

FROM MARKERS TO MOVES: A PARADIGM SHIFT IN UNDERSTANDING INTERACTIONAL METADISOURSE ACROSS CULTURES AND DISCIPLINES

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Abstract: *The number of 'marker' approaches in metadiscourse (MD) studies greatly outnumbers the number of 'move' approaches. This has highlighted the focus on small units of analysis, especially word-based categorizations, such as classifying the pronoun "I" as self-mention. Following a contrasting 'move' approach, this overview offers a more contextualized and functional analysis of interactional discourse strategies in academic writing. A taxonomy of metadiscursive functions is developed through a critical synthesis of existing MD taxonomies and theoretical frameworks, shifting the focus from surface markers to rhetorical moves. The framework was developed in light of 90 research articles (RAs) written in English by Anglophone and Arab Academic English writers in political science, law, and journalism. This paper also examines an under-researched aspect of MD, namely interactional MD, which is categorized into stance and engagement. In addition to revealing disciplinary and cultural patterns in authorial stance-taking and audience engagement, the proposed move-based approach offers pedagogical value for EAP/ESP instruction. In this overview, a paradigm shift in understanding interactions in academic writing is proposed, especially in cross-cultural and disciplinary contexts.*

Keywords: *cross-cultural academic writing, engagement, metadiscourse, move analysis, stance*

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Framing Academic Discourse: The Rhetorical Impact of Interactional Metadiscourse

Human language possesses the remarkable ability to refer to various aspects of communication itself. This includes using language to comment on language, discourse organization, and communicative roles. This reflexive capacity has long been recognized through Jakobson's (1990) metalinguistic function, and it forms the foundational premise of metadiscourse (MD), commonly described as "text about the text" (Hyland, 2005). MD is now widely understood as the set of linguistic choices that help writers guide readers, signal interpersonal intentions, and construct a shared communicative space. MD does not refer only to how writers link their ideas to form a cohesive and coherent text (interactive MD), but also to how they project themselves into their texts and how readers respond to this projection of a shared discourse community (interactional MD) (Hyland, 2005).

MD plays a key role in academic writing as it not only reveals the writer's identity and personality but also shapes how they intend the readers to interpret the propositional content. Mauranen (1993) argues that MD is used in academic rhetoric to establish coherence and logic. Research has consistently shown that academic writing is inherently persuasive and audience-oriented, crafted to secure readers' acceptance of the knowledge being constructed (Swales, 1990; Hyland, 2004). Writers' choices are shaped by disciplinary conventions and cultural preferences, as communities differ in how they position arguments, express epistemic stance, and engage readers (Bloor & Bloor, 1991; Fløttum, 2012). These differences highlight the need to examine not only what writers say but how they guide and negotiate meaning through MD.

While increasing attention has been paid to the interpersonal aspects of academic writing, existing MD research has primarily focused on isolated linguistic items, such as hedges, boosters, and self-mentions, to examine how writers express stance and engage audiences (Hyland & Paltridge, 2011). These studies have significantly advanced our understanding of academic voice, yet they often adopt a word-based "marker" approach that overlooks the larger rhetorical purposes these choices serve. For instance, Hinkel (2003) notes cultural preferences that influence the use of hedging or amplification, but analyses typically remain at the lexical level without exploring how such choices function within broader argumentative structures. Despite its importance, research examining the functions of interactional MD markers in Arab and Anglophone academic articles remains surprisingly limited.

Hyland (2005) argues that MD reflects a community's practices, values, and ideals. Accordingly, this study adopts a tailored coding scheme to capture the functional and paradigmatic variations of interactional MD across two cultural contexts and three disciplines. The 'move' approach employed here identifies the pragmatic and rhetorical functions of stance and engagement markers,

offering insights into why discourse is structured in particular ways by specific groups of writers. While move analysis can be implemented in various applied linguistics approaches, in MD research it focuses on how linguistic choices fulfil communicative purposes – whether a stretch of text asserts a claim, guides readers toward a conclusion, elaborates a point, or poses a question. This perspective emphasizes contextual meaning and discursive purpose, rather than the dictionary definition of individual forms or their surface functions.

This paper seeks to make two pivotal contributions: (1) it advocates for renewed attention to rhetorical functions within interactional MD studies, and (2) it demonstrates a sample ‘move’ analysis of English research articles (RAs), comparing two cultural contexts across three academic disciplines. This study adopts and modifies aspects of Hyland’s (2005) interactional MD and proposes a more functional move-based framework for analyzing interaction in RAs written by Anglophone Academic Writers (AAWs) and Arab Academic English Writers (AAEWs). The corpus consists of 90 RAs (45 AAWs and 45 AAEWs) in journalism, law, and political science, selected using a purposive and quota-based strategy to ensure balance. For clarity, all corpus examples used throughout the paper are labeled using a discipline–writer code (e.g., J.–AAW13 = Journalism article by Anglophone Academic Writer no. 13; P.S.–AAEW7 = Political Science article by Arab Academic English Writer no. 7; L.–AAW8 = Law article by Anglophone Writer no. 8).

