

**A GENRE ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS AND DISCUSSION SECTION  
OF MASTERS DISSERTATIONS**

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**A GENRE ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS AND DISCUSSION  
SECTION OF MASTERS DISSERTATIONS**

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# A GENRE ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS AND DISCUSSION SECTION OF MASTERS DISSERTATIONS

## ABSTRACT

Academic institutions and different academic communities around the world have been concerned about students' academic writing. As academic writing is highly challenging particularly for non-native English language users; accordingly, in recent years an increase in academic genre analysis is noticeable. Unlike other genres, the Master's dissertations have remained much understudied. As in reporting research findings novice writers' face many difficulties thus an investigation on the result and discussion sections is essential. Previous genre analysis in the academic genre field was focusing on abstract and introductions chapters of masters' dissertations. A very few studies looked at the result and discussion chapters written particularly by ESL writers'. Together with, in producing an effective result report writing also needs to be persuasive. A well-organized text is effective in convincing the target readers. This genre based text analysis study presents an analysis of ten (10) Applied Linguistics (AL) Master's dissertations combined result and discussions (R&D) chapters. The aim of the present study is to identify the communicative purpose and the general pattern of the genre. This study also aims to look at the interactional metadiscourse of the R&D chapter. It is based on the move-step tradition initiated by Swales (1990) to develop his influential Create a Research Space (CARS) model for research article introductions and on Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2015) framework. This mixed method study found that the main communicative purpose of the combined R&D is not only to introduce the chapter and report the results or findings but to comment and summaries the results as well. The move frequency is classified by following Kanoksilapatham's (2005) work.

A cyclical pattern of (M2) reporting result-(M3) commenting on the result- (M2) reporting result appeared frequently in the ESL writing. Analysis of hedges, boosters, and engagement markers further present the interactional practice of the ESL community. The communicative purposes of the ESL dissertations are organized mostly with booster markers. The finding indicates writers' awareness about the target audience.

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## ANALISIS GENRE HASIL KEPUTUSAN DAN PERBINCANGAN SEKSYEN PENGESAHAN MASTER

### ABSTRAK

Institusi akademik dan komuniti akademik yang berbeza di seluruh dunia telah bimbang tentang penulisan akademik pelajar. Memandangkan penulisan akademik sangat mencabar terutamanya untuk pengguna bahasa bukan bahasa asli; Oleh itu, dalam tahun-tahun kebelakangan ini peningkatan dalam analisis genre akademik adalah ketara. Tidak seperti genre lain, disertasi Sarjana masih banyak yang tidak dapat difahami. Seperti yang dilaporkan dalam penemuan penyelidikan novel penulis menghadapi banyak kesulitan sehingga penyiasatan terhadap hasil dan bagian perbincangan adalah penting. Analisa genre terdahulu dalam bidang genre akademik menumpukan pada abstrak dan pengenalan bab-bab disertasi sarjana. Satu kajian yang sangat sedikit melihat hasil dan bab perbincangan yang ditulis terutamanya oleh penulis ESL. Bersama, dalam menghasilkan penulisan laporan hasil yang berkesan juga perlu menjadi persuasif. Teks yang teratur adalah berkesan dalam meyakinkan para pembaca sasaran. Kajian analisis teks berasaskan genre ini membentangkan analisis sepuluh (10) disertasi Sarjana Linguistik (AL) gabungan gabungan hasil dan perbincangan (R & D) bab. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengenal pasti tujuan komunikatif dan corak umum genre. Kajian ini juga bertujuan untuk melihat metadiskual interaksional bab R & D. Ia didasarkan pada tradisi langkah-langkah yang dimulakan oleh Swales (1990) untuk membangunkan model Pembentukan Ruang Angkasa (CARS) yang berpengaruh untuk pengenalan artikel penyelidikan dan rangka kerja Pinjaman dan Pramoolsook (2015). Kajian kaedah campuran ini mendapati bahawa tujuan komunikatif utama R & D gabungan bukan sahaja untuk memperkenalkan bab dan melaporkan keputusan atau penemuan tetapi

untuk memberi komen dan merumuskan hasilnya juga. Frekuensi bergerak diklasifikasikan dengan mengikuti kerja Kanoksilapatham (2005). Corak cyclical (M2) laporan hasil- (M3) mengulas keputusan hasil (M2) yang sering muncul dalam penulisan ESL. Analisis lindung nilai, penggalak, dan penanda pertunjukan terus membentangkan amalan interaksi komuniti ESL. Tujuan komunikasi disertasi ESL dianjurkan kebanyakannya dengan penanda booster. Penemuan ini menunjukkan kesedaran para penulis mengenai sasaran penonton.

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## LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AL	:	Applied Linguistics
AntConc	:	Corpus Analysis Tool used to find incidence of hedging
CARS	:	Create A Research Space
DC	:	Discourse Community
ESP	:	English for Specific Purposes
EFL	:	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	:	English as a Second Language
IMRD	:	Introductions, Method, Result, and Discussion
IRD	:	Introduction, Result, and Discussion
L1	:	First Language Speaker
L2	:	Second Language Speaker
MA	:	Master's
MD	:	Metadiscourse
RA	:	Research Articles
TagAnt	:	Parts of Speech (POS) Analysis Tool used to find MD features



## **LIST OF APPENDICES**

Appendix A : List of Master's dissertations selected for the present study corpus

Appendix B : Sample move analysis

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

This exploratory study aims to provide insights into the structure of the results and discussion (R&D) sections of master's degree dissertations. This exploration will indirectly inform us of the writing practice of ESL master's degree students from Malaysia. The study also analyses the use of hedges and boosters in their academic writing. This chapter thus discusses the motivation of the study before introducing the purpose of the research. Several research questions are also presented. There are several limitations to the study, and these are explained before the concluding remarks.

### 1.2 Background of the study

The term "genre" has always been considered to be a 'fuzzy concept' (Swales, 1990). Some researchers also found it to be a rather controversial term (e.g. Kay & Dudley-Evans, 1998). This is because "specific genres tend to be easy to recognise intuitively, but it is impossible to define" (Chandler, 1997, p.2). A more relatable concept of genre is provided by Swales (1990). He defined genre as a "class of communicative events where the members share a similar set of communicative purposes" (Swales, 1990, p.58). He further defined genre as "particular forms of discourse with shared structure, style, content and intended audience, which are used by a specific discourse community to achieve certain communicative purposes through "socio-rhetorical" activities of writing" (pp.8-10).

An understanding of how writers of a community organise and communicate in their community through writings can best be understood by investigating genres. Genre studies focus both on the organisational patterns and the discourse features, such as hedges and

boosters. The interest of genre studies was heightened by Swales's (1990) work. According to his framework, in order to be qualified as a genre, an event needs to be communicative and expressed through verbal language. Swalesian genre analysis combines rhetoric and linguistics, which help in discovering the communicative purposes of genres by analysing texts (Devitt, 2015, p.1). Swales (1990), through his work, showed and emphasised the importance of investigating genres from different communities to understand how a community communicates. Although previous researchers looked at different genres and communities, Swales' robust concept of community and its effects on the community members have heightened interest to explore genre thoroughly.

Following his work and understanding the nature of the different genres, researchers focusing on academic discourses investigated various discourse categories such as conclusion chapters found in doctoral theses (e.g. Bunton, 2005), literature reviews of doctoral theses (e.g. Kwan, 2006), discussion chapters of RAs (e.g. Basturkmen, 2012), result and discussion (R&D) sections of master's (MA) theses (e.g. Nguyen & Pramoolsook, 2015), and so on. These studies indicate structural variations within a genre based on community and context. These differences indicate the uniqueness in writers' performances, which are carried out in a unique "rhetorical situation to carry out a unique communicative purpose" (Devitt, 2015, p.2). So, this stands the reason that there are deeper communicative intentions hidden in individuals such as small communities like the academic community of a specific institution. Because this study was conducted in Malaysia, the study focuses on seeing if communicative differences are common in an ESL community.

In order to be accepted in certain academic communities, writing in a thesis or dissertations needs to be persuasive. This requires a writer to be able to apply the knowledge of norms and conventions of their discourse community in their writing. Unlike spoken

communication, in written communication writers tend to create text for an intended reader rather than a specific reader. Hence, in constructing a paper, writers must pay attention not only on the propositions but also on how they can create a purposeful interaction. To create persuasive writing, researchers tend to employ linguistic features in their writings.

In the attempts to identify the community practices, genre analysts have been investigating different genres. Genre studies in the line of investigating discourse markers have concentrated on various rhetorical features. Linguistics features such as lexical bundles (e.g. Esfandiari & Barbary, 2017; Karabacak & Qin, 2013), modal verbs (e.g. Pastor, 2014), epistemic modality (e.g. Yang, Zheng & Ge, 2015), pronoun 'you' (e.g. Polo, 2018) and so on were investigated. One of the ways to understand this textual structure of genres is to identify the ways writers interact with their readers. Metadiscourse (MD) in this case plays an important role in rhetoric. Hyland (1996, 1998) makes the point that metadiscourse features are shaped in a language and used in a certain context so that they can be fitted in the context (community). This stands with the idea of creating proper communication between writer and reader in the community. As noted by Hyland (2005), "metadiscourse is closely associated with the purposes of speakers and writers." (p.63). He continued by referring to the value it provides by allowing the readers and writers in projecting their "interests, opinions and evaluations" (p.63). According to him "the importance of metadiscourse lies in its underlying rhetorical dynamics which relate it to the contexts in which it occurs" (p.59). However, realising this necessity, several genre studies have looked at MD markers and its functionality (e.g. Kwase, 2015; Li & Wharthon, 2012; Hyland, 2005). Understanding the importance of the MD markers to a writer's claim, the present study looks to explore the forms of hedges and boosters in master's dissertations..

To explore writers' choices regarding hedging and boosters, it is at first essential to know the function of these features in the rhetoric. In finding answers to the question of hedges and boosters some studies focused on English L2 students' academic writing. A recent study by Hyland (2000) demonstrated Cantonese students of English at the University of Hong Kong tended to use more booster markers than hedges. Hyland later rationalised that this outcome possibly is the effect of proficiency than the first language (Hyland, 2000). Other researchers (e.g. Bloor & Bloor, 1991; Clyne, 1987) also concluded with similar suggestions. Hyland (2000) also added that the higher occurrences of booster markers in student writing are "potentially relevant for students beyond Hong Kong" (p. 20). Based on this assertion, the present study explores the frequency of these markers in the ESL texts produced in the Malaysian academic community.

In an extensive sense, approaches of MD in master's of arts dissertations highlight students' standing as independent and confident researchers as well as denoting their position as novice affiliates in an academic community. By carrying proper writer personality and getting involved with possible readers, appropriate social interaction is feasible (Hyland, 2005, p.ix). Thus, investigation on interactional MD from different genres and rhetorical patterns may bring forward manners of meaningful interactions between different communities. Therefore, this study aims to find out the communicative purposes (moves) of this result and discussion genre and the metadiscourse features like hedge and boosters in their construction.

### 1.3 Statement of problem

In the field of genre studies, the number of studies conducted to investigate the structural moves in dissertations appears to be limited when compared to research articles (RAs). The reason is mainly because of the 'daunting size' (Swales, 1990) regarding the number of words in a dissertation or thesis. These known studies looking at the rhetorical moves in specific chapters of master's (MA) theses are analysed from the perspectives of culture, language, and academic discipline. Some examples include the introductory chapter of biology, philosophy, and linguistics dissertations (e.g. Samraj, 2008), literature review chapters in TESOL dissertations (e.g. Nguyen & Pramoolsook, 2014), R&D chapters in Applied Linguistics (AL) dissertations (e.g. Chen & Kuo, 2012; Nguyen & Pramoolsook, 2015). The study by Nguyen & Pramoolsook (2015) on R&D sections of dissertations is the key document for the present study. Although this study was conducted on EFL texts, it serves a complete move/step framework of combined R&D sections. However, all the studies mentioned above were conducted in an EFL context. In comparison to EFL contexts, few studies focused on an ESL context. While in an EFL context, students only get introduced to limited use of language in ESL contexts where the English language is a compulsory medium of communication. This shows that an ESL context may have higher intrinsic motivation to achieve the goal. Students coming from an EFL context to an ESL context realizes the importance of improving their English language accuracy to be part of that discourse community. Therefore, looking at ESL writing patterns could reveal the writing pattern that may become effective for future students in getting accustomed in that particular ESL community.

Through previous studies (e.g. Samraj, 2008; Nguyen & Pramoolsook, 2014, 2015; Chen & Kuo, 2012) it is evident that although they were conducted in different discourse

communities and on different groups of EFL writers, the rhetorical patterns of the texts differed. Moreover, there is a possibility that these differences may or may not be prevalent among ESL students. In some previous studies (e.g. Tonkyn, 1996; Lenon, 1995; Spada, 1986), researchers found that studying and L2 in an SL context has a positive effect on the learners. Longcope (2009) also noted that “there is a considerable difference in learning language in EFL and ESL context” (p.304). Therefore, analysing the texts formed in an ESL context, such as in Malaysia, may reveal textual constructions of this discourse community. While in an EFL context, teachers mostly focus on particular subjects like English inside a classroom conversation, in an ESL context, learners do not get the opportunity to speak in any other language out of the classroom. Therefore, the ESL community also inspires learners to get accustomed to the new community they are in. These differences may be obvious in the writing pattern of these two discourse communities.

In order to be accepted in certain academic communities, writing in a thesis or dissertation needs to be persuasive. To create persuasive writing, researchers tend to employ linguistic features. In the case of dissertations, the examiners are the main audience who mainly focus on sentence construction. In order to provide persuasive writing, writers depend on metadiscourse (MD) elements. An application of MD strategies reveals the student writers’ level of awareness of the discourse-as-process and the way they manage this. Therefore, this can consist of:

1. The ways they organise their texts;
2. Their attempt at engaging the target audience, including them; and
3. The evaluation of what they do in their own writing.

For the past several years, few scholars have shown interest in MD analysis on academic genres, such as Ph.D. dissertations and MA theses (e.g. Ozdemir & Longo, 2014). Analysis of ESL academic thesis and dissertations produced in L2 English language contexts has remained understudied.

In an extensive sense, approaches of MD in MA dissertations highlight students' standing as independent and confident researchers as well as signifies their position as novice affiliates in an academic community. By carrying a proper writer personality and getting involved with the potential readers, appropriate social interaction is feasible (Hyland, 2005, p. ix). Thus, investigation on interactional MD on different genres and rhetorical patterns may bring forward manners of meaningful interactions of different communities.

#### **1.4 Objective of the study**

There are three objectives of this present study. The first objective is to look at the communicative purposes of the combined R&D sections of Master's (MA) dissertations.. In achieving this objective, the study began by finding moves in the written texts. By identifying the obligatory, conventional and optional moves, the communicative purpose is decided. Then the study carried on to identify the generic structure of the section. From the moves and steps identified in the texts, this objective is achieved. The third objective of this study is to find out the type of interactional metadiscourse, such as hedges and boosters in the corpus. At this stage, text analysis it is done using lexical software.



## **1.5 Research Questions**

This study proposes to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the communicative purposes of the combined Results and Discussion sections in MA Applied Linguistics dissertations?
2. What are the rhetorical structures of the combined Results and Discussion sections?
3. How are the interactional metadiscourse devices used in the combined Results and Discussion sections?

The study examines how ESL writers construct their propositions in presenting the combined R&D sections. This study is limited to one discipline which is Applied Linguistics. As Hyland (2004, p. 151) pointed out, different disciplines have their own way of creating arguments. In order to answer RQ1, this study first attempts to find and identify the moves/rhetorical structure of the text. The identification of moves answers RQ2. In realising the moves, the study then looked at the rhetorical strategy specifically the two metadiscourse devices which are the hedging and booster devices.

