-M2-M3 |
| AI4 | M1-M3-M2-M3 |
| AI5 | M1-M2-M3 |

### 4.5 The Revised Scene Model

In response to the results from the pilot study, the Scene Model underwent several revisions (see Figure 3), such as incorporating additional sub-moves, particularly in regard to Move 3. The Scene Model is built upon the findings of previous research, specifically within the ELF context; thus, the model transcends its initial focus on the Hungarian context. Furthermore, The Scene model portrays the rhetorical structure found in applied linguistics theses. Its utility, however, is not confined to this discipline; it can potentially be extended to other similar disciplines, such as pedagogy.

Figure 3. The Revised Scene Model




## 5. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to develop a model for studying the RMS of MA thesis introductions in applied linguistics within an EFL context. The model was initially constructed based on genre theory and previous studies in applied linguistics, using the CARS model (1990, 2004) as a starting point. The proposed model (i.e., the Scene Model) was then piloted with 10 MA thesis introductions written by students at the Department of Applied Linguistics at a Hungarian university. Modifications were deemed necessary, particularly in Move 3. These modifications were incorporated, and the Model can now be claimed to be valid and reliable in describing the RMS of MA thesis introductions. Furthermore, the potential extension of its applicability to other similar ELF contexts is evident.

The outcomes of this study offer both theoretical and pedagogical implications. Theoretically, the research provides further insights into the differences between RAs and MA thesis genres regarding their purposes and RMS. Pedagogically, the Scene Model emerges as a practical tool for researchers to analyze the MA thesis genre in other ELF contexts. The Scene Model accounts for the features of the MA thesis genre, such as how students indicate research gaps and present their own research. Moreover, the model can aid teachers in better understanding students' writing and in providing

them with guidance throughout their academic writing journey. The pilot study underscores how students from distinct cultures and contexts may differ in how they structure information and how much information they provide. For instance, although the introductions were taken from one Hungarian university, the introductions that were written by Arabic students showed a higher tendency to emphasize the centrality or importance of their topics more than Hungarian students. On the other hand, some Hungarian students indicated the research gap twice in multiple ways. This is not meant to be to evaluate one group over another but to show how students within this shared educational setting might apply different strategies in their writing.

Ultimately, while the Scene Model serves as a valuable analytical tool, it is not without its limitations. First, its development is based on studies primarily analyzing the RMS of introductions in applied linguistics texts. In this regard, its utility may be confined to this discipline. Additionally, the pilot study was conducted using a relatively small corpus, underscoring the need to employ the model on a larger scale. Further studies are recommended to enrich the Scene Model and expand its utility as an analytical tool for examining the RMS of MA thesis introductions in applied linguistics.

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**Bio-note:**

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## Appendix A

## A Sample Analysis

| **From the HIC** | **Moves and Sub-moves** |
|---|---|
| Digital and academic identities **have gained prominence** in applied linguistics research in the last few decades. | M1/SM1 "Claiming centrality" |
| **However**, their interrelatedness is scarcely studied. | M2/SM1.A. b "Insufficient research/context" |
| With digitalization becoming more and more important in tertiary education, it is crucial to **investigate how** the two concepts affect each other. For first-year students, the new environmental changes further complicate this relationship. | M3/SM2 "Stating research questions/ hypotheses" |
| **The goa**l of this study is **to** examine the correlation between digital and academic identities of EFL, first-year university students. | M3/SM1 "Outlining thesis aims" |
| **Mixed-method** research was employed to conduct this study. | M3/SM4 "Summarizing research design" |
| **First**, to provide context for this paper, the two key concepts and their practical combination are discussed. **Second**, the data collection process is described in detail. Third, the results of the quantitative and qualitative phases are presented followed by the discussion of the data. **Finally,** the paper closes with a summary of the major findings, the limitations of the paper, and suggestions for further research concerning the topic. | M3/SM 10 "Outlining thesis structure" |
| **Move Pattern=M1-M2-M3** | |
| **From the HIC** | **Moves and Sub-moves** |
| Digital and academic identities **have gained prominence** in applied linguistics research in the last few decades. | M1/SM1 "Claiming centrality" |
| **However**, their interrelatedness is scarcely studied. | M2/SM1.A. b "Insufficient research/context" |

| | |
|---|---|
| With digitalization becoming more and more important in tertiary education, it is crucial to **investigate how** the two concepts affect each other. For first-year students, the new environmental changes further complicate this relationship. | M3/SM2 "Stating research questions/ hypotheses" |
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