Each example was selected from the corpus of the study and coded accordingly. Once the corpus was finalized, all discussion sections were imported into NVivo and MD markers were coded clause-by-clause. I used a move-based framework to examine each identified marker in its immediate co-text to determine its rhetorical purpose, followed by categorizing it into its corresponding MD move. As part of the functional re-classification, I looked beyond surface lexical forms, such as whether a hedge expressed humility, negotiated knowledge, or conveyed indefinite claims, or whether a directive served as a textual, cognitive, or physical guide. In this process, small linguistic units traditionally treated as ‘markers’ were systematically mapped onto larger rhetorical ‘moves.’ To ensure reliability, two independent coders coded two samples from each discipline using clause-by-clause annotations in QSR NVivo, identifying MD markers and their moves with an inter-coder agreement of 88.6%, and resolving discrepancies through discussion and consensual coding (Kuckartz, 2014).

In this study, the binary of “native/non-native” is intentionally avoided, recognizing that language proficiency transcends a person’s first language. Academic English Writers associated with Arab universities and institutions are designated as AAEW, whereas academic writers based in Anglophone countries are labeled as AAW (Alghamdi & Alyousef, 2022). Additionally, the choice of these three soft disciplines was driven by a critical need to investigate cross-disciplinary rhetorical variations and their significance for ESP/EAP instruction, making them

highly relevant areas for deeper exploration. Surprisingly, MD studies in the soft sciences remain largely underexplored, even though the argumentation, critiques, and perspectives in these fields are frequently influenced by the writer's personal experiences, passions, and interests.

Mapping the Metadiscourse Landscape: Shifting from Markers to Moves

MD research rarely addresses an obvious question: What is the unit of meaning or analysis? Is it primarily word-based, or does it extend to a broader range of linguistic units? Research on discourse phenomena often demonstrates that size can vary, as is the case with pragmatic markers (e.g. Furko, 2017) and rhetorical moves (e.g. Moreno & Swales, 2018). According to Hyland (2017), MD can be realized in various ways and various lengths, ranging from single words to whole clauses or sentences. While MD markers can encompass a wide range of sizes and scopes, it is evident that many studies often focus on smaller units in their analyses. MD research can be classified into two ends: one end primarily deals with small units (a 'marker' approach), and the other end deals with large units (a 'move' approach). Both 'move' and 'marker' are enclosed in scare quotes, signifying that the terms are approximated. Note that researchers aligned with the 'move' tradition do not typically identify their work as embracing a 'move' approach and the same holds for those engaged in the 'marker' approach.

In the context/ functional approach, 'moves' are "discourse fragments or rhetorical units that perform coherent functions within texts" (Swales, 2004, pp. 228–229). However, this choice is not ideal, as MD functions in the taxonomy below resemble 'steps,' which can be smaller units than 'moves.' While we might refer to the approach as 'macro-level' or 'holistic,' these terms may carry overly optimistic implications. The literature frequently employs terms such as "discourse practices" (Koester & Handford, 2012, p. 11) and "discourse functions" (Ädel, 2006). Although I do not assert that the discourse functions in the MD taxonomy are directly comparable to 'moves,' I use the term 'move' here to provide a general framework for comparison with 'markers.' This comparison clearly demonstrates their differences. Using a 'marker' approach (Figure 1), it may be possible to identify a single pronoun *I* as an interactional MD (classified as Self-mention). In contrast, a study embracing a 'move' approach would identify *I* in *'I discuss below...'* as the architect (Figure 2) who gives structure and organization to the text and discourse, pointing to something to come.

It is possible to combine both approaches so that a 'move' analysis includes a 'marker' analysis. If a 'move' analysis is embraced and employed, investigating markers and their functions could yield valuable insight. For example, the analyst might examine the frequency with which a certain expression 'marker' can contribute to fulfilling a specific function (move). When comparing different populations or discourse types, keeping track of smaller units of MD can help assess

the overall density of MD markers (e.g. Alghamdi & Alyousef, 2022). Alghamdi and Alyousef (2022) analyzed the density of interactional MD markers, specifically hedges and boosters, comparing their frequency and rhetorical functions in RAs written by AAWs and AAEWs. In order to facilitate analysis and comparison, the authors identified smaller units as complementary to metadiscursive ‘moves’. This approach was not intended to suggest that the metadiscursive unit ‘marker’ itself was minor; rather, it offered a more refined understanding of the function of each unit ‘move’ within the discourse. Methodological versus theoretical considerations may differ between how a study counts relevant linguistic markers and how it views the linguistic units of analysis ‘moves’. MD quantification may serve as a tool or a foundational framework that does not affect definitions.