## **1.6 Significance of the study**

In the pedagogical field, an understanding of different rhetorical patterns of different genres by a different community is beneficial. This not only helps in recognising the structural pattern of a text but also provides the necessary understanding of the students' language proficiency. Although analyses of MD features in different genres are not many, very limited attempts were taken to observe the function of MD features in ESL texts. Pedagogically the analysis of ESL groups of texts can be beneficial for (i) English Language instructors in dealing with students coming from different English language communities; (ii) future researchers to know the differences in text constructions as well as effective ways

of structuring texts for dissertations and (iii) new researchers to recognise the necessity of metadiscourse features in writing. Theoretically speaking, this study enlightens the connection between language and context (community).

### **1.7 Scope of the study**

The present study is limited to Malaysian ESL students' written texts because the students are studying in one of the Malaysian institutions. The purpose of this study is to Discover the communicative purposes of the result and discussion sections of master's dissertations.. This part of the study is analysed following Swales' (1990) move analysis. Besides focusing on the communicative purposes, the study also intends to explore the type of interactional metadiscourse functional in the ESL writings. For this purpose, the forms of hedges and boosters are taken into account. Since this study is exploratory and focused on new groups of participants, only written communication is investigated.

### **1.8 Definition of the term**

For a clearer understanding of the present study, operational definitions of key terms are given below.

#### *Move*

The move is "a text segment made up of a bundle of linguistic features (lexical meaning, propositional meanings, illocutionary forces, etc.) that gives the segment a uniform orientation and signals the content of discourse in it" (Nwogu, 1997).

#### *Steps*

A step is "a lower level unit than the move that provides a detailed perspective on the options open to the writer in setting out the moves in the introduction" (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998, p.89).

### *Move / step cycle*

The cycle of move/step indicates the repetition of a move/step in the text. If a move/step appears more than once in a text, then that move/step can be considered cyclical.

### *Move/step sequence*

Move/step sequence is the combination of move/step. A move/step sequence carries two different moves/steps in it. Sequences can also consist of more than two or three moves/steps. However, if a move/ step appears frequently in a sequence this shows the prevalence of that move/step function in presenting a proposition.

## **1.9 Organization of the study**

Chapter One portrays different phases of the research purpose of the present study.

The introduction of the research is followed by Chapter Two, which is a literature review. The review of the literature includes discussions concerning the theory of genre analysis, metadiscourse and community and its writing practice.

Chapter Three presents the methodology of the study and discusses the ways that were followed to accomplish the analysis. Besides the explanation of the research design, the nature of the corpus, instruments used for the coding and other procedural information are discussed.

Chapter Four is dedicated to presenting the findings the result from analysis.

Chapter Five discusses the findings from the study and concludes the entire study. In this part, the proposed research questions are also addressed. In the concluding remarks, the chapter briefly explains the findings and gives an overview of the study. This chapter finishes by providing suggestions for future research.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the definition of genre and genre theory is discussed. The notion genre as defined by different scholars are explained in order to understand the main idea “communicative purpose” that is used in this study. The interactional MD features such as hedges and boosters are also addressed in this part of the study. The main argument of this chapter is surrounding the unique writing pattern of ESL Master’s dissertations and its persuasive techniques. In this purpose, the chapter first provided a detailed theoretical perspective of genre analysis. This is followed by Swales (1990) model of the genre. One of the purposes of the study is also to identify the metadiscourse (MD) features such as hedges and boosters in the corpus. The theory of MD is discussed in order to understand the purpose of MD features. This chapter also presented relevant literature to establish a link between previous and present studies conducted in the field of genre.

### **2.2 Theoretical perspective**

#### **2.2.1 Genre theory**

The definition of a genre theory is more than categorizing poetry, novel or a type of writing. Genre theory emphasizes the idea that writing is socially constructed (Dean, 2008, p.8). In recent years analysis of different genres has grown promptly within the field of Linguistics (e.g. Dobakhti, 2016; Nguyen & Pramoolsook, 2015; Basturkmen, 2012; Kwan, 2006; Bunton, 2005). However, scholars have been looking into this discipline by following three schools of thoughts: (a) North American New Rhetoric studies, (b) Australian Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), and (c) English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Each of these

approaches distinguishes genre as a social occurrence. They specify that genres have certain similar characteristics, conventions, and constraints regarding their language, purpose, and intended audience (Fryer, 2007, p.27).

As genre approach is the main method followed for this study thus it is necessary to start with the definitions forwarded by the renowned scholars. The significant definitions are provided by three different schools of genre studies.

### 1. New rhetoric genre studies

“Genre is dependent on the ‘recurrent situations’. The members of the genre are controlled by rhetorical situation” (Miller, 1984, p.159).

### 2. Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)

Genre is “a staged, goal-orientated, and purposeful social activity that people engage in as members of their culture” (Martin, 1984, p.371).

### 3. English for specific purposes (ESP)

“A genre is a class of communicative events, the members of which share some sets of communicative purposes which are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community” (Swales, 1990,p.58).

These three schools of genre are similar in the way in which they view genre, i.e. genre is dynamic and socially constructed. However, the three schools of genre differ in their analytical focus in research. Hyland (2003) reminds us that “while these approaches are united by to describe and explain regularities of purpose, form and established social action, they clearly differ in the emphasis they give to text or context, the research methods, and the

types of pedagogies they encourage”(p.22). As this research is focused on academic text produced in a certain discourse community, Swales (1990) definition and theory of genre are deemed appropriate. The perception of genre from a linguistics perspective is highly influenced by Swales’ (1990) work. Swales (1990) has defined ‘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 choice of content and style.” (Swales, 1990, p. 58)

From the definition, it can be said that genres are communicative events, which are identifiable based on their communicative purposes (Swales, 1990, 2004). Thus, in order to understand the language of a discourse community, we need to investigate what it is trying to accomplish. If we look to comprehend the purpose of language pattern produced in a particular community, we need to focus on the mechanism that shapes the forms and values of a discourse community. This notion can be broadly understood by a detail discussion on a discourse community and its characteristics.

### **2.2.2 Discourse community (DC)**

According to Swales (1990), “a genre is a class of communicative events, the members of which share some sets of communicative purposes which are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community” (p.58). Swales (1990) also differentiated the discourse community from speech community. He stated that “the discourse community (DC) is socio rhetorical in nature with its communicative goals, while the speech community fulfills social functions” (p.24). Additionally to indicate the connection between genre and DC Hyland (2005) stated that “genre and community together provide a descriptive and explanatory framework of how meanings are socially constructed” (p.138). Another

prominent scholar Dudley-Evans (1994) defined DC as “the group of people within a discipline or area of special interest that communicate with each other in part through the genres which they ‘possess’” (p.220). However, Hyland (2009) argued that the DC “provides a principled way of understanding how meaning is produced in interaction and useful in identifying how writers’ rhetorical choices depend on purposes, setting and audience” (p.66). Swales (1990) in his attempt to define the DC has presented six characteristics of it. An attempt to map the current research discourse community (DC) is presented in table 2.1.

**Table 2.1:** Swales (1990) characteristics of DC (p.25-27) and mapping AL dissertation

<b>Characteristics of Swales’ discourse community (DC)</b>	<b>Characteristics of the discourse community (DC) of AL master’s dissertations</b>
Broadly agreed set of common public goals.	The public can understand the necessity of research and realize the AL master’s dissertations are about Language related issues.
Mechanism of inter-communication among its members.	The Master’s dissertations were collected from an online library database. Before submitting the online version of the dissertations, academic experts of the related study field peer-reviewed.
Uses its participatory mechanism primarily to provide information and feedback.	The citation of previous or present articles and theses/dissertations in writer’s work functions to provide information and feedbacks.
Has one or more genres in the communicative furtherance of its aims.	Besides the written part of the dissertations, writers tend to present their studies to the examiners and in conferences.
Has acquired some specific lexis.	The AL disciplinary texts contain specific terminology, which helps in identifying them as one particular genre.
Has a threshold level of members with a suitable degree of relevant content and discursual expertise.	The University helps the researchers in publishing their researcher papers. Alongside, the senior fellows help the novice researchers in learning academic ways of writing and publishing writing.

Swales (1990) also introduced the application of genre theory. He investigated genres from different discourse communities. His theory of genre mainly surrounds the ESP school of thoughts. According to the ESP theory, the communicative purpose of a community is easily recognizable by the members of that community. As this study is adapting the ESP schools of genre theory, the following sections will provide a detail of the ESP approach.

### **2.2.3 ESP Approach**

Recognition of John M. Swales's prominent work (1981, 1990) and Bhatia's (1993) Genre studies are widespread. Their works have brought several models for genre analysis. Swales' (1981) investigation on article introductions extended the previous analysis by the ESP schools from micro-level grammatical features to a more global text structure. His analysis of moves was concerned with the formal elements of the genre than the factors influencing the communicative purposes or with the participants in the genre (Hyon, 1996). However, after the emergence of Swales (1990) work, the ESP genre approach has become more prominent. Through his work, he projects genre as "a class of communicative events, the members of which share some sets of communicative purposes" (Swales, 1990, p. 58). As mentioned by Swales (1990), this approach principally directed to offer a convenient method to ESP for academic writing. According to him, the ESP approach describes genre as communicative actions. These actions are predictable based on their communicative purpose (Swales, 1990). Thus we can say the functionality of genre mediates "between social situations and the texts that respond strategically to the exigencies of those situations" (Swales, 2009, as cited in Dobakhti, 2013, p.145). Moreover, this functionality indicates a close relation between genre and discourse community (DC).



#### **2.2.4 ESP framework**

As a significant exposition, Carolyn Miller's (1984) essay defined genre "as a particular type of discourse classification. This classification is based on rhetorical practice and organized around situated actions" (p.155). Swales (1990) afterward defined the genre as the particular structure of discourse. The perception of the genre from a linguistics perspective is highly influenced by the work of Swales (1990). His definition presents that the theory of genre is merely not a way to see the organization of the text, but represents certain societies or communities. He further added that "the genre as particular forms of discourse with shared structure, style, content and intended audience, which are used by specific discourse community to achieve certain communicative purposes through "socio-rhetorical" activities of writing" (pp.8-10). Bhatia (1993) extended Swales definition by referring to it "as a recognizable communicative event characterized by a set of communicative purpose(s) identified and understood by the members of the professional or academic community in which it regularly occurs" (p.3). Likewise, Flowerdew and Peacock (2001) stated that "genre is a particular type of communicative event which has a particular communicative purpose recognized by its users or the discourse community" (p.15).

In order to help the language learners in understanding academic, professional or educational discourse familiarity of the genre was highly recognized for decades. Researchers, however, gradually implied this theory on their works and came up with different notions of genre. By focusing on the crisis of lacking a concrete definition of the genre, Swales (2004) compiled a definition from earlier researches.

Frames of Social Action → Guiding Principles

Language Standards → Conventional Expectations

Biological Species → Complex Historicities

Families and Prototypes → Variable Links to the Centre

Institutions → Shaping Contexts; Roles

Speech Acts → Directed Discourses

### **2.2.5 The concept of move and step**

While speaking of the genre the notion 'Move' should be the main concern in it. Several definitions of "move" has been suggested by ESP scholars. Moves, as Swales suggests, "can be viewed as spatial matters in which ideas move from one pre-formatted section to another pre-formatted section" (Swales, 1990). To Dudley-Evans and St John (1998), 'moves' refers to 'a unit that relates both to the writer's purpose and to the content s/he wishes to communicate'. A more detailed definition of "move" is given by Nwogu (1997):

... a text segment made up of a bundle of linguistic features (lexical meaning, propositional meanings, illocutionary forces etc.) which gives the segment a uniform orientation and signals the content of discourse in it. Each move is taken to embody a number of "Constituent Elements" or sub-moves, which combine to constitute information in the move (p.122).

Thus, for Nwogu, a move is signaled by various linguistic features and/or by drawing an inference from context these features realise the communicative purpose of the text. He also points out that a move can have a number of constituent elements that realise a move. In order to realise the communicative purpose of a move, the writer may employ one or more constituent elements, called "Step". A step is explicated as "a lower level unit than the move

that provides a detailed perspective on the options open to the writer in setting out the moves in the introduction” (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998, p.89). Bhatia (1993, p. 21) categorises moves as discriminatory strategies because they tend to vary the nature of the genre considerably, by “introducing new or additional considerations in the communicative purpose of the text”. Meanwhile, a step or “strategy”, according to Bhatia (1993), is non-discriminative, because it does not change the essential communicative purpose of the genre, even though the steps,

exploited by a particular writer are generally used in order to make the writing more effective, keeping in mind any special reader requirements, considerations arising from a different use of medium or prerequisites or constraints imposed by organisational and other factors of this kind. (p. 20)

From pedagogical points of view, Swales’ (1990, 2004) model and Nwogu’s (1997) approach are distinct with respect to the descriptive or “prescriptive” pedagogical application of ESP (Fryer, 2007, p. 31). Even though scholars have tried to explain genre ESP analysis from the different point of view, scholars had been highly influenced in Swalesian ESP move approach. Swales’s (1981) study on research articles has revealed a four-move structure model. However, three of the classifiable moves were found most frequently in the introductory chapters, which are, a) establish a territory, b) establish a niche, and c) occupying the niche. These moves were identified by certain linguistics and lexical markers. Later, Swales (1990) also explained that in the CARS model, every move has optional approaches, which are named “steps”. By analysing 158 different disciplinary research articles’ introduction chapters, the model was organized with three obligatory moves. The framework is given in the next page.

**Move 1 Establishing a territory**

Step 1-Claiming centrality and/or

Step 2-Making topic generalization(s) 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

Step 2-Announcing principal findings

Step 3-Indicating RA structure

(Swales, 1990, p. 141)

Swales (2004) defined moves as “discoursal or rhetorical units that perform a coherent communicative function in a written or spoken discourse” (p.228). Afterward, an enhanced IMRD pattern was proposed by Swales through analysing moves in the introductory chapters of research articles. The purpose was to show hierarchical or moves structures of texts, which were responsible for achieving the communicative purpose of the sections of RAs. Moreover, Swales’ prominent ESP genre analysis model influenced researchers and the teaching of academic writing. This move and step analysis highlights the reality that lives inside texts and the ways writers apply the certain strategy of sharing messages to target readers.

**2.2.6 ESP framework in related studies**

In connection with the approaches of genre analysis explained above, the ESP approach in research has been immensely dynamic in explaining the written conventions of academic discourse. By following Swales’s approach researchers have expanded the analysis to other sections of research papers. In the field of academic and professional discourse the ESP move analysis has achieved a higher number of researches.

Although Swales's (1990) CARS model was appreciated as a principal means to understand introduction chapters of texts, researchers afterward have accounted this as insufficient. Choe and Hwang's (2014) investigation on Korean Master's theses Ph.D. dissertations, and research articles produced by Korean professionals and L1 English language speaker has shown dissimilarities with Swales' proposed CARS model. Out of 200 written papers, only 50 of them were following a similar pattern of the framework. The result revealed that few Master's and Ph.D. texts followed a regular pattern of CARS model. In contrary, the expert group of writers and L1 English users in articles used liberal method structure of move. Ozturk (2007) also identified an inadequacy. Ozturk observed the absence of Move 2 in his study corpus. Another scholar Samraj (2002) in the analysis of the same genre of two different disciplines also reported that the direct application of CARS model not convenient. Later he proposed a modified CARS model suitable both for Biology and wildlife behavior texts to locate rhetorical moves.

To attain the understanding of different chapters of academic texts from various disciplines several modified model for ESP move analysis have been organized later by researchers (e.g. Nguyen & Pramoolsook, 2015; Chen & Kuo, 2012; Basturkmen, 2009; Samraj, 2008; Kwan, 2006; Ruiying & Allison, 2003; Bunton, 2005). Likewise, with continuous research on different disciplinary texts and contexts, these ESP models were modified with new moves and steps.