The ‘marker’ approach is essentially a word-based view of MD which is intimately related to the notion that MD is non-propositional. MD has historically been shaped by the tradition of pragmatic markers and the necessity to demonstrate that texts contain more than propositional material. Early research defined MD as non-propositional material (Ädel, 2021). An MD marker is sometimes used to define the entire category as well as its subcategories, such as Hedges, Boosters, Self-mentions, Attitude, and Engagement markers. These can, in some respects, be considered pragmatic markers. Fraser (1996) defined pragmatic markers by their non-propositional meaning, limiting their size by technically using the term ‘non-propositional’. MD often conceptualizes ‘proposition’ more expansively, encompassing all elements outside of metadiscourse itself (cf. Hyland, 2017). It can also be understood as the topic of discussion, including aspects that may be doubted, affirmed, qualified, denied, or regretted (Hyland, 2017). In practice, it can be contended that the restricted unit model is frequently upheld within the ‘marker’ approach, even with its flexible definitions. Nonetheless, MD need not be exclusively characterized as non-propositional, and not all researchers in the field adopt this view. Thomson (2021) offered an in-depth examination of the different arguments and viewpoints related to this issue.

There are numerous unresolved issues linked to the ‘marker’ and ‘move’ methods that are not addressed here. For example, the ‘marker’ tradition uses a predefined list of categories to retrieve MD examples, whereas the ‘move’ tradition examines context (see Ädel & Mauranen, 2010). Because the ‘marker’ approach considers individual words as MD, it overlooks the linguistic or syntactic patterns in which these words occur. Furthermore, the focus on lexis prevents MD from operating at the level of rhetoric or discourse.

Hyland’s Model of Interactional Metadiscourse: A Foundational Framework

Researchers have proposed several analytical frameworks for categorizing metadiscursive resources. While perspectives vary in scope, Hyland’s (2005)

interpersonal model provides the primary foundation for this study due to its influence and pedagogical relevance. This study centers on Hyland's interactional metadiscourse (MD) model (2005) because it offers a clear and widely adopted taxonomy for analyzing interactional meaning. As this model seeks to extend beyond the ideational aspect of texts, it sheds light on how writers successfully use MD to convey propositional content, while retaining their identity through credible representations of themselves and their beliefs. Hyland (2009) considered this as a key attribute of successful writing. His model pivots on writing as both interactive and interactional, and it brings writing scholars closer to a comprehensive pedagogy of voice. Writing research involves transforming the information found in research into a meaningful message. In this way, it is considered a social process in which producing a RA reflects methodologies, arguments, and rhetorical functions constructed to persuade and engage readers.

According to Hyland (2005), interactional MD consists of stance and engagement, two complementary ways through which writers position themselves and their readers in the discourse.

Stance reflects the writer's unique voice or the recognized personality specific to their community. This is a writer-oriented function that encodes how writers project and express their opinions, judgments, and commitments. Engagement, in contrast, can be seen as the reverse side of the interactions model. It is a reader-oriented feature that provides ways for writers to acknowledge their audience, guide interpretation, involve them as participants, and dynamically engage them in the argument. Figure 1 shows a list of interactional metadiscourse markers developed by Hyland (2005, p.177).

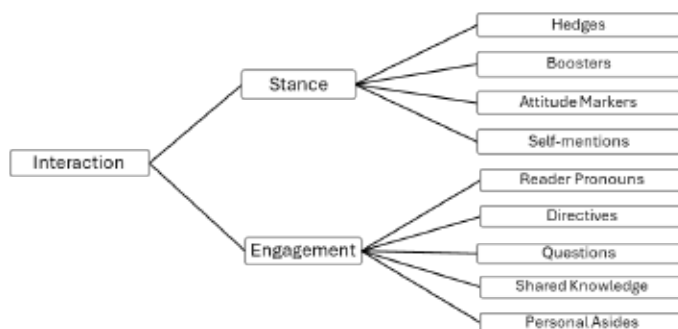


Figure 1. *Interactional Metadiscourse Markers*
(Based on Hyland, 2005, p. 177)

Stance includes four writer-oriented markers: hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and self-mentions. Authors can use these markers to demonstrate their commitment to propositional content. Hedges allow writers to withhold full commitment and frame claims as opinions rather than facts, whereas boosters help them assert ideas with confidence. Attitude markers reveal the writer's

affective response to propositions. Linguistic devices such as adjectives, attitude verbs, and adverbs express emotions such as surprise, frustration, agreement, or importance (Hyland, 2005). Self-mention markers, typically realized through first-person pronouns and possessive adjectives, explicitly present the authorial persona (Hyland, 2001). Table 1 presents some examples of stance markers in academic writing based on Hyland's model.

Table 1. Stance Markers in Academic Writing (Hyland, 2005)

Stance Markers	Examples
Hedges	<i>feasible, could, possibly, ...</i>
Boosters	<i>evidently, illustrate, assertively,...</i>
Attitude markers	<i>concur, ideally, impressive,...</i>
Self-mentions	<i>I, my, our, mine, author, ...</i>

Academic writers employ engagement markers to acknowledge their readers' presence, direct their interpretations, include them as participants, or align them with an intended interpretation. Among the engagement elements identified by Hyland (2005) are five primary linguistic resources: directives, reader mentions, questions, knowledge appeals, and personal asides. Directives guide the reader to take action within the discourse or to perceive the world from the author's perspective. A reader reference is a way for a writer to acknowledge the presence of a reader. Questions are markers that encourage reader engagement, facilitate dialogic participation, and guide them toward the writer's perspective. Knowledge appeals involve the intentional use of linguistic cues that signal shared or accepted information, allowing readers to recognize familiar concepts. Personal asides, on the other hand, let writers momentarily pause the argument to directly address the reader with a comment on the discussed idea. Table 2 presents examples of engagement markers in academic writing, drawing on Hyland's (2005) model.

Table 2. Engagement Markers in Academic Writing (Hyland, 2005)

Engagement Markers	Examples
Reader Pronouns	<i>You, your, inclusive we, ...</i>
Directives	<i>Note, observe, envision,...</i>
Questions	<i>What similarities might these two share?</i>
Knowledge Appeals	<i>Clearly, Of course, etc.</i>
Personal Asides	<i>And – as I trust many educators in TESOL will agree – critical thinking has started to gain prominence.</i>

Hyland's interactional MD markers highlight the writer's perspective toward both propositions and readers. In this sense, it creates a writer-reader relationship and anticipates the subjective negotiability of statements (Hyland, 1998b). Interactional MD is an evaluative form of discourse that expresses and realizes the writers' individuality as well as their disciplinary confined persona (Hyland, 1999). However, applying the model through a marker-based approach introduces limitations: many expressions are multifunctional, and their rhetorical functions cannot be determined solely from their lexical form. Over 300 possible instances of MD markers were identified by Hyland (2004) in different disciplinary discourses. In large corpora, the large number of cases makes functional analyses impractical. Recent applied linguistics research also demonstrates the limitations of surface-marker classifications, showing that metadiscourse features operate differently across rhetorical contexts and cannot be fully understood without functional analysis (Hasan & Alsout, 2023).

Interactional Metadiscourse: A Move-Based Approach

It is necessary to distinguish between propositions and MD before exploring interactional MD in academic writing. MD is functional, rhetorical, and pragmatic (Hyland, 2005). Thus, a 'move' approach enables a functional analysis of interactional markers – namely, stance and engagement – across disciplines and cultures, as augmented in this study. Analyzing the corpus revealed the frequency of these interactional MD markers. It is important to acknowledge, however, that identifying all the interactional MD markers used by a writer can be complex and somewhat challenging. Hyland (1996) argued that MD can be multifunctional, and not every lexical device or form can be interpreted in a single, clear-cut manner. As a result, it was not feasible to attribute specific meanings solely to particular forms. When expressing epistemic meaning, *should*, for example, can function as a hedge, as in "The resulting estimates *should* show that ideological distance is a..." It can also be used with a deontic meaning as an attitude marker, as in "Future research *should* look at other terror attacks and ..." A writer may also utilize it as a directive by directly engaging with the audience, as in "It *should* be noted that the results cited in the literature were derived from..." Thus, it was necessary to carefully examine the contexts of potential instances to determine their specific functions, hence a 'move' approach. Empirical work on rhetorical moves in academic abstracts similarly highlights the importance of mapping metadiscourse to functional units rather than isolated lexical items (Hasan & Hadoud, 2022; Hasan & Alsout, 2023).