### **2.3 Studies on result and discussion chapters of academic papers**

According to genre researchers (e.g. Bitchener & Basturkmen, 2006; Swales, 2004) in universities, students find difficulties in understanding the form and functions of research report very often. Although students are provided with ample amount of research papers still 'the forms and functions of writing in these samples may not be obvious' (Basturkmen, 2009,

p. 242) and understandable to them. Particularly writing the result and the following chapters can be challenging for new researchers. These sections require gathering down different parts of a research project to combine contents from review sections (Basturkmen, 2009). Earlier researchers, such as the pioneer of ESP genre analysis Swales (1990) observed that it is still unclear to what extent “matters tend to be arranged” (p.170) in the result, discussion and conclusion sections. He continued by mentioning that sometimes research papers tend to coalesced result sections and others have ‘additional or substituted sections labeled Conclusions, Implications or Applications and so on’ (Swales, 1990, p. 170). However, investigation on different sections of a research paper can reveal the central role it plays in reaching “the need to re-establish in the eyes of the discourse community the significance of the research field itself [...]” (Swales, 1990, p.142).

By realizing the importance of academic genre for students’ particular need several researchers attempted to find out the rhetorical structures of academic genre (e.g. Lim, 2014; Nguyen & Pramoolsook, 2015, 2014; Choe & Hwang , 2014; Yang, 2012; Chen & Kuo, 2012; Nodoushan, 2012; Monreal et al., 2011; Samraj, 2008; Kwan, 2006; Bunton, 2005). Following Swales (1990) established model researchers have investigated Ph.D. acknowledgment sections , Introduction chapters (e.g. Monreal, 2011), research questions (e.g. Lim, 2014), literature review chapters (e.g. Monreal, 2015; Kwan, 2006) and conclusion sections (e.g. Bunton, 2005). These studies covered various disciplines such as English linguistics, education and literature, computer science, applied linguistics (AL), technology and social science. In these studies, only two of the studies were conducted on Ph.D., applied linguistics thesis (e.g. Lim, 2014; Kwan, 2006). Above and beyond being concentrating on Ph.D. thesis some others have also extended the field toward Master’s dissertations.

A dissertation differs from research articles (RAs) because of its unique communicative purpose. One of the principal objectives of a dissertation is to persuade examiners through the presentation of knowledge and research abilities in complete written form. This way academic papers help to meet the academic community's expectations. Samraj (2002) also points out the importance of research writing across disciplines regarding gaining membership to specific discourse communities. In short, dissertations help new researchers in achieving a position in certain academic communities through their ability to conduct an independent study. In several studies, scholars investigated the rhetorical structure of Master's (MA) dissertations. Samraj (2008) analysed introduction chapters of MA dissertations from three disciplines, Biology, Philosophy and applied linguistics (AL). His analysis on 24 dissertations from different US base universities revealed diversities in a disciplinary text structure. Samraj (2008) further commented that the "intradepartmental variations" in linguistics dissertations indicate "some disciplines may accommodate more textual variation than others" (p.65). His study, however, showed that in MA dissertations IMRD macrostructure is fairly common. This finding has proven dissimilarities with the structure of Ph.D. as reported by Swales (2004). In recent years another group of researchers (e.g. Choe & Hwang, 2014) in their comparative study also investigated the Introduction chapters of Masters and Ph.D. theses. An obvious distinction between the organizational structures was reported in the two groups of writers, native L1 English users, and non-native English language users. The analysis on 200 MA and Ph.D. theses altogether from four different academic communities revealed that Korean researchers followed a traditional structure of move form such as M1-M2-M3 and recursive move trends, M1-M2-M1-M2-M3 (Choe & Hwang, 2014, p. 27). In contrast, the English language researchers used liberal patterns with the absence of particular moves such as M1-M3. Hyland (2003, 2004), Hyland and Tse (2004) and Zhao and Jiang (2010) studied Chinese speakers from China and Hong

Kong. In conclusion, the findings showed that although these texts were produced by writers of similar cultural backgrounds yet contextual factors such as ‘academic, socio-cultural or geographical differences’ were responsible for the variations observed in the rhetorical pattern.

In recent years some researchers conducted studies on result and discussion chapters of Applied Linguistics (AL) Master’s dissertations. A current study conducted by Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2015) on 24 Vietnamese TESOL Master’s dissertations. Their study aimed to investigate the move-step structures in result and discussion chapters. The study found two obligatory moves in separate result and discussion sections. Move 1: introducing result and move 2: reporting result was compulsory moves in the result chapters. In the discussion chapters move 3: summarizing result and move 4: commenting on the result were obligatory moves. Unlike the separate results and discussion chapters, 11 combined R&D chapters had a different rhetorical pattern. The researchers found first three moves, move 1: introducing results-discussion chapters, move 2: reporting results and move 3: commenting on results were functioning as obligatory moves. By following Ruiying and Allison’s (2003) move analysis model Nodoushan (2012) conducted a study on Iranian EFL master’s dissertations. Forty-six (46) dissertation discussion chapters were analyzed to investigate the rhetorical patterns. This study carried out a comparative discussion between EFL Iranian texts and non-Iranian EFL texts which were analysed in Rasmeenin’s (2006) study. He concluded that the EFL writing class gave less attention to the move structure. A similar observation was made in Nguyen and Pramoolsook’s (2015) study. This finding showed these students might have got improper training in their early ages. The researcher also observed EFL Iranian students struggle in making “deductions from their data (i.e., move 7), to evaluate their studies (i.e., move 6), and to comment on the results of their studies (i.e., move 4)” (Nodoushan, 2012



, p.9). Three obligatory moves were found in the Iranian EFL discussion sections, move 2: reporting results, move 4: commenting on result, and move 7: deductions from research. An interesting finding was the obligatory function of move 7: deduction from research. In any other studies, this move did not appear as an obligatory move. Later Nodoushan added that the main reason for move 7 functioning as an obligatory move in a research report possibly is the type of supervision these writers received.

In another study, Chen and Kuo (2012) analyzed twenty (20) Master's dissertations from Applied Linguistics (AL) discipline. Unlike other research in this study, the samples were collected from the online database. The original coding scheme followed in their study was founded on previous studies. The frameworks which were applied are, "Abstract (e.g. Lores, 2004), Introduction (e.g. Bunton, 2002), Literature review (e.g. Kwan, 2006), Method (e.g. Lim, 2006), Results, Discussions, and Conclusions (e.g. Ruiying & Allison, 2003)" (Chen & Kuo, 2012, p. 27). The finding showed that 15 out of 20 MA dissertations were organized in the typical ILrMRDC pattern, three were found as an article compilation structure and two of them were topic-based (Chen & Kuo, p. 28). The findings reported that both reporting major findings and providing background or indicating how results are presented found as obligatory moves in result chapters. In the discussion sections of the M2S4: reporting major findings and M3S1: interpreting findings appeared as obligatory moves. Basturkmen (2009) studied both RAs and dissertations of language teaching to investigate the differences. He particularly focused on the move 3-commenting on result as this move appears to be the key move in result and discussion sections. Writers of the articles and dissertations have a similar pattern of discussing their results mostly through a series of Result-Comments sequences. The study shows that similar to the RA writers, the dissertation writers used move 3 in order to explain the finding.

From studies discussed above, it can be seen that the theses and dissertations revealed variations in text structures although they were produced in similar disciplines and genres. Researchers, (e.g. yang, 2013) likewise also observed rhetorical variation in texts which were produced in the same country but in different contexts. This difference shows the influence of geographical and contextual factors in writers' textual construction. Similar to the aim of the present study a few researches focused on result and discussion sections of Applied Linguistics master's dissertations (e.g. Nguyen & Pramoolsook, 2015; Chen & Kuo, 2012; Nodoushan, 2012). Their targeted participants were EFL students in EFL contexts such as Vietnam and Iran. In another study (e.g. Chen & Kuo, 2012) focused participants were either from L1 English speaking community or EFL community as the corpora were online based (ProQuest). Their study focused on "language learning, ESL, English, SLA, and academic writing" (Chen & Kuo, 2012, p. 28). Contrasting from those studies this present study is exclusively focusing on ESL students and their produced texts in the ESL context (e.g. Malaysia).

By noting on the statement that "applied linguistics is of particular interest for pedagogic reasons, because raising awareness of genre features becomes directly relevant as part of its disciplinary content" (Ruiying & Allison, 2003, p. 366) the applied linguistics discipline was decidedly chosen for analysis. Alongside to my best knowledge, very few attempts was taken to investigate the Malaysian ESL academic texts. Looking at all the gaps in the current literature, this study sought to start with a limited number of corpus in order to understand the textural pattern of ESL texts. Also different from EFL context in ESL context English is used as a second language. Hence this is also necessary to discover the applicability of the ESP genre theory in this community. Moreover, following Dudley-Evans (1994) and

Thompson's (1999) emphasis on the "more future investigation on students' texts"; this study can be taken as another attempt to enrich the literature in this academic genre.

According to Biber et al. (2007, p. 10) discourse analysis has been conducted from two significant perspectives: one is focused on "the distribution and functions of surface linguistic features" and the second is concentrated on "internal organization of texts". For this present study, the corpus was seen from both of these perspectives to find out the real nature of this ESL texts. When one part is focused on the internal structure of the text the other one has concentrated on the "the distribution and functions of surface linguistic features" (2007, p. 10).

Besides reporting on the rhetorical functions of chosen genre rhetorical device such as metadiscourse was also addressed in this study. As mentioned by Hyland (2010), "Metadiscoursal analysis is a valuable means of exploring academic writing [...] of different discourse communities" (p.141). Metadiscourse represents the notion that communication is not only a medium to share information, services, but also includes the "personalities, attitudes and assumption of the communicator". (Hyland, 2005, p.3). Which means in written texts, writers do not only attempt to present their ideas but also tries to create a bridge with the reader. Writers also highlight their personalities through their writing. As we know that Genre theory is based on the idea that texts are either similar or different and can be classified as one genre or another, studies has been conducted to characterize rhetorical and linguistics features of a particular genre. Metadiscourse has been getting much attention in genre analysis (e.g. Kawase, 2015; Feng, 2014; Hyland, 2000; Crismore, 1989) as academic and professional writings requires much accuracy in order to be part of that particular discourse community. In doing so, the interpersonal metadicourse has gained much attention in the linguistics research field.

## **2.4 Review of Metadiscourse**

This section of the literature review is dedicated to the general concepts of metadiscourse and its relation to rhetoric and genre analysis. A detailed review is provided to support the purpose of this present study which involves reviewing past studies and justifying the reason for analyzing metadiscourse features such as hedges and boosters in the combined result and discussion chapters of Master's dissertations.

Metadiscourse (MD) is closely related with speakers' or writers' intentions. Metadiscourse feature helps writers in projecting "their interests, opinions, and evaluations into a text and to process and refine ideas out of concern for readers' possible reactions" (Hyland, 2005, p.63). Thus, we can say metadiscourse and rhetoric are inseparable. In constructing the rhetorical pattern, metadiscourse plays a significant role "which relate it to the contexts in which it occurs" (Hyland, 2005, p.59). Through the investigation of metadiscourse within the discourse community, it is possible to understand ESL writers' communicative intentions. In order to locate the function of MD features in the ESL writing practice, this section starts by providing a brief definition and background of metadiscourse. This is followed by a discussion on theoretical issues of metadiscourse. Next, metadiscourse is discussed in relation to genre and academic community. Interactional features such as hedges and boosters are also addressed. Lastly, related studies on hedges and boosters are reviewed. The review presents similarities and differences in the frequency and their use in different context and genre types. The next section will be discussing the concept of metadiscourse and then it will go on in the sequence as mentioned above.

### 2.4.1 Concept of Metadiscourse

The term Metadiscourse was first initiated by Zellig Harris in 1959 (Hyland, 2005, p3). He pioneered the practice of MD to provide a medium to understand “language in use”. This notion helps in understanding writer’s efforts to guide target readers’ judgment of a text (Hyland, 2005, p.3). Later Williams (1981), Vande Kopple (1985) and Crismore (1989) established the concept further, which includes various forms of text commentaries. According to Hyland (2005), “metadiscourse embodies the idea that communication is more than just the exchange of information, goods or services, but also involves the personalities, attitudes, and assumptions of those who are communicating” (p.3).

As definitions for the term metadiscourse has always been vague, Hyland (2005) mentioned it as a fuzzy term. Researchers previously attempted to define this rhetorical device based on its functions. Williams (1981) defined metadiscourse as “writing about writing” (p.40). His notion states about two stages of writing, on the first level we provide information about the subject of the text and the second level is metadiscourse (Vande Kopple, 1985, p.83). Vande Kopple (1985) defined metadiscourse simply as “discourse about discourse or communication about communication” (p.83). Crismore et al. (1993) explained metadiscourse as, “linguistic material in texts, which does not add anything to the propositional content but that is intended to help the listener or reader organize, interpret and evaluate the information given”(as cited in Amiryousefi & Rasekh,2010,p.160). In describing the traits Hyland (1999) explained metadiscourse as “one important means by which texts depict the characteristics of an underlying community” (p.5).

Thus metadiscourse is seen as ‘dynamic view of language’ as with the application of metadiscourse in our everyday interactions ‘we negotiate with others, making decisions about the kind of effects we are having on our listeners or readers’ (Hyland, 2005, p.3). Although

these definitions above provided a clear fact about two different entities, the understanding of the distinct functionality of proposition and metadiscourse was unclear. Halliday (1994) stated that ‘propositional material is something that can be argued about, affirmed, denied, doubted, insisted upon, qualified, tempered, regretted and so on’ (as cited in Hyland & Tse, 2004, p.160). In this regard, Mao notified that if the hypothesis is well acknowledged the ‘explicit act of hypothesizing fails’ (as cited in Hyland & Tse, 2004, p.160). Furthermore, Hyland (2005) in his well-known work mentioned that the meaning of a text is a combination of both proposition and the way it is presented. Through the notion ‘complete package’ he has claimed that these two features are inseparable (p.22).

#### **2.4.2 Theoretical concerns of Metadiscourse**

In theorizing the concept of metadiscourse several disputes have been observed. Hyland and Tse (2004) argued that although metadiscourse is a striking concept this ‘remained under-theorized and empirically vague’ (p.156). A great number of disagreement is observed among metadiscourse theorists (e.g. Vande Kopple, 1985; Crismore et al. 1993; Hyland, 1998, 1999). Major concerns were on the relationship “between proposition and metadiscourse features and how to classify and identify MD markers in texts” (Feng, 2014, p. 29).

Although scholars attempted to provide several definitions of metadiscourse, most of them were based on Williams (1981) and Vande Kopple’s (1985) idea of seeing texts in two levels. Unlike the previous researchers, Hyland (2005) in his recent work showed propositional contents and metadiscourse features as a “complete package” (p.22). According to him, metadiscourse does not play the role of particularly as “‘glue’ that holds the more important parts of the text together, but is itself a crucial element of its meaning” (p.41). What Hyland (2005) meant was that metadiscourse as an element “which helps relate a text

to its context, taking readers' needs, understandings, existing knowledge, inter-textual experiences and relative status into account" (p.41). Thus metadiscourse is not a completely different entity in a discourse but its involvement in the proposition helps in communication. As Hyland and Tse (2004) pointed out, "A rigid conceptual separation between proposition and metadiscourse relegates the latter to a commentary on the main informal purpose of the text rather than seeing it as an integral process of communicating meaning" (p.161).

A clear understanding on the differences between propositions and metadiscourse is unclear because "idea of 'proposition' is under-theorised and rarely elaborated" that failed to provide researchers a reliable way to identify propositional and non-propositional items in discourse (Hyland, 2005, p.38). He also added that "metadiscourse does not simply support propositional content: it is the means by which propositional content is made coherent, intelligible and persuasive to a particular audience" (p.39). With the purpose of theorizing metadiscourse Hyland (2005) anchored on Sinclair's (1981) 'planes of discourse' model. In describing "propositional, transactional, informative or ideational dimension of language, Sinclair (1981) argued that language performs important work in structuring and shaping the writer's understandings of the world for readers" (as cited in Hyland, 2005, p.39). According to this model "autonomous plane language works to organize and share relevant experiences... and interactive plane seeks to negotiate and engage readers with those experiences" (p.40). Theorists had also been under dispute over the procedure of identifying and classifying metadiscourse features.

Through several theoretical assumptions, researchers tried to understand metadiscourse. Later the taxonomies were developed by several researchers (e.g. Vandekopple, 1985; Lautamatti, 1978; Crismore et al., 1993; Hyland, 1998, 1998, 1999). In a recent study, Adel (2010) renamed two approaches as 'interactive and reflexive model'

(p.70). These models were named earlier by Mauranen (1993) as an integrative and non-integrative approach. Although Hyland (1998, 1999) revised, collapsed and separated Vandepol's category of metadiscourse, he found this model inadequate. He also debated on Crismore et al.'s (1993) classification of metadiscourse. They divided the textual metadiscourse markers into "textual and interpretative markers" (Hyland, 2005, p. 34), which was not supported enough with rationales. Based on the earlier theories Hyland and Tse (2004) and Hyland (2005) proposed a revised metadiscourse model for analysis. Their theory was developed from Sinclair's (2004) "plane of discourse" model. This model sees metadiscourse as, "the cover term for the self-reflective expressions used to negotiate interactional meanings in a text, assisting the writer to express a viewpoint and engage with readers as members of a particular community" (p.37). Unlike earlier concepts of metadiscourse, in this model emphasis was given on the interpersonal features of metadiscourse which "sees metadiscourse as a system of meanings realized by an open-ended set of language items." (Hyland, 2005, p. 37).

Hyland and Tse (2004) forwarded three principles, which are based on the concept that metadiscourse is focused on reader-writer interaction. These are:

1. that metadiscourse is distinct from propositional aspects of discourse;
2. that metadiscourse refers to aspects of the text that embody writer-reader interactions;
3. that metadiscourse refers only to relations which are internal to the discourse. (Hyland, 2005, p.38).

*The first principle* draws a line between the "propositional material or the communicative content and the materials used to communicate" (Hyland, 2005, p. 38). In other words, it can be said that the delivery of a message and the ways chosen for delivering



the message depend on the writers' expectations on the target readers supposed understanding over it.

*The second principle* highlights that metadiscourse embodies writer-reader interaction. According to Hyland (2005) "all metadiscourse is interpersonal" which "takes account of the reader's knowledge, textual experiences, and processing needs" (p.41). Hyland notified that although the "textual –interpersonal categorization draws on Halliday's (1994) conception of metafunction" the concept plays no part in his thinking (Hyland & Tse, 2004, p.161). Theorists in the past in conceptualizing metadiscourse also did not follow their earlier Hallidayan proposition that is "ideational, interpersonal and textual functions work simultaneously in the same text" (Feng, 2014, p.42). In other words, the Hallidayan (1994) SFG sees all these materials function as a whole in a text. One example of this is the use of conjunction in texts. They are also known as "text connective" (Vande Kopple, 1985, p.83). However, in the earlier literature, this textual metadiscourse actually represented "another aspect of the interpersonal features of a text" (Hyland, 2005, p.45) which mainly focuses on writers' decision on presenting proposition. In this way writer "accommodates readers" understandings, guides their reading, and make them aware of the writer's preferred interpretations" (p.45). Moreover, Hyland's (2005) revised work on metadiscourse presents that metadiscourse profoundly stands for interaction between writer and reader.

*In the third principle*, Hyland (2005) discussed "internal" and "external" issues of metadiscourse. In other words "whether metadiscourse represents relationships between elements within the text itself or outside the text" (Feng, 2014, p.43). The clear example can be the conjunctions, which were used as connectives in texts. It can "organize the discourse as an argument, (internal) or they can connect activities in the world outside the text (external)" (Martin, 1992, p.45). By focusing on Bunton's (1999, as cited in Hyland, 2005,

p.47) classification “research acts and writer acts” Hyland (2005) classified internal and external items as “two writer roles” in a text. The first one focuses on the “events occur in the research process” and the second act indicates writer’s choice about presentation and the best way to express for the target readers (Hyland, 2005, p.47). The second action, which is the external part of the text adds metadiscourse. Metadiscourse thus helps us in understanding the writer’s strategies applied in their writing to engage the target readers.

By keeping all of these key principles Hyland (2005) provided a metadiscourse framework, which classifies metadiscourse into two types: Interactive and Interactional. According to Hyland (2005), interactive metadiscourse involves “writer's awareness of a participating audience and the ways s/he seeks to accommodate its probable knowledge, interests, rhetorical expectations and processing abilities” (p.49). From an interpersonal perspective, interactional metadiscourse “concerns the ways writers conduct interaction by intruding and commenting on their message” (p.49). Writer explicitly participates in the writing to interact with the target readers. As mentioned by Hyland (2005) these metadiscourse features create opportunities for the readers “contribute to the discourse by alerting them to the author's perspective towards both propositional information and readers themselves” (p.52). The subcategories of this metadiscourse feature are Hedges, Boosters, Attitude markers, Self-mentions, and Engagement markers.

## **2.5 Metadiscourse in academic writing**

Metadiscourse, in general, represents the effects of context on a group of people in their spoken and written communications. As mentioned by Hyland (2005), metadiscourse has a close relation with the “norms and expectations of those who use it in particular settings” (p.87). However, contextual differences mostly create variation in the use of metadiscourse across different genres. Understanding the differences in the application of

metadiscourse helps the writers or speakers arrange their texts that are appropriate for certain context as (Hyland 2005, p. 87). This also helps in realizing the ways individuals communicate in a context.

Previously the writing practice was mostly dependent on imitating sample works by experts or following grammatical rules. During this practice, metadiscourse had been highly neglected (Amiryousefi & Rasekh, 2010). In the case of academic writing, new researchers are also observed to be mostly dependent on experts of certain research field or L1 English research samples. However, the combination of grammar and metadiscourse is unavoidable in writing English texts. Knowledge of grammar helps in constructing sentence while application of metadiscourse helps in constructing a meaningful text for the readers. As English is a second language for both EFL and ESL students hence, presenting propositions in a convincing tone is much problematic for them. To persuade the target readers of academic communities, examiners or panels, proper linguistic choices can help in “presenting reliability of the writer’s argument” (Hyland, 2005, p.89). In short persuasion techniques differs depending on different context and genres.

With the aim of understanding the persuasive techniques and help new researchers with textual constructions, researchers studied various genres. Within the academic genre research article, genre is immensely chosen by researchers for analysis. Some studies are, Chen and Zhang (2017), Zanina, (2016), Salas, Wang and Yang (2015), Khedri et al. ,(2015), Hu and Cao (2015),Yagiz and Demir (2014), Rahimivand and Kuhi (2014), Lee and Casal (2014), Kim and Lim (2015), Tran and Duong (2013), Mur-Dueñas (2011), McGrath and Kuteeva (2011), Abdillahzadeh (2010), Dhal (2004), Hyland, (1995). Compared to this great number of studies conducted on RAs very few studies interested in the dissertation or thesis genre (e.g. Kawase, 2015; Lee & Casal, 2014; Ozmendir & Longo, 2014; Bunton, 1999).

Ozmen dir and Longo (2014) studied two different groups of texts, American and Turkish, produced in an ESL context such as USA. They have reported cultural differences in the use of MD markers. However, in comparison to the native English language writers Turkish writers used slightly more hedge markers in presenting their proposition. They have found that American writers used more booster markers than Turkish writers. The final finding of the study showed American writers used twice more interactional MD markers than the Turkish writers. They concluded that writing of the non-native speakers may be affected by the writers' ability to conceptualize the relationship between writer and reader. The differences in the use of MD markers reflected different social norms in an interpersonal relationship. Following this finding it can be said that different ESL community may have different ways of presenting their argument through writing. As stated by Koutsantoni (2006), "that research writers change how to use metadiscourse items to control the strength of their claims according to their relationship with the intended audience of the genre" (Kawase, 2015, p. 115). Kwase in his study on the introduction of Ph.D. theses by Japanese writer who was studying at an Australian university. His finding showed that writers used more hedge markers in presenting the introduction in RAs instead of the Ph.D. theses. The study concluded by stating that the differences in the use of MD markers show that Ph.D. thesis is an educational genre and research articles are professional genre. This can be assumed that the lesser use of MD markers in the academic texts is common in the ESL writers. However, this noticeable difference in the number of studies on certain genres proves that most genre studies focused particularly on the prestigious genre of research articles (Swales, 2004). This tendency maybe is also common due to the "daunting size of typical text" researchers tend to avoid analyzing "research theses and dissertations" (Swales, 1990). Besides the analysis of the academic thesis and dissertations, some studies also attempted to compare two sets of writing, proficient and non-proficient essays (e.g. Helen & Tan, 2010).

As students' research papers are a possible way to place researchers' in an academic community, Master's and Ph.D. dissertations have been chosen for analysis more than students' assignments or essays. With this similar intention, this study also aimed at one of the academic texts, Master's dissertations. As stated by Hyland (2005) "Metadiscourse is particularly important at this advanced level of writing as it represents novice writers' attempts to negotiate prepositional information in ways that are meaningful and appropriate to a particular disciplinary community." (pp. 54-55).

Moreover, in previous studies, different researches "have shown that the interpersonal component of texts is an essential factor in determining the success of scholarly communication" (Lafuente-Millán et al., 2010, p.84). According to Hyland (1999) "academic communication is the writer's awareness of the social context and the professional consequences of the writing" (p.5). Thus it can be said that academic writing requires various persuasive strategies. And in the rhetorical construction of the academic texts, one of the essential rhetorical devices is metadiscourse. The functionality of metadiscourse both guides and involves the readers in the text and helps the writers' to estimate the possible responses from the target audience. As this study is focused on Interactional metadiscourse solely and has investigated hedges and boosters markers in the dissertations genre hence, a discussion is provided in the next section.

## **2.6 Interactional Metadiscourse**

Following Thompson and Thetela's (1995) idea of interactive and interactional resources, Hyland (2005) organized the new model for metadiscourse. In this model, metadiscourse includes two features: Interactive and interactional. The interactional aspect of metadiscourse concerns writer's practice of conducting interactions by interfering and commenting on the remarks (Hyland, 2005, p.49). The writers attempt to explicitly express

their ideas and try to involve readers in understanding the text. In other words, interactional metadiscourse in texts validates writers' consideration on the readers. However, this assertion of writers' work represents "textual community-recognized personality". These characteristics comprise the ways writers' "conveys judgments and overtly aligns themselves with readers" (Hyland, 2005, p.49). In this interpersonal model, Hyland (2005) presented 5 different categories of interactional dimensions. These five features are presented in table 2.2.

**Table 2.2** :Five interactional metadiscourse features with examples

(Hyland, 2005, p.49)

<b>Interactional features</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Hedges	might; perhaps; possible; about
Boosters	in fact; definitely; it is clear that
Attitude markers	I agree; surprisingly
Self-mentions	I; we; my; me; our
Engagement marker	note; you can see that

Researchers, besides investigation of metadiscourse in different disciplinary RAs (e.g. Zanina, 2016; Kwase, 2015; Ozmendir & Longo 2014; Kim & Lim, 2013; Hyland, 1998, 2004) also concentrated on individual metadiscourse features in academic writing such as interactional metadiscourse in applied linguistics RAs (e.g. Gillerts & Velde, 2010), AL and economic RAs (e.g. Khedri et al., 2015). Researchers also investigated students' papers such as ESL Chinese students essay (e.g. Lee & Deakin, 2016). A large group of studies looked at the hedge markers in different disciplinary RAs such as molecular biology (e.g. Hyland, 1995), introduction chapters of economic and linguistics disciplines (e.g. Dhal, 2008), result and discussion chapters of AL and chemical engineering (e.g. Tran & Duong, 2013),

introduction, discussion and conclusion sections of ELT RAs (e.g. Yagiz & Demir, 2014), Conclusion chapters of applied linguistics RAs (e.g. Chen & Zhang, 2017).

For the present study, the hedge and booster markers were intentionally selected to discover their functions in the combined R&D sections. As stated by Hyland (2005) “the balance of hedges and boosters in a text indicates to alternatives [...]” (p.53). From Hyland’s what extent the writer is willing to entertain statement it can be said that these two metadiscourse markers play a very important role in presenting propositions. However, for the purpose of analysis Hyland (1998, 1994) proposed a metadiscourse framework. His framework was highly appreciated by the genre analysts.

In this study, three of the interactional metadiscourse features were excluded from the analysis. These three interactional features, self-mention, attitude markers, and engagement markers were excluded from the analysis for a few reasons. According to Langacker (1990), the application of self-mention is “highly conventionalized”. This means that the application of these features is not something writers spontaneously use in their writing. As stated by Hyland (2005), “the presence or absence of explicit author reference is generally a conscious choice by writers to adopt a particular stance and a contextually situated authorial identity” (p.53). This, as a result, leads to the less interpersonal structure. Besides being less constructional, occurrences of this metadiscourse feature appeared much lesser. Another interactional feature attitude marker in academic texts generally shows writers affective attitude than doubts or certainties of the propositions (Hyland, 2005). In contrary, the application of hedges and boosters indicates writers’ attempt regarding “alternative voice” for their proposition. In academic texts such as dissertations, the writers tend to avoid emotion-driven views or comments. In order to provide effective justifications, writers tend to depend more on old references. Hence, by focusing on the importance of hedges and

boosters in academic writing this study also omitted attitude markers from the analysis. The third interactional feature that was excluded from the analysis was the engagement marker. Engagement marker “explicitly address readers, either to focus their attention or include them as discourse participants” (Hyland, 2005, p.53). Hyland also notified that the attitude and engagement markers are often problematic when in use. They are much difficult to distinguish from each other. Researchers also reported that students appeared to be least interested in using this features in their writing (Chang & Swales, 1999). Hyland (2005) observed that students also failed in engaging the readers in their propositions. For example, the use of reader pronoun “you” is not focusing on the reader but it is “encompassing meaning” (p.369). Hence, the engagement markers need a detailed investigation. The present study is only focusing to compile the forms of the metadiscourse in this combined R&D sections. Hence, a small investigation seemed inadequate if we look into the engagement markers also.

However, as the study intended to find out two interactional features, hedge and booster forms in the combined R&D sections, a review for both hedge and booster markers are provided in the next section. First, a review on the hedge is provided then it is followed by a review on the booster.

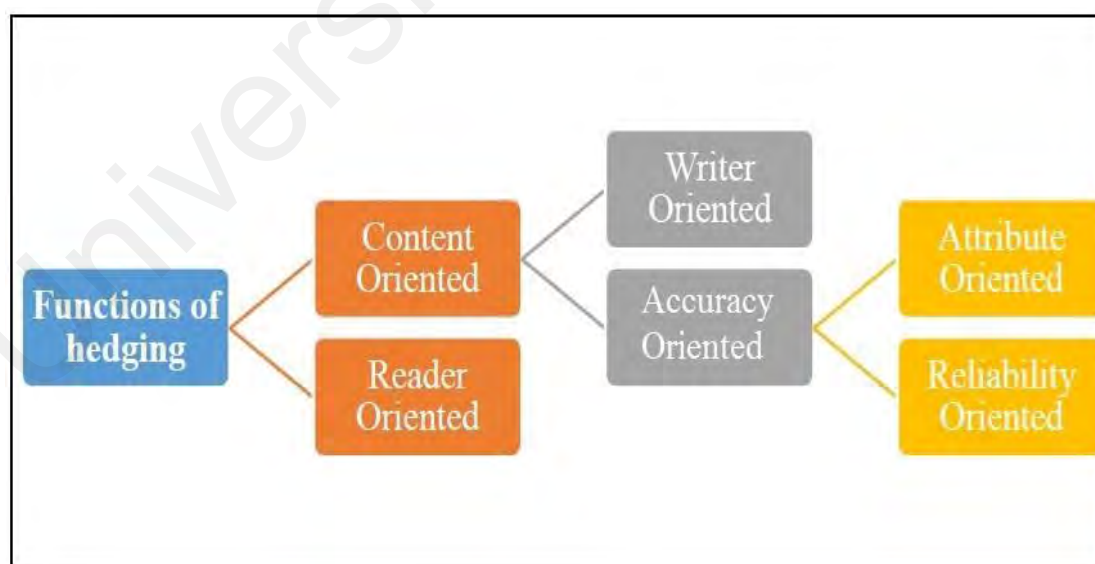
### **2.6.1 Hedges**

The definition of the term hedge from a linguistics perspective was first introduced by Lakoff (1972). He defined hedge as words “whose job is to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy” (as cited in Hyland, 1998, p.1). Realizing its fuzzy nature Lakoff did not look at the “communicative value of the use of hedges” (Markkanen & Schröder, 1997, p. 4). However, his definition was the starting point of the term hedge. Following his path, several hedging analysis were carried out on different genres and texts (e.g. Hyland, 1994). In a study, Vande



Kopple (1985) categorized hedges as the element, which shows a lack of full commitment to a statement. Salager-Myers (1994) links hedges to purposive vagueness when she examined 15 research papers and case reports in the field of medicine. Myers (1989) recognized the hedge features as politeness strategy. Later Hyland (1996) argued that the concept of politeness approach does not show the true nature of the hedging features. He also added that “Myers concept neglect the multifunctional character of hedges” (p.434). Hyland’s (1998) main argument was that hedge in a text is used by writers not only to protect themselves but also the use is shaped by the discourse community. Furthermore, Hyland (1998) defined hedge as a way to express “a lack of complete commitment to the truth value of an accompanying proposition” (p.1).