Hyland (2005) viewed interactional MD as a complex process that includes stance and engagement markers. Stance is conveyed through writer-oriented MD markers, including hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and self-references. Engagement is expressed by reader-oriented metadiscourse markers such as reader mentions, personal asides, questions, knowledge appeal, and directives.

These MD markers were thus incorporated into an extended ‘move’ approach to interactional MD, and further ‘move’ analyses of stance and engagement markers were conducted based on the corpus and according to some of the previously reviewed literature (e.g. Liu & Tseng, 2021; Dueñas, 2010; Hyland 2002a; Tang & John, 1999; Thetela, 1997). Figure 2 illustrates a ‘move’ approach to interactional MD in this study.

Interactional Metadiscourse	Stance	Hedges	Humility
			Plausible reasoning
			Negotiating knowledge
			Indefinite claims
		Boosters	Assertiveness
			Factual reasoning
			Sharing knowledge
			Salient claims
		Attitude	Significance
			Predictability
			Assessment
			Acceptability
	Obligation		
	Self-mentions	Emotion	
		The research recounter	
		The originator	
The opinion holder			
Engagement	Directives	The architect	
		Textual guide	
		Physical guide	
	Reader Mention	Cognitive guide	
		Guiding the reader	
		Aligning the reader	
	Questions	Establishing an informed reader	
		Framing information	
		Stimulating reflection	
		Anticipating future research	
	Knowledge Appeals	Demonstration	
		Solidarize with the reader	
	Personal Asides	Further explanation	
		Concept illustration	
Readers’ guide			
Explicit views			

Figure 2. *A move approach to interactional metadiscourse*

Stance Moves in Academic Writing

Hedges

Hedges enable authors to acknowledge alternative perspectives while avoiding absolute commitment to their knowledge claims. Drawing on prior studies on hedging (Liu & Tseng, 2021; Hu & Cao, 2011; Hyland & Tse, 2005), four specific types of hedging moves have been identified: showing humility in knowledge claims, employing assumptive reasoning, negotiating knowledge, and making indefinite claims. The humility move reflects an author's modesty by softening the impact of their assertions and downplaying their contribution (Example 1). Assumptive reasoning, on the other hand, involves deriving conclusions from findings with low certainty markers (Example 2). Knowledge negotiation allows writers to align or contrast their findings with previous research, carefully avoiding misinterpretation (Example 3). Lastly, writers make indefinite claims by using ambiguous language, allowing for flexibility rather than certainty in their statements (Example 4).

1. Constructive journalism *would be* an opportunity for them to change their self-censored reporting by being able to highlight a problem through the offer of solutions, rather than avoiding it altogether. (J.- AAEW9)
2. One *possible* explanation for the surprisingly minimal impact of ideological disagreement on institutional support could be that the Court has issued liberal rulings in numerous high-profile cases. (L.- AAW1)
3. Current studies *suggest* that when voters possess additional information about candidates, gender plays a diminished role in their decision-making (Hayes 2011)). (P.S.- AAW7)
4. *Some* critics may contend that the forecasts do not meet the standards of statistical or demographic parity. (L.- AAW3)

These examples illustrate how hedges function as rhetorical moves in academic discourse to manage epistemic risk and signal caution (Hyland, 1998a;). Disciplinary norms for certainty and argumentation shape their function (Bloor & Bloor, 1991). The pragmatic function of hedging cannot be inferred from lexical form alone, which is why move-based analysis is necessary (Hinkel, 2003).

Boosters

It is possible to consider hedges and boosters as lying at opposite ends of the certainty spectrum. As opposed to hedges, boosters increase commitment to a proposition and, therefore, “close down alternatives” (Hyland, 2005, p. 52). Based on previous studies of boosters (Liu & Tseng, 2021; Hu & Cao, 2011;

Hyland & Tse, 2004) four distinct booster moves were identified: approaching knowledge claims with assertiveness, establishing factual reasoning, sharing knowledge, and conveying a sense of salience. The assertiveness move highlights how writers project a confident identity by amplifying the impact of their suggestions and contributions (Example 5). Factual reasoning move refers to the process by which writers use truth-value markers to indicate facts based on their research findings (Example 6). The sharing knowledge move refers to the assumption that certain knowledge is shared among audiences (Example 7). Finally, the salience move pertains to how writers explicitly assess the credibility of their claims (Example 8).