Hyland (1996; 1998), proposed a precise hedging model for academic purpose. He argued that hedges not only can be presented in different semantic interpretations but also they can express various meanings in particular contexts (1998). Figure 2.1 gives a picture of the multiple functions of hedging forwarded by Hyland (1998).



**Figure 2.1:** Hyland’s (1998) model of hedging

Figure 2.1 shows Hyland's (1998) hedging model with four basic functions. He defined the "content-oriented" hedging base on two motivations. The "accuracy oriented hedging" focuses on a writer's accuracy in presenting the propositions. Writer seeks "to meet adequacy conditions by reducing the risk of negation on objective grounds" (Hyland, 1998, p.162). This hedging also occurs in two other functions, attribute hedging and reliability hedging. The attribute hedging helps in softening writer's commitment to any claim that appears as unexpected. Some examples of attribute hedge are, for example, generally, essentially, usually etc. Another function of hedging is to show the "writers' confidence in the truth of a proposition" (Hyland, 1996, p. 441). Hyland labeled it as reliability hedge. He also added that writers choose to use this hedge where they identify that the claim they make may not be accurate. Another type of content-oriented hedge is the "writer oriented" hedges. By applying this hedging feature writers try "to shield themselves from the consequences of opposition by limiting personal commitment" (Hyland, 1996, p. 443). In other words, the writer oriented hedges help the writers in keeping themselves away from a probable false claim.

The second category of hedging "reader-oriented" can be seen in figure 2.1 above. The reader oriented hedges are particularly concerned with the interaction between writer and reader. The reader-oriented hedges indicate that there might be alternative explanations to a given phenomenon described by the writer and what the writer has said "is a personal opinion" and "the claim is left to the reader's judgment" (Hyland, 1998, p. 182).

The functions of the hedges are determined by the forms they carry inside. Hedging can take multiple forms in the spoken and written discourse. Probably the most prevalent form that hedging carries is the modality and modal verbs. Biber (2006) also reported that in the university level of academic discourse, modal verbs are the most frequently used form

applied by authors and speakers. However, as Varttala (1999) points out, the forms of hedging could really be limitless as there are so many different ways to hedge.

### **2.6.2 Boosters**

In contrast to hedge markers “boosters” according to Bondi (2008) are “markers of certainty” e.g. clearly, obviously, demonstrate, definitely which writers use to emphasize the force of a proposition by expressing conviction (Holmes, 1997; Hyland, 1998). In an earlier definition, Holmes (1997) stated that “boosting involves expressing degrees of commitment or seriousness of intention” (as cited in Peacock, 2006, p. 61). By using boosters, the writers leave little room for the readers’ own interpretation and “close down alternatives”, “head off conflicting views” (Hyland, 2005, p.52). Researchers found that the boosters play a significant role in persuading readers (e.g. Peacock, 2006). The study also reported a higher frequency of booster markers in the language and linguistics discipline. Although boosters appeared to be an important feature in the academic discourse, very few studies have addressed this feature (e.g. Hu & Cao, 2015; Dobakhti, 2013; Peacock, 2006). Detail of these studies is presented in the next section.

### **2.7 Related studies**

Hedging is the rhetorical features that have been studied broadly by researchers from linguistics fields. Some studies have conducted comparative studies on two different groups of texts (e.g. Yagiz & Demir, 2014; Tran & Duong, 2013) some other studies looked to investigate the hedging features in one group of text (e.g. Hashemi & Shirzadi, 2016; Kim & Lim, 2015). However, compared to the studies conducted on hedging features studies on boosters are considerably limited in number. Some studies conducted a comparative study between hedge and booster (e.g. Hyland, 2000) and some solely concentrated on the booster

features in a particular group of text (e.g. Yagiz & Demir, 2015, Dobakhti, 2013; Peacock, 2006). Still, more researches are just starting to be carried out in the context of Malaysia.

### **2.7.1 Hedging in different groups of texts**

Hedging has been studied on several groups of genres and different types of studies. One of the broad areas in the study of hedging has been on comparative studies. These studies include comparison between disciplines, language, different contexts, and different users. Some other studies looked to investigate one particular context.

Tran and Duong (2013) looked to hedges in two disciplinary research articles. They reported that the use of hedges is more frequent in applied linguistics (AL) discipline than the chemical engineering research articles. Yagiz and Demir (2014) analysed two groups of English language users' texts. They investigated 100 research articles from applied linguistics discipline. This comparative study showed the Native English language users (NS) used hedges more than the Turkish L2 English language users "in the attempt to weaken the claims" (p. 266). In another study, Koutsantoni (2006) analyzed two different groups of written texts. His comparative study between research articles and these from electronic and chemical engineering disciplines showed differences in hedge pattern in different genres. He reported that the expert writers used more hedge markers than the academic thesis writers. Behnam et al. (2012) studied 100 research articles from applied linguistics disciplines. They have found significant differences in the application of hedge markers in qualitative and quantitative research articles. Following Hyland's (2005) hedge model some other studies also investigated hedge function in different languages. In his study, Andrusenko (2015) investigated Spanish and Arabic research articles of linguistics. The finding showed the Spanish writers use more hedge markers than the Arabic writers.

From the finding, it can be confirmed that the application of hedges markers is dependent on several factors. Writers of different genre, different context, and different disciplines shape their writings with much caution so that their writing becomes meaningful for that particular discourse community.

### **2.7.2 Boosters in different groups of texts**

Although it is seen that the number of studies on booster markers is limited yet some researchers have shown interest in understanding its function in different groups of texts. Yagiz and Demir (2015) conducted a contrastive study on Turkish, Japanese and Anglophonic authors ELT research articles written in the English language. They reported that the Japanese writers used more booster markers than the other two groups of writers. The finding also showed that altogether the adverbial booster was used highest in the corpora. Dobakhti (2013) also conducted a study on 200 research articles from applied linguistics (AL) discipline. She particularly focused on the discussion chapter of the RAs. Her study aimed to find out the differences in the usage of boosters in qualitative and quantitative RAs. The finding did not show much difference in the application of boosters in these two groups of texts. However, the quantitative set of discussion chapters were carrying more booster markers than the qualitative chapters. Peacock (2006) also carried out a comparative study on booster markers across six academic disciplines (e.g. Business, Language and Linguistics, Public and Social Administration, Law, Physics, and Environmental Science). The study showed significant function of booster markers in the corpus. The frequent use of boosters in Move 2- reporting result shows the highest frequency of booster was found in the language and linguistics discipline. In short from the discussion above it can be said that the presentation of the propositions are shaped by the community it belongs to.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

The chapter has presented a review of the related literature for the present study. This literature review has covered the areas of genre analysis, ESP theory, metadiscourse, and theoretical concerns. Alongside, the discussion about hedge and booster has shown what hedging and booster are. The previous studies on genre analysis and the related studies on the hedge and boosters features are also outlined. The next chapter will be discussing the methodology followed for this study.

University of Malaysia

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

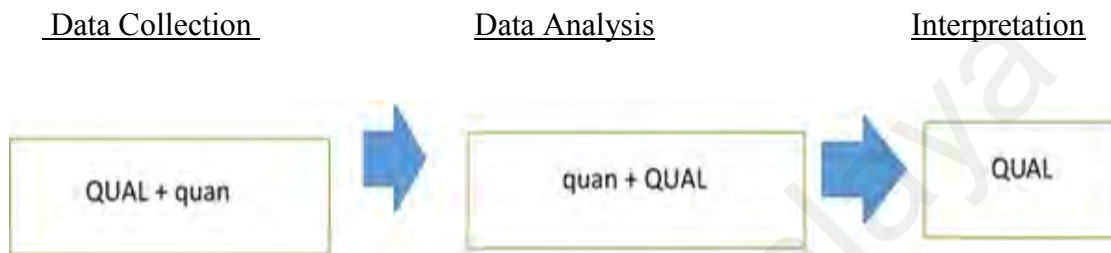
### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter explains the methodology employed in this research to fulfil the objectives of this study. The first objective of this study is to look for the communicative purposes of the combined results and discussion (R&D) sections of Master's (MA) dissertations. This research also intends to identify the generic structure of the section in focus as well as to explore the interactional metadiscourse (MD) features used by writers. The two MD features the study focuses on are the hedges and boosters. In order to achieve the aims of the study, this chapter begins with a detailed description of the research design for this study. This chapter continues with an in-depth look at the context and nature of the corpora used. This is followed by a detailed description of the analytical framework for both move and MD analysis. The analytical procedure is presented and explained thoroughly. Since the analytical procedure involves the lexical software AntConc and TagAnt, visuals from screenshots are also provided.

### **3.2 Research approach**

This genre-based study employed both qualitative and quantitative methods in the data collection and data analysis procedures. This follows Creswell's (2012) definition of a mixed method procedure where he defined this method as a "procedure for collecting, analysing, and mixing" both quantitative and qualitative methods in a single study or a series of studies to understand a research problem" (p. 535).

The data collection, analysis and mixing of qualitative and quantitative data in this study are defined by three main characteristics of the mixed method approach: timing, weighing and mixing. Using Creswell's (2003) notation (based on Morse, 1991, and Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998), the conceptual framework of the study is as visualised in Figure 3.1.



**Figure 3.1:** Research Design Visualised

The uppercase letters (e.g. QUAL) in Figure 3.1 represents the supremacy of the method. The lower-case letters (e.g. qual) however, signifies the lesser role of this method in the analysis. Alongside the sequence, it also indicates the timing of the procedure. As shown in the figure, the "QUAL" method comes first followed by a lower case "quan". This defines the initial data collection procedure to be qualitative and chronological whereas the quantitative collection was a part of this data collection method.

What these qualitative and quantitative methods mean for this present study will be explained in this part. In the data collection phase, the data collected for this study were the written texts, which consist of the Master's dissertations. There are several Master's dissertation structures in terms of the presentation of analysis and results. Some dissertations separate these into two chapters whereas others combine them. The upper-case letter QUAL in the data collection stage highlights the procedure of choosing and categorising the data.



After the collection of data, the analysis phase started with coding the moves qualitatively followed by counting the moves and steps. This procedure was carried out to find out the communicative purposes of the R&D sections on Master's dissertations. To compile the frequency of the moves and steps identified in the corpus, the software-analysed files were run under AntConc. The quantitative analysis also involved the analysis of hedges and boosters in this genre.

In the initial phase, ten results and discussion sections of Master's (MA) dissertations were analysed. All of these chosen texts were from the Applied Linguistics (AL) discipline. Each text was coded manually by following a model (Nguyen & Pramoolsook, 2015) particularly developed for AL group of texts. A qualitative analysis was conducted first, which was followed by quantitative examination. The frequency of moves steps were counted and subsequently, the percentage was achieved from the analysis. The second phase of the analysis comprised of metadiscourse (MD) analysis. Hyland (2005) stated that metadiscourse helps writers in 'engaging audience, indicating relationships, explain varying certainty to the reader and guide their understanding of a text' (p. 63). By adapting Hyland's (1996, 1998, 2005) taxonomy of MD features, hedges and boosters were investigated in the R&D sections of MA dissertations.

In the second part of analysis, at first a corpus-based analysis was conducted to identify the selected metadiscourse forms in the corpus. In this purpose, the software AntConc and TagAnt were found to be an easily accessible tool available with all necessary features for the analysis. With this procedure, it was possible to identify the move markers and MD forms used in the text.

### **3.3 Corpus of the study**

The corpus chosen for this study is the combined result and discussion (R&D) sections of ten Master's (MA) dissertations from the applied linguistics (AL) discipline. All of the writers were students of the University of Malaya (UM). The number of words for the corpus ranged from 10000-15000. The average number of words for the ten R&D sections was 10660. Because the aim is to investigate the combined sections of R&D dissertations covering both R&D, one title was selected.

#### **3.3.1 Master's dissertation**

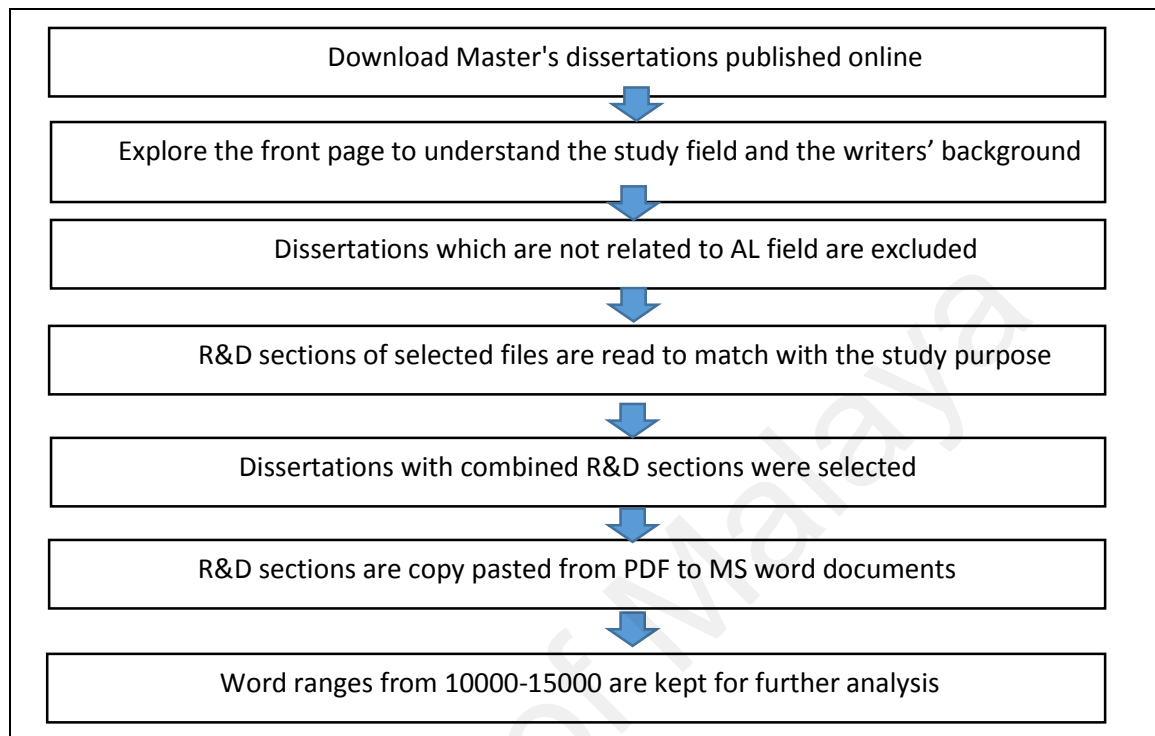
The choice to analyse the Master's dissertations was made to find out the writing pattern of the Master's degree seeking students. Through a research report, writers not only try to contribute to the literature of that field, but also create a place themselves in that particular academic community. For this purpose, they must persuade the target readers who are experts in the community. Persuasion is possible when writers successfully create interaction between the writer and the reader. In this situation, writers need to apply rhetorical markers, such as hedges and boosters. Writers' attempt to hedge commitments and withhold responsibility of propositions help in providing a sense of good writing. Characterised with confidence, writers boost up their propositions when necessary. Writers' emphasis on the study's findings represents the attempt of presenting new study findings. Hence, the realisation of a communicative purpose and technique of creating a persuasive interaction can help in understanding the ESL writers' writing techniques.