5. Many Egyptian governmental organizations still do not have recorded data, which is *a must* for data journalists to build databases for their data-driven stories. (J.-AAEW12)
6. The initial VAR results *show* minimal evidence that shifts in public support influence media coverage. (P.S.- AAW1)
7. The issue could be addressed by detaining a sufficiently large, random sample of low-risk white juveniles. *Clearly*, this would be a nonstarter for policy. (L.- AAW3)
8. *Undoubtedly*, the campaign, which was waged primarily on social media, provided the perfect platform and the best opportunity for radical and terrorist groups to attract, recruit, and mobilize new followers. (P.S.-AAEW3)

The booster examples illustrate how writers assert confidence and guide reader alignment – strategies commonly used to reinforce claims and strengthen persuasion (Hyland, 2005; Swales, 1990). While markers such as “clearly” or “undoubtedly” are traditionally identified lexically, their rhetorical impact varies across disciplines with different expectations for assertiveness (Fløttum, 2012). This supports the need for contextualized, move-based interpretation rather than surface-level categorization.

Attitude

In addition to commenting on the credibility, relevance, and truth of the propositional content, RAs writers convey surprise, agreement, importance, obligation, frustration, and so forth. They employed attitude markers to control the interpretation of the propositional content, suggesting sometimes subtly, sometimes obviously how they wanted their statements to be understood. Based on previous studies of attitude markers (Thetela, 1997; Hyland & Tse, 2005) and the findings from the corpus, six distinct moves of attitude markers were identified: significance, predictability, assessment, acceptability, obligation, and emotion. The significance move highlights the author’s assessment of the value, intrigue, and relevance of the content presented (Example 9). In contrast,

the predictability move indicates whether the author considers the content to be anticipated or surprising (Example 10). The assessment move refers to the writers' evaluations of a research topic or research entities (Example 11). The acceptability move expresses the writer's evaluation of propositions and findings from previous studies or theories compared to their own (Example 12). The obligation move refers to the writer's evaluation of what is obligatory or necessary (Example 13). The emotive move conveys the writer's emotions and personal feelings toward the propositional content (Example 14).

9. This study offers *valuable* insights into how U.S. politicians seek to construct more pessimistic or optimistic portrayals of the nation. (J.- AAW11)

10. The result is most *surprising* since Lebanese policies mandate 10 weeks of paid maternity leave. (J.- AAEW14)

11. Given those differences in the characteristics of our two samples, it is *difficult* to draw strong conclusions by comparing the Egyptian with the Syrian sample. (P.S.-AAEW5)

12. Moreover, we *agree* with Levine (2005), Nili and Rastad (2007), and Bhattacharyya and Hodler (2014) in the view that a lack of financing is a leading constraint for the private sector, while financial development can play a significant role in diversifying the economy. (L.-AAEW11)

13. Future research *should* attempt to further parse out the issues of race, religion, geography, and cultural similarity in coverage of terrorism victims. (J.-AAEW1)

14. *Sadly*, this is reminiscent of Plotnikoff and Woolfson's findings on the matter of appeals for the Royal Commission, in the wake of several high-profile miscarriages of justice. (L.-AAW13)

These attitude markers reflect evaluative stances that express the writer's affective or judgmental orientation toward the proposition (Hyland, 2004; Martin & White, 2005). Culture shapes such evaluations and it is tolerated differently across disciplines (McGrath & Kuteeva, 2012). By analyzing moves, we can gain insight into how writers position themselves emotionally and evaluatively.

Self-mention

Based on previous studies looking at the discourse functions of self-mentions (i.e., writer's role) in academic texts (e.g., Alyousef & Alotaibi, 2019; Muñoz, 2013; Hyland, 2001, 2002a; Tang & John, 1999), a move analysis was conducted to examine the specific functions of self-mention markers in this study. It is important to note that self-mentions highlight the writers' roles and involvement in RAs with different moves, based on the types of MD markers they collocate with. Pronouns and nouns that refer to the writers are usually found to collocate

with other types of MD markers like hedging markers such as *suggest* and *believe*, boosting markers such as *argue* and *found*, or attitude markers such as *hope* and *agree*. Thus, the classifications of writers' moves in the corpus could be grouped into seven roles: (1) recounter of procedures; (2) originator; (3) opinion holder; and (4) architect. This aligns with recent findings that demonstrate how self-mention helps writers negotiate identity and authority in research articles (Alghamdi, 2025). The recounter of procedures uses self-mentions to list research processes (Example 15). The originator projects themselves as originators and contributors of new ideas to the field (Example 16). The opinion holder expresses opinions on either an approach or theory related to the authors' work or the research methods and processes used in their study (Example 17). The architect gives structure to the text and the discourse (Example 18).