### **3.3.2 The procedure of selecting the Master's dissertation**

Before finalising the corpus for analysis, the corpus was compiled by following a few criteria. First, the dissertations needed to be from the postgraduate level and particularly from Master's groups. In this procedure, only dissertations produced by L2 speakers were selected. Second, the corpus had to be only from the discipline of Applied Linguistics (AL). In this purpose, the subject area of AL is considered for this selection. The combined sections of results and discussions (R&D) dissertations covering both R&D under one title were selected. Lastly, the nationality of the writers were reviewed as the study is focused on only L2 English language speakers.

A corpus of applied linguistics (AL) Master's (MA) dissertations produced by ESL users in Malaysia was used for this study. These texts were written by both local and international L2 writers. The L2 international students come from an EFL context. Texts produced by these group of students are considered to be ESL texts because of the context they were in and the supervision they were receiving while writing their dissertation. Hayes (1996) stated that what a writer writes, how they write, and for whom they write for are usually "shaped by the social convention and the history of social interactions" (p.5). Byram (1997, p.22) emphasised that when learners are engaged in an act of communication with someone from the target foreign academic culture, they have to bring to the situation and incorporate in the discourse that one brings to a communication event. Therefore, similarities in contents and context are the reasons for choosing certain dissertations for this corpus. Only 10 dissertations were selected for the analysis as it was considered sufficient for an exploratory study. In the next stage, the combined R&D sections of these texts were first read to recognise the general structure. The corpus in the study consists of the sections with various headings including, 'Result and Discussion' or 'Findings and Discussion' or

‘Analysis and Discussion’ and ‘Findings and Interpretations’. Researchers in their previous studies either have labelled the heading, ‘Result and Discussion’ as ‘result sections’ (e.g. Brett, 1994) or as ‘result’ (e.g. Ruiying & Allison, 2003). To avoid any possible complication, a few studies took a ‘stringent method’ by excluding sections labelled with a combined heading (e.g. Lim, 2010). However, unlike those studies, the study exclusively decided to analyse combined R&D sections. This is because it was observed that the dissertations produced in this academic community, such as the Faculty of Language and Linguistics tend to report findings mostly in a combined pattern. The sections with different headings, such as ‘Result and discussion’ or ‘Findings and discussion’ or ‘Analysis and Discussion’ or ‘Findings and interpretations’ were labelled as, ‘ result and discussion (R&D)’ as the detailed results (Brett, 1994) and discussions were presented in this sections. Sections under one title (R&D) and the appropriate contents in them were selected for further analysis. These texts were later copy and pasted into the MS Word documents. Since the contents inside had visual aids that were not part of rhetoric, only the titles of each example, tables and graphs were analysed. Figure 3.2 shows the data collection procedure.



**Figure 3.2:** Procedure followed for the corpus selection

### 3.4 Instruments

For this study, various instruments were used to analyse data. The Create a Research Space (CARS) (1990) framework created by Swales, as well as a modified model by Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2015) were chosen as guidelines to analyse the corpus in the study. The reason for choosing these particular move analysis frameworks has several reasons: first, this framework was inspired by the work by Swales (1990). This framework was first modified for the Applied Linguistics discipline by Ruiying and Allison (2003). Furthermore, the AntConc lexical software was used to identify the moves. This software was also used to compile the interactional MD in the chosen corpus. Before finalising the frequency and types of interactional MD markers through AntConc, the texts were run into another software named, TagAnt. In this procedure, the forms of hedges and boosters were identified. These

forms were arranged by following Hyland's (1995, 1998) MD classification for hedges and boosters. Hyland's MD framework is considered suitable for this study because his works have always been dealing with written texts. Alongside his work not only being focused on professional papers, but also on academic papers. This shows the applicability of this model for this present research. A detail of the frameworks followed for data coding are addressed in the following sections.

### **3.4.1 Framework for move analysis**

With the purpose of move analysis on Master's (MA) applied linguistics (AL) dissertations, Chen and Kuo (2012) modified and extended the move framework proposed by Ruiying and Allison (2003). Both of these frameworks were used to identify the communicative purpose of result and discussion (R&D) sections in the Master's AL dissertations. In a recent study on Vietnamese Master's TESOL dissertations, Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2015) by adopting Chen and Kuo's (2012) modified move framework, which investigated 24 Vietnamese R&D sections of MA dissertations. Following this trend, the data coding for moves and steps in this study began by employing the framework by Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2015). The reason for deciding on this framework is due to its successful applications in previous studies. Unlike the other studies, this framework was used to analyse ESL texts for this study. Through its current text analysis was a new move framework developed for this ESL text genre. A detailed explanation is provided in the next section.

**Table 3.1:** Move framework by Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2015)

<b>Moves &amp; Steps</b>
- Summarising the previous
<b>Move 1: Introducing the Results-Discussion chapter</b> Providing background information How the chapter is presented Indicating methods used or statistical procedure applied
<b>Move 2: Reporting results</b> Section structure Locating graphics Reporting major findings
<b>Move 3: Commenting on results</b> Interpreting results Comparing results with literature Evaluating results Accounting for results Section summary Next section introduction
<b>Move 4: Summarising results</b> Making conclusions of results
<b>Move 5: Summarising the study</b> Summarising the study briefly
<b>Move 6: Evaluating the study</b> Indicating limitations of the study Indicating significance/advantage of the study
<b>Move 7: Deductions from the (research) study</b> Recommending further research Drawing pedagogic implications Making suggestions
<b>Referring to other studies</b> Providing background information Providing definition of terms Providing support or justification Summarising the chapter Introducing the next chapter content

### **3.4.1.1 Setting the Move boundary**

Moves in texts establish the flow of information presented. Besides acknowledging the importance of examining the textual organisation, a closer look is given on the realisation of boundaries. According to Paltridge (1994), “the recognition of a boundary can provide a clear definition of moves”. His question on how this boundary can be realised has received different techniques by different researchers. Because no exact procedure was provided, the researchers tend to produce their own methodology, which supports Bhatia’s (1993) statement that in doing analysis of such a nature, researchers often tend to create their own methodology, which is “troublesome and not always reliable” (p. 87).

Therefore, a different methodology for this particular analysis was practiced. These included, “headwords and phrases, spacing for a new paragraph, and clause boundaries” (Davis, 2015, p. 61). However, how to explain the move boundary has remained unanswered and vague. In this study, the framework by Kanoksilapatham (2005) was followed to set a boundary between moves. According to his framework, a boundary can be drawn from the contents and linguistics’ ‘criteria’ (Kanoksilapatham’s, 2005, p. 272). Content refers to the communicative functions or moves and the linguistic criteria indicates the “keywords or phrases that act like discourse markers” (Davis, 2015, p. 61).

### **3.4.1.2 Categorizing moves/steps**

To identify the communicative purpose of the combined results and discussion sections, the selected genre was also investigated to find out the obligatory, conventional, and optional moves/steps. Li and Ge (2009) emphasised obligatory moves/steps in the genre ensures genre integrity, which helps in identifying the main communicative purpose of a



genre. They also pointed out the optional move/step as, “available choices authors or speakers may choose to use” (p. 94). However, the criteria of identifying moves/steps into obligatory, optional, and conventional varies in studies. Nwogu (1997) studied 15 research articles and claims that moves/steps are optional, if they appear in less than 50% of the texts. Following this criterion of 50% for optionality, Li and Ge (2009) identified same moves to be optional. However, in their study, in two sets of data the optionality in moves varied between new and old corpus. Unlike those studies, Kanoksilapatham (2005) attempted to classify moves into three categories: obligatory, conventional, and optional moves. According to his work, a move is obligatory if it appears in 100% of the corpus, a move is optional if it appears less than 60% of the corpus and moves appeared in 60-99% of the corpus as conventional moves. He also added that, “the high cut-off frequency of 60% would be beneficial in enhancing the distinction between the two categories of moves” (p. 272). Following his work, researchers from different disciplinary fields classified the moves and steps in their study (e.g. Amnuai, 2019; Nguyen & Pramoolsook, 2015; Amnuai & Wannaruk, 2013). In order to classify and justify the moves/steps in the combined results and discussion of the Master’s dissertations, the present study also follows the frequency of occurrence defined by Kanoksilapatham (2005).

#### **3.4.2 Framework for Metadiscourse (MD) analysis**

For the purpose of investigating MD features, such as hedges and boosters in the corpus, Hyland’s (2005) taxonomy was adapted for initial coding. This quantitative analysis was carried out through the software, AntConc. After finding out these MD forms, a qualitative analysis was conducted to confirm the forms of the MD markers.

### 3.4.2.1 Hedges

Because this study is focused on the communicative purpose and writers' position in the written texts, the framework proposed by Hyland (2005) is deemed appropriate in achieving the study's purpose. In comparison to Hyland's (1998) work, the context and the genre in this study is very different. He investigated hedge features in the research articles (RAs) whereas the present study requires exploring hedge forms in students' writing.

**Table 3.2:** Hedging functions and forms (Hyland, 1998, p. 186)

Content oriented		Reader oriented
Accuracy oriented	Writer oriented	
<b>Attribute type</b> Precision Adverbs: a. content disjuncts b. style disjuncts c. downtoners	Epistemic Lexical Verbs a. judgmental b. evidential Impersonal expressions a. passive voice b. abstract rhetoric c. "empty" subjects Modal Verbs	Epistemic Lexical Verbs a. judgemental b. deductive Personal Attribution Personal reference a. methods b. model Assumed shared goals
<b>Reliability Type</b> Epistemic Lexical Verbs Modal Verbs Epistemic Adjectives Epistemic Nouns Content disjuncts adverbs Limited knowledge	a. thematic epistemic device b. attribution to literature 4) Impersonal Reference to a. method b. model c. experimental conditions	Hypothetical a. conditionals b. <i>would</i> Involve Reader a. direct questions b. refer to testability

Hyland (1995) categorised the linguistic realisation of hedging forms based on an analysis on 26 scientific RAs. According to Hyland (1995, p. 36-37), writers use five main grammatical categories and three strategies to express epistemic modality in their papers. The forms of hedges found in RAs are explained in Table 3.3.

**Table 3.3:** Hyland's (1995) finding from the analysis

<b>Hedge forms</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Lexical verbs	(e.g., indicate, suggest, appear, and propose).
Adverbial constructions - Disjuncts - Downtoners	(e.g., probably, possibly, presumably, etc.).
Modal adjectives	(e.g., likely, possible, most and consistent with).
Modal verbs	(e.g., would, may and could).
Modal nouns	(e.g., possibility, assumption, estimate, and tendency),
Admission to a lack of knowledge	(e.g., we do not know whether).
Reference to limiting conditions	(e.g., if this scheme is correct, viewed in this way and according to our method).
Reference to a model, theory or methodology	(e.g., we did not succeed and it is difficult to conclude).

Following his hedging classifications, an analysis was conducted for this study. A few considerations were considered before the analysis. First, although the present study is focused on written genre, however, compared to his previous work, the discipline chosen for this study belongs to a soft science, e.g. applied linguistics. In contrast to his work, this study concentrated only on a particular section of the text. Furthermore, unlike the professional genre, the present study is focused on students' Master's dissertations.

**Table 3.4:** Hedge forms followed for the study

<b>Hedge forms</b>
Adverbial constructions <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Content disjuncts</li><li>- Style disjuncts</li><li>- Downtoners</li></ul>
Epistemic lexical verbs
Epistemic adjectives
Modal verbs
Epistemic nouns

#### **3.4.2.2 Boosters**

Alongside the hedging devices, the booster markers appeared frequently in professional texts. In this way, hedging and boosters presents “different meanings, signalling the writer's confidence in the truth of information and contributing to a relationship with the reader” (Hyland, 2005, p. 133). In their study, Hyland and Milton (1997) found that both Hong Kong and British school leaver students depended mostly on modal verbs and adverbs. Their study showed that both groups of writers have used a similar number of hedge and booster features in text construction. Therefore, this is obvious that booster and hedges somewhat carries the same forms in textual constructions. The forms of booster followed in this study can be seen from Table 3.5.

**Table 3.5:** Forms of boosters followed for data coding

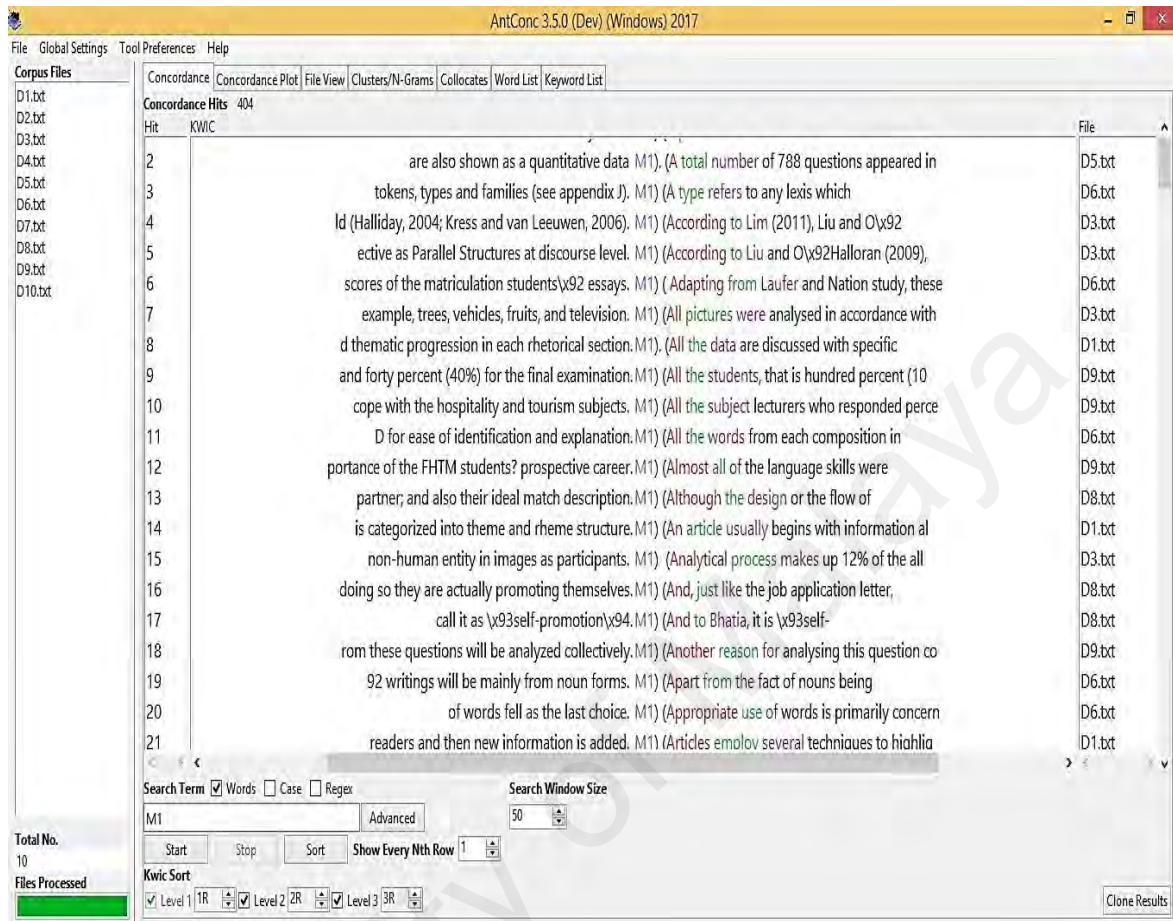
<b>Forms of booster</b>
Lexical verb
Modal verbs
Adverbs
Adjectives
Nouns

### **3.5 Data analysis procedure**

#### **3.5.1 Move analysis**

In order to find out the communicative purpose of the ESL texts, the analysis started by coding the moves in the chosen corpus. Following Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2015) the coding for moves and steps in the dissertation was conducted. This framework was created after the applied linguistics (AL) Master's dissertations' result and discussion sections. Hence, this framework makes coding easier for the AL groups of texts. However, the descriptions of each moves and steps were derived from Ruiying and Allison (2003), Chen and Kuo (2012), and Nodoushan (2012).

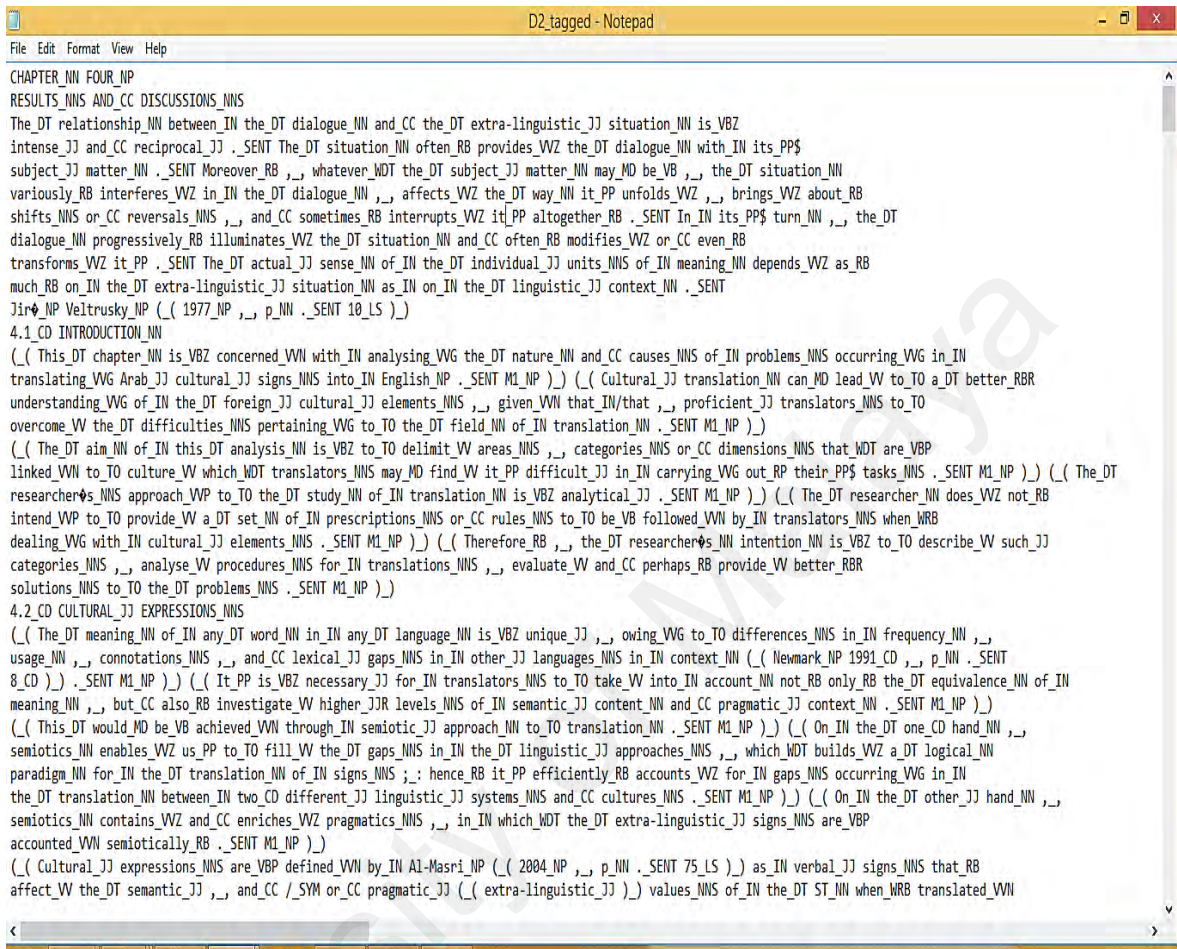
The documents were read and reanalysed several times to understand the function of each sentences. In this purpose, coding was rechecked with an expert from the faculty of Language and Linguistics. She is supervising many research students, who are currently doing genre analysis. After consulting a field expert, the coding was finalised. At this phase, the findings were saved and transferred into the form of plain text. The plain texts were further analysed using AntConc to count the frequency of the moves. The document is presented by the screenshot in Figure 3.3. The findings for each moves from the software were saved in individual Word documents for further analysis.



**Figure 3.3:** Analysis on AntConc

### 3.5.2 Analysis of metadiscourse

Another aim of this study was to see the persuasive strategies ESL users apply in presenting their findings. In this purpose, it was necessary to explore the interactional markers used in the text. Following Hyland's (1998, 1995) framework and forms for hedges and boosters, the texts were first analysed into the software, TagAnt. This software is designed to find the parts of speech (POS) in written documents. Because the interactional features are mostly a function through which writers try to convey propositions persuasively, hence this software is appropriate. The plain text documents were used for this analysis. The software automatically saves the tagged files into plain texts in the designated folder.



**Figure 3.4 :** Analyzed file from TagAnt

This software comes with 58 tags in it. Following this word list, the proposed forms were retrieved from the documents. The list of tags are provided in the screenshot inside the figure below.



## TreeTagger Tag Set (58 tags)

POS Tag	Description	Example	POS Tag	Description	Example
CC	coordinating conjunction	<i>and, but, or, &amp;</i>	VB	verb <i>be</i> , base form	<i>be</i>
CD	cardinal number	<i>1, three</i>	VBD	verb <i>be</i> , past	<i>was/were</i>
DT	determiner	<i>the</i>	VBG	verb <i>be</i> , gerund/participle	<i>being</i>
EX	existential there	<i>there is</i>	VBN	verb <i>be</i> , past participle	<i>been</i>
FW	foreign word	<i>d'œuvre</i>	VBZ	verb <i>be</i> , pres, 3rd p. sing	<i>is</i>
IN	preposition/subord. conj.	<i>in, of, like, after, whether</i>	VBP	verb <i>be</i> , pres non-3rd p.	<i>am/are</i>
IN/that	complementizer	<i>that</i>	VD	verb <i>do</i> , base form	<i>do</i>
JJ	adjective	<i>green</i>	VDD	verb <i>do</i> , past	<i>did</i>
JJR	adjective, comparative	<i>greener</i>	VDG	verb <i>do</i> gerund/participle	<i>doing</i>
JJS	adjective, superlative	<i>greenest</i>	VDN	verb <i>do</i> , past participle	<i>done</i>
LS	list marker	<i>(1),</i>	VDZ	verb <i>do</i> , pres, 3rd per.sing	<i>does</i>
MD	modal	<i>could, will</i>	VDP	verb <i>do</i> , pres, non-3rd per.	<i>do</i>
NN	noun, singular or mass	<i>table</i>	VH	verb <i>have</i> , base form	<i>have</i>
NNS	noun plural	<i>tables</i>	VHD	verb <i>have</i> , past	<i>had</i>
NP	proper noun, singular	<i>John</i>	VHG	verb <i>have</i> , gerund/participle	<i>having</i>
NPS	proper noun, plural	<i>Vikings</i>	VHN	verb <i>have</i> , past participle	<i>had</i>
PDT	predeterminer	<i>both the boys</i>	VHZ	verb <i>have</i> , pres 3rd per.sing	<i>has</i>
POS	possessive ending	<i>friend's</i>	VHP	verb <i>have</i> , pres non-3rd per.	<i>have</i>
PP	personal pronoun	<i>I, he, it</i>	VV	verb, base form	<i>take</i>
PP\$	possessive pronoun	<i>my, his</i>	VVD	verb, past tense	<i>took</i>
RB	adverb	<i>however, usually, here, not</i>	VVG	verb, gerund/participle	<i>taking</i>
RBR	adverb, comparative	<i>better</i>	VVN	verb, past participle	<i>taken</i>
RBS	adverb, superlative	<i>best</i>	VVP	verb, present, non-3rd p.	<i>take</i>
RP	particle	<i>give up</i>	VVZ	verb, present 3d p. sing.	<i>takes</i>
SENT	end punctuation	<i>?, !, .</i>	WDT	wh-determiner	<i>which</i>
SYM	symbol	<i>@, +, *, ^,  , =</i>	WP	wh-pronoun	<i>who, what</i>
TO	<i>to</i>	<i>to go, to him</i>	WP\$	possessive wh-pronoun	<i>whose</i>
UH	interjection	<i>uhhuhhuhh</i>	WRB	wh-abverb	<i>where, when</i>
			:	general joiner	<i>;; , -</i>
			\$	currency symbol	<i>\$, £</i>

Adapted from: <https://courses.washington.edu/hypertext/csar-v02/penntable.html>

**Figure 3.5:** word list from TagAnt

For the present study, the modals, verbs, adverbs, adjectives and nouns were chosen for analysis. A detail of these forms is shown in Table 3.6.



**Table 3.6:** The POS (parts of speech) form followed for the coding

Lexical verbs	VV (Verb base form) VVD (Verb past tense) VVG (Verb gerund/participles) VVN (Verb past participles) VPN (3 <sup>rd</sup> person plural) VPZ (3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular)
Adverbial constructions - Disjuncts - Downtoners	RB (Adverb) RBR (Adverb comparative) RBS (Adverb superlative)
Modal adjective	JJ (Adjective) JJR (Adjective, comparative) JJS (Adjective, superlative)
Modal verbs	MD (Modal)
Modal nouns	NN (noun, singular or mass) NNS (noun plural) NP (proper noun, singular) NPS (proper noun, plural)

This analysis is followed by another analysis in the software, AntConc. In this part of the analysis, the forms of hedges and boosters identified in the POS tagger were compiled. This phase was critical because the hedge and booster markers cannot be taken directly from the software tag list and the frequency count. The lexical items in the texts are not always placed to function as rhetorical devices. Once the forms were identified, they were reviewed from the context to confirm their function. In this purpose, the list of forms organised by Hyland (1995, 1998) were used one more time to categorise the MD markers.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

The chapter described the methods followed to pursue the aim of this study. It explained the complete research procedure and the instruments adapted for this work. The coding criteria for the analysis is also explained in this chapter. The findings from the analysis conducted through this methodology are presented and discussed in the following chapter.

University of Malaysia

## **CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

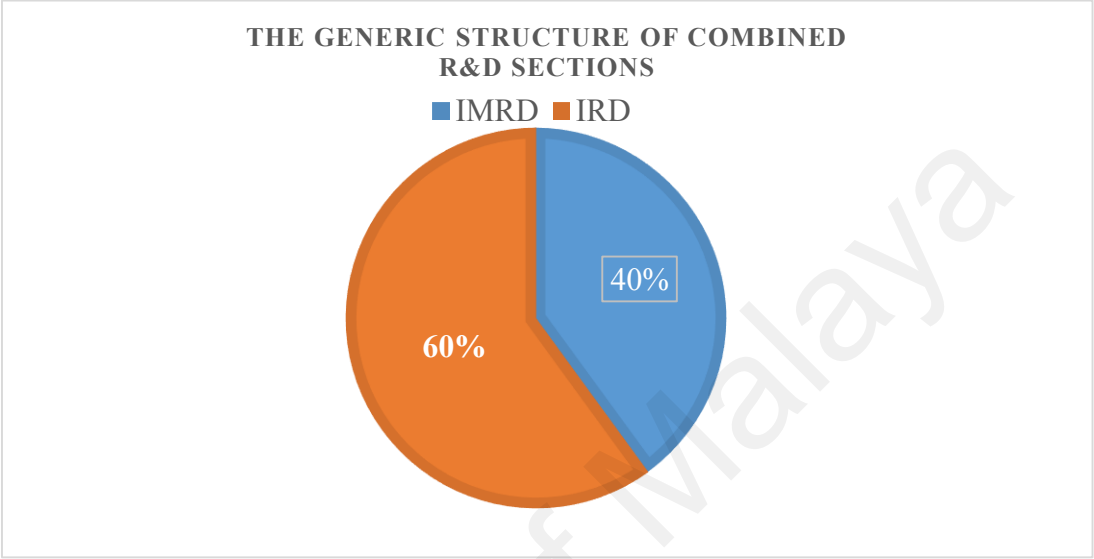
The chapter presents the findings of the research. This chapter opens by drawing the overall generic structure of the combined result and discussion (R&D) sections from Master's dissertations. Then it goes on presenting the frequency of the moves and steps identified in the corpus. Next, this chapter presents the analysis with examples for each move and step. The following section starts with the overall findings for metadiscourse markers in the combined R&D corpus. Lastly, the concluding section summarizes the overall finding of the study.

### **4.2 Overall generic structure of combined result and discussion (R&D) section**

#### **4.2.1 Section headings**

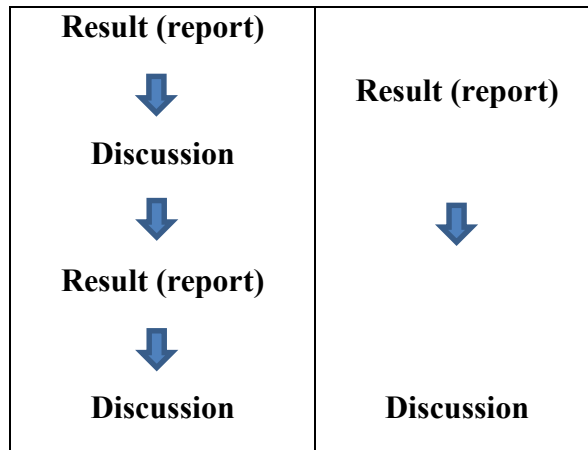
In order to understand the generic structure of the text, Martin (1992) emphasised to focus on the structure of the texts by notifying the "titles, sub-titles, headings and subheadings" (p.443) of the text. Following this general textual organization, the moves can be identified. Biber (2010) also emphasised that the major "linguistics characteristics" are organized as a "four main sections – Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion – which is in turn followed by the references" (p.241). As this current study investigated only the combined R&D sections of the dissertations hence the sequence of the content inside the section was observed to identify the generic pattern of the texts. Following this procedure, this is observed that 60% of the dissertations were organized in IRD textual structure and 40% is structured in IMRD pattern. Figure 4.1 below is showing the generic pattern of the Master's (MA) R&D sections. From this finding, it can be confirmed that writers during

reporting their finding focus more on reporting their results immediately after introducing the section.



**Figure 4.1:** The generic structure of R&D sections

Besides the investigation on the generic pattern, another observation was made on the textual arrangements. The analysis found that 9 out of 10 combined R&D sections in Master's dissertations were arranged in a repetitive pattern of reporting and discussion. Only one dissertation (D9) reported the finding first and this is followed by a discussion. It is necessary to identify the differences in the textual pattern as this may help in realising the differences in the generic pattern of the texts.



**Figure 4.2:** Different text construction pattern of the combined R &D section

### 4.3. Overall Moves and Steps analysis

In these combined R & D sections of master's (MA) dissertations, eight rhetorical moves were identified. All of the moves were realized by several steps. In total, there are 28 steps. The moves did not always occur in the sequence as organized in the structure of this genre. For example, move 1 is also found to appear at the beginning of the sections inside, e.g. M1-M2-M3-M2-M3.

Before defining the steps under each move, few modifications were made in the framework I followed for the move analysis. The data in this corpus was coded by following the move framework proposed by Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2015). A step which appeared as introducing the next section in move 3: commenting on the result is included under move 2: reporting result for this study. This step in the text functions as describing what the next section will report rather than writer's own comment. Also, the move 'Summarizing the previous chapter' which appeared before the move 1 in Nguyen and Pramoolsook's (2015) framework was included as M1S3: Reviewing the previous *chapter* in this study. Writers in this study delivered a brief of the previous chapter while providing the background

information. Hence the step appeared to be the best fit under move 1. Table 4.1 displays the rhetorical structure of the R&D sections of the applied linguistics (AL) Master's dissertations.