15. First, *we examined* the degree to which partisans had optimistic or pessimistic appraisals about the United States' standing in the world. (J.-AAW11)

16. *We provide* the first comparative evidence to support the hypothesis, taking a wide variety of potentially confounding factors into account. (P.S.-AAW10)

17. In sum, *we think* moral disengagement is an effective approach that may yield a rich and interesting line of research. (P.S.-AAW2)

18. In this part of the article, *we discuss* the findings of the empirical case study presented above. (L.-AAW12)

Depending on the rhetorical intent, writers adopt different authorial roles – such as architect, originator, or recounter (Hyland, 2002a; Tang & John, 1999). Treating “I” or “we” as simple markers obscures these nuanced identity performances. In a move-based approach, writers construct authorial presence and negotiate authority within discourse communities (Ivanic, 1998).

Engagement Moves in Academic Writing

Directives

Academic writers used directives in their RAs to guide readers to perform an action or emphasize what should be particularly taken into account. Hyland (2001, 2002a) categorized directives as textual, physical, or cognitive, depending on their discourse functions within the texts. Textual acts guided readers through the discussion and directed them to textual information (Example 19). Physical acts guided readers through specific research processes and actions in either intertextual sources (Example 20) or the research world (Example 21). Cognitive acts guided readers through a line of reasoning and allowing them to draw similar conclusions. (Example 22).

19. The results of the analysis reveal a pattern similar to that of Figure 1a, with strong-tie appeals causing larger increases in motivation to like and share the protest post among Korean respondents than among Japanese respondents (*see* Tables A11 and A12 and Figure A2 in the online Appendix). (J.-AAW10)

20. First, we cannot assess whether state policies are consistent with mass preferences at any given moment (*cf.* Achen 1978; Matsusaka 2001; Lax & Phillips 2012). (P.S.-AAW14)

21. *Assume* that providers have a utility function where Y is income minus the value of leisure and I is the level of inducement. (L.-AAW9)

22. To interpret the estimated effect of media coverage on UKIP support, *consider* the impulse response function plotted in Figure 3. (P.S.-AAW1)

These directive expressions serve as instructional or orienting rhetorical moves (Hyland, 2005). Their function depends on both genre and disciplinary expectations regarding reader engagement (Swales, 2004). In this way, interactional MD should be understood in terms of rhetorical moves alongside lexical identification.

Reader mentions

Reader mentions enable the writers to steer readers toward a preferred interpretation and to establish solidarity with them to make significant contributions to their research. Analyzing the moves related to reader mentions in the corpus revealed three distinct functions: steering the reader through the discourse (Example 23), aligning the reader with a specific interpretation (Example 24), and positioning the reader as a knowledgeable contributor to the discussion (Example 25).

23. *We* can now turn our attention to the space newspapers devoted to policy discussion in their election coverage. (J.-AAW7)

24. Examining both the Syrian and Egyptian samples in Table 5, *one can see* that both Syrians and Egyptians are notably more likely to exhibit inequity aversion when their opponent is Syrian, as opposed to Egyptian. (P.S.-AAEW5)

25. *We* also need to look beyond the state's procedural framework which, despite appearing impartial. (L.-AAW14)

These examples position readers as active participants in the interpretation process (Hyland, 2001). Different cultural and disciplinary contexts have different engagement strategies (Fløttum, Dahl & Kinn, 2006). A move-based lens explains how writers manage interpersonal alignment with their readers.

Questions

The academic writers used questions as an engagement marker to raise readers' interests and curiosity which can lead to the writers' viewpoint (Hyland, 2002b). The move analysis of the corpus data revealed that the questions in the corpus served four major moves: Framing information (Example 26), stimulating reflection (Example 27), anticipating future research (Example 28), and demonstration (Example 29). The first three of these functions have also been reported in studies by Hyland (2002b) and Camiciottoli (2008), while the last function was identified and added based on the corpus of this study.

26. In other words, *what can a subset of Latino voters in NC tell us about Latinos elsewhere?* In the following section, we perform a replication test using GRD to assess the generalizability of our results in a different state. (P.S.-AW9)

27. What is not clear, however, is whether there is a negative corollary to this positive injunctive. In other words, *if Japanese citizens tend not to see protest as something citizens ought to do, do they then view protest as something that good citizens ought not do?* (J.-AAW10)

28. A finding that could be valuable to reevaluate during Trump's presidency. *Do politicians running in safe versus marginal districts respond to different types of constituents? Do politicians respond differently to constituents' issue priorities depending on the issues they own? And how would these results differ across institutional or political contexts?* (P.S.-AAW12)

29. We consider here several possible issues in the interpretation of our results: *Could our simplified scenarios pose a threat to external validity (for a more detailed discussion of this issue, see Appendix A.1 in the SI)? Might our experiments present the causal factor of interest (the treatment) in an implausibly salient manner, thus leading us to overestimate the effect?* (P.S.-AW11)

Questions serve the rhetorical move of anticipating reader concerns or prompting reflection (Hyland, 2005). While they are easily identifiable lexically, their pragmatic function varies by discipline and community norms (Swales, 1990). This illustrates the limitations of the marker approach and confirms the value of a move-based interpretation.

Knowledge appeals

To build a shared understanding with disciplinary readers, academic writers in this corpus used knowledge appeals. They were primarily used in the corpus to establish solidarity with readers based on common background knowledge (Example 30).

30. *Obviously*, the survey cannot attempt to account for the views of the entire Shi'i community, but it does examine one of the Shi'i community's most articulate and opinionated groups toward a timely and important topic. (P.S.-AAEW2)

Knowledge appeals work as engagement moves that construct shared understanding between writer and reader. Writers position readers as members of the same discourse community by presenting certain propositions as common knowledge (Hyland, 2005; Swales, 1990). The writer's argument is more likely to be accepted with this strategy. Rather than merely serving as lexical indicators of engagement, these expressions function rhetorically to build consensus.

Asides

Personal aside is an interactional strategy that interrupts the flow of the argument to build solidarity with readers (Hyland, 2005). The move analysis of asides in the corpus showed that they were not only used to express opinions or give further comments but also to initiate a brief interpersonal conversation. It became apparent that these types of engagement markers were typically used to indicate four major moves: to offer further explanation of a certain point (Examples 31), to illustrate a concept (Examples 32), to point readers to more specific information (Examples 33), and to provide with the writers' explicit remarks about the proposition (Example 34).

31. There was a type of bipolarity at play in all of *The Post's* coverage – *localized in coverage of Ankara and Maiduguri, and globalized in coverage of both Paris and Brussels*. (J.-AAEW1)

32. The results are also robust due to fewer periods observed post-MSP than pre-MSP (*e.g., examining only the first year after the case is filed and censoring any case that has not terminated within one year*). (L.-AAW5)

33. The VAR results indicate clear but, *for reasons discussed above*, inherently limited evidence for Hypothesis 1. (P.S.-AAW1)

34. Every reaction here is to either do work for free (*which, in this payment regime particularly, becomes more difficult as cuts bite*) or to cut corners. (L.-AAW13)

By using personal asides, writers foster rapport, clarify intent, or emphasize a point (Hyland, 2005). Such moves contribute to interpersonal involvement and writer–reader connection – a key aspect of interactional discourse (Ädel, 2006). Context-dependent rhetorical functions reinforce the need to analyze MD as moves rather than isolated lexical items.

Teaching with Moves: Implications for EAP/ESP

EAP/ESP instruction can benefit from the move-based approach developed in this study. It is particularly valuable in contexts such as Saudi Arabia, the Arab world, and the non-Anglophonic academic community that require students to produce academic texts without explicitly training them in rhetorical strategies. The move-based approach may be particularly useful for teaching MD because it emphasizes larger discourse units and provides functional labels that are transparent. Students can be guided to identify specific rhetorical functions in academic texts and to apply these moves in their own writing. Students can practice these functions in authentic texts by noticing and practicing the moves within each category, such as hedging, boosting, attitude expression, self-mention roles, and engagement strategies. For example, students may identify hedging moves in research articles, analyze how boosters strengthen disciplinary claims, or incorporate engagement moves when drafting literature reviews. As a result of the move-based approach, teachers can design scaffolding tasks that help learners construct stance and negotiate reader engagement more effectively, which can also support materials development.

Conclusion

This paper has advocated for a ‘move’ method in MD, considering functionally-defined units of meaning. Although it is more comprehensive than the ‘marker’ approach, this does not imply abandoning the ‘marker’ approach. Future MD research should take a ‘move’ approach, and shift from frequency-based, descriptive studies of academic genres to rhetorical aspects. The taxonomy was intended to work across a range of genres and communication modes, and to be adaptable to new information. Additionally, it can be used to study cultural preferences among academic writers. The present study contributes to the empirical study of academic writing by focusing on discourse and rhetoric. Although students are often required to produce academic texts, they rarely receive explicit rhetorical instruction or training. The study illustrates how a move-based perspective can offer deeper insights into how writers construct stance and engagement, and demonstrates its potential for application across different disciplines and cultural contexts.

This study is limited by its focus on a conceptual and illustrative application of the move-based taxonomy rather than a full empirical validation across genres or larger corpora. Future research could apply and test the taxonomy quantitatively and qualitatively across additional disciplines, languages, and multimodal genres to further refine its categories and confirm its analytical utility.

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