**Table 4.1** Frequency of moves and steps in the combined R&D corpus

<b>Moves &amp; steps</b>	<b>D 1</b>	<b>D 2</b>	<b>D 3</b>	<b>D 4</b>	<b>D 5</b>	<b>D 6</b>	<b>D 7</b>	<b>D 8</b>	<b>D 9</b>	<b>D 10</b>	<b>Frequen cy</b>
<b>Move 1: Introducing the Results-Discussion chapter</b>	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	10=100%
M1S1: Reviewing the background of the study	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	10=100%
M1S2: How the chapter is presented	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	10=100%
M1S3: Reviewing the previous chapter	X	X	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	1=10%
*M1S4: Justify procedure and terms used in the study	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	X	X	X	6=60%
<b>Move 2: Reporting results</b>	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	10=100%
M2S1: Section structure	√	X	√	X	√	√	X	X	X	X	4=40%
M2S2: Locating graphics and tables, examples	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	10=100%
*M2S3: Data Commentary or explanation	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	10=100%
M2S4: Reporting major findings	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	10=100%
*M2S5: Referring to previous studies/ strategies	X	X	√	X	X	√	X	X	X	√	3=30%
M2S6: Introducing next section	√	X	√	√	X	X	√	√	X	√	6=60%
<b>Move 3: Commenting on results</b>	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	10=100%
M3S1: Interpreting results	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	10=100%
M3S2: Comparing results with literature	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	9=90%
M3S3: Evaluating results	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	10=100%
M3S4: Accounting for results	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	X	√	√	8=80%
M3S5: Section summary	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	0%
<b>Move 4: Summarizing results</b>	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	10=100%
M4S1: Making conclusions of results	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	10=100%

**Table 4.1 continued**

<b>Move 5: Summarizing the study</b>	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	9=90%
M5S1: Summarizing the study briefly	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	9=90%
<b>Move 6: Evaluating the study</b>	X	X	√	X	X	√	X	√	√	X	4=40%
M6S1: Indicating limitations of the study	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	0%
M6S2: Indicating significance/ advantage of the study	X	X	√	X	X	X	X	X	√	X	2=20%
*M6S3: Evaluating methodology	X	X	X	X	X	√	X	√	X	X	2=20%
<b>Move 7: Deductions from the (research) study</b>	X	√	X	X	X	√	X	X	X	X	2=20%
M7S1: Recommending further research	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	0%
M7S2: Drawing pedagogic implications	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	0%
M7S3: Making suggestions	X	√	X	X	X	√	X	X	X	X	2=20%
<b>Move 8 :Concluding one's study/section</b>	√	X	X	√	X	X	√	X	X	X	3=30%
M8S1: Providing background information	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	0%
M8S2: Providing definition of terms	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	0%
M8S3: Providing support or justification	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	0%
M8S4: Summarizing the chapter	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	0%
M8S5: Introducing the next chapter content	√	X	X	√	X	X	√	X	X	X	3=30%

\*new steps

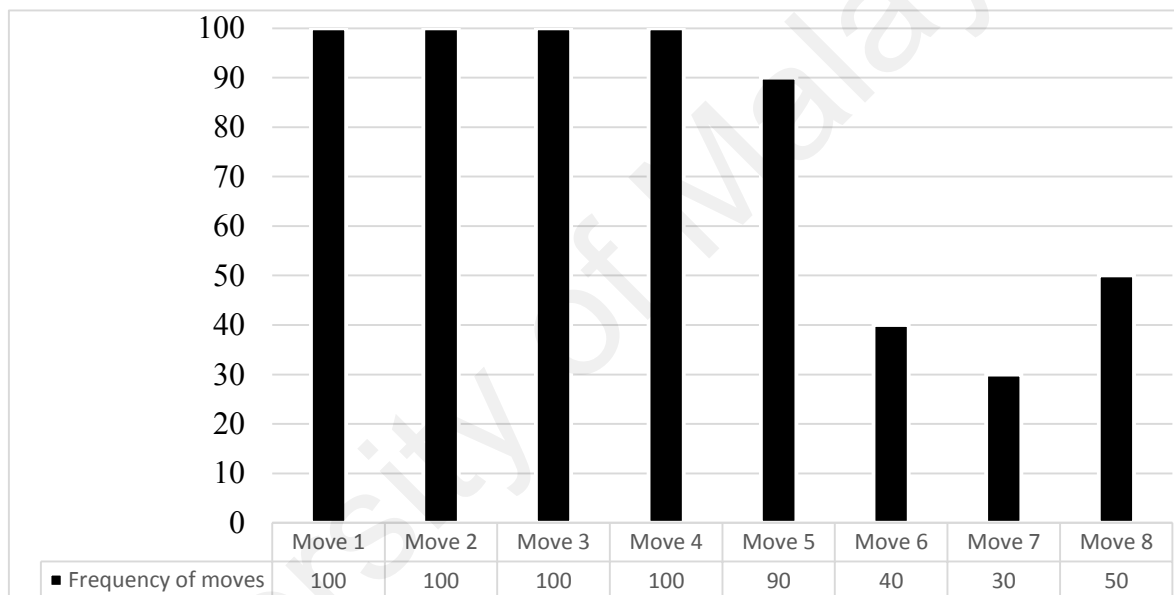
Table 4.1 presents the frequency of moves and steps in the combined R&D sections. The finding shows that move 1, move 2, move 3 and move 4 are obligatory moves in this sub-genre. Move 5 is a conventional move and move 6, move 7 and move 8 are optional moves. Regarding the occurrences of steps M1S1: reviewing the background of the study, M1S2: how the chapter is presented are compulsory steps in Move 1. The step 4 in this move, M1S4: justify procedure and terms used in the study is found as a conventional in the corpus. It appeared in 60% of the corpus. As M1S3: Reviewing the previous chapter appeared in 10%

of the corpus, this is considered as an optional step. In Move 2, M2S2: Locating graphics and tables, examples, M2S3: Data Commentary or explanation and M2S4: Reporting major findings are compulsory steps as they appeared in 100% of the corpus. Other steps such as M2S5: Referring to previous studies/ strategies and M2S6: Introducing next section are conventional steps. M2S1: Section structure is found as an optional step. Move 3 in this corpus is the obligatory move. The steps, M3S1: interpreting results and M3S3: evaluating results have appeared as obligatory steps in move 3. The other steps M3S2: comparing results with literature, and M3S4: accounting for results are conventional steps. These steps appeared in 90% and 80% of the corpus. However, M3S5: section summary did not appear in any of the texts in this corpus. The steps in Move 6, M6S2: Indicating significance/advantage of the study and M6S3: Evaluate methodology appeared as optional steps. The step M6S1: Indicating limitations of the study was absent in the corpus. Move 7 is another optional move in the corpus. M7S3: Making suggestions is the optional step in this move. However, two other steps, M7S1: Recommending further research and M7S2: Drawing pedagogic implications are not found in the corpus. Similar to move 6 and move 7 the move 8 is also an optional move. From the table it can be said, move 8 is realized by 5 steps. However, only two steps seem to be functional in this move. The study also found new steps in some moves such as move 1, move 2 and move 6. The new step in move 1 is, M1S4: justify procedure used in the study. Two new step appeared in move 2 which were, M2S3: Data Commentary or explanation and M2S5: Referring to previous studies/ strategies. In move 6, the newly found step is M6S3: Evaluating-methodology.



#### 4.4 Analysis of the moves

Following the criteria of Move classification, suggested by Kanoksilapatham (2005) Move frequencies are categorized into obligatory (100%), conventional (99%-60%) and optional (less than 60%) for the Master's dissertation. In this study out of 8 moves, 4 of the moves (M1, M2, M3, and M4) appeared as obligatory. Move 5 in this corpus is conventional move and Move 6, move 7 Move 8 are optional moves.



**Figure 4.3:** The frequency of moves in the R&D section

Figure 4.3 shows the highest and lowest frequency of moves in the ESL master's corpus. From the frequency of the move occurrences, we can understand the communicative purpose of the combined R&D genre. Related to this point Chen and Kuo (2012) added that “the occurrence of the first three moves represent the primary communicative purpose of the corpora” (p.37)

#### 4.4.2 Sequence and cycle of moves

In addition to the frequency and assignments of moves and steps, the chosen move and step sequences were investigated. The identification of these sequences also supported in identifying the cyclicity of move and steps. In this combined R&D corpus, the most common move sequence appeared was M2-M3-M2-M3. This combination of move 2 and move 3 appeared most frequently. This sequence was also highly cyclical in this corpus. Other sequences that were found in the combined R&D sections were M1-M2-M3 and M1-M2-M1. The M1-M2-M1 sequence was basically common at the beginning of the sections. A two move sequence M2-M3 was also frequent in the corpus. Some distinctiveness in this corpus was observed in move sequencing such as, in the dissertation 2 (D2) the move 7 appeared with move 2 and move 3. In general, all of the texts summarised the result (move 4) after commenting (Move 3) on it. In another dissertation (D3) the move 2 functioned at the end of the section. The move 2 appeared in the concluding chapter after move 8. Although the dissertation number nine is structured in different pattern, however, no particular differences were found in the move sequencing. In dissertation 10 (D10) at the beginning of the section, the writer followed the sequence of M1-M3-M2. Here the writer commented on the finding before reporting on it. The most common types of move sequences can be seen from Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2:** Examples of the move sequence and the cycle of moves

<b>Move sequence</b>	<b>Cyclical moves</b>	<b>Number of cycles</b>
M2-M3	-	0
M2-M3-M2-M3	M2 & M3	2
M1-M2-M3	-	0
M1-M2-M1	M1	1

The table is showing the examples of the frequent move sequence. From the table above it can be seen that the sequence of M2-M3 is common in this corpus. This sequence is also cyclical in the ESL combined R&D sections. In short Move 1, Move 2 and Move 3 appeared more cyclical in this combined R&D corpus.

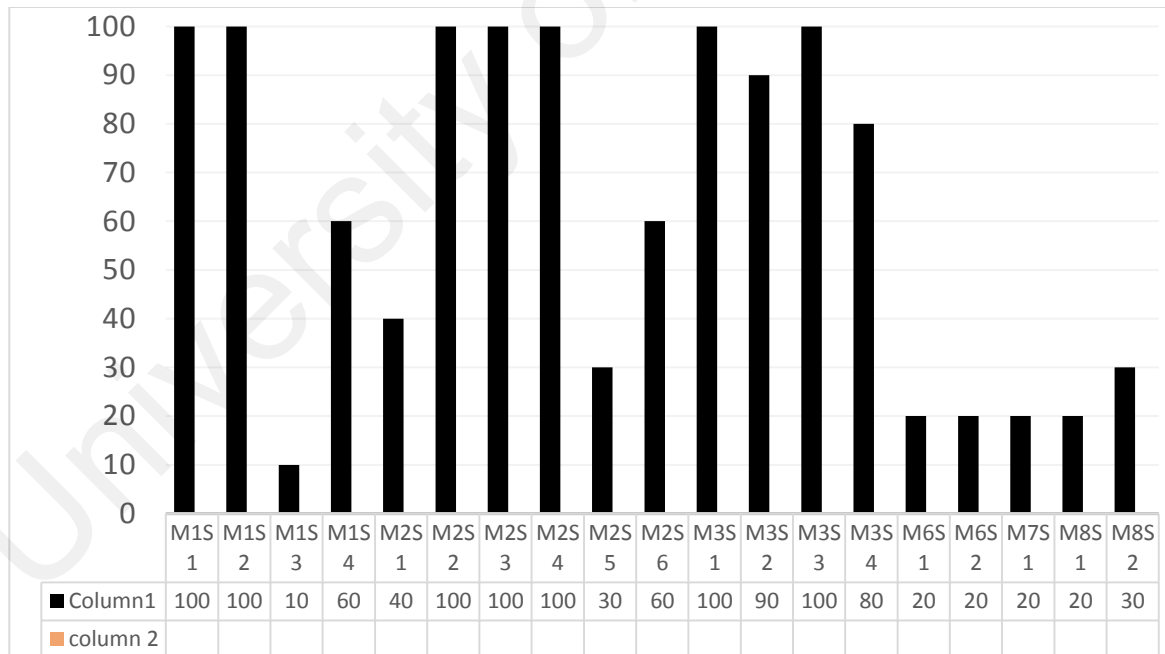
**Table 4.3:** Example of move cyclicity M2-M3-M2-M3

D4	<p><u>The table below shows the difference in average duration in milliseconds (ms) between the penultimate and final syllable of the ten test words in both phrase-final and phrase-medial positions. [...]</u></p>	<b>M2</b>
	<p><u>As can be seen from the table, the average duration in the phrase-final position is 10ms, where the final syllable is 10ms longer than the penultimate syllable. In the phrase-medial position, the average duration is 52ms, where the final syllable is 52ms shorter than the penultimate syllable.</u></p>	<b>M3</b>
	<p><u>A t-test shows that the mean difference between the average duration between the two positions was significant, t(9) 3.3, p&lt;0.01. If the ME speakers placed lexical stress on the final syllable of the test words, there would be durational correlation in both the data.</u></p>	<b>M2</b>
	<p><u>This is a similar finding to Low and Grabe's (1999, p. 46) comparison of average syllable durations between SgE and BrE, where they found more phrase-final lengthening in SgE compared to BrE while cross-varietal difference disappears in phrase-medial position.</u></p>	<b>M3</b>

## 4.5 Analysis of steps

### 4.5.1 Frequency of steps

Besides investigating the move frequency the steps were classified in the obligatory, conventional and optional category. The steps in this study were also classified following the criteria suggested by Kanoksilapatham (2005). These steps were categorized into obligatory (100%), conventional (99%-60%) and optional (less than 60%) for the master's dissertations. Overall 20 steps appeared functional in this corpus. Among the steps 8 obligatory, 5 conventional and 8 optional steps were found. However, 7 of the steps were not observed in the present study corpus. These idle steps can be seen in Table 4.1. The frequency of the steps is visualised in figure 4.4.



**Figure 4.4:** The frequency of steps in the combined R&D section

#### 4.5.2 Sequence and cycles of steps

Analysis of the step sequence showed five high-frequency steps. The steps are M2M2: locating graphics and tables, examples, M2S3: data commentary or explanation, M2S4: reporting major finding, M3S1: interpreting results and M3S4: accounting for results. These steps formed several step patterns. The most frequent step sequence was M2S3-M3S1. This sequence appeared either in two steps sequence or four steps sequence. Other frequently appeared step sequences were M2M2-M2S3, M2S2-M2S3-M3S1, M2S3-M3S4 and M3S1-M3S4. The step M2S4: reporting major finding was also higher in frequency in this combined R&D sections. This step appeared mostly after M2S2:reporting result and M2S3: data commentary. The step sequences and their cyclicity can be seen in table 4.4 below.

**Table 4.4:** Examples of the step sequence and the cycle of steps

Step sequence	Steps	Number of step cycles
M2M2-M2S3	-	0
M2S3-M3S1-M2S3-M3S1	M2S3 & M3S1	2
M2S2-M2S3-M3S1	-	0
M2S3-M3S4	-	0
M3S1-M3S3	-	0
M3S1-M3S4	-	0

Table 4.4 shows that the step M2S3: data commentary and the M3S1: interpreting result are prevalent in the ESL texts. This step sequence was also highly cyclical.

**Table 4.5 :** Example of the step sequence M2S3-M3S1

<b>Move -step</b>	<b>Example</b>
M2S3	The dialogue balloon on the left illustrates a man posing in front of the blackboard and pointing to the English words written on the board.
M3S1	Moreover, frontal angle and medium shot minimize the social distance between viewer and represented participant, therefore their involvement is increased. [...]
M2S3	The dialogue balloon on the right illustrates a man riding a tractor. Although the man on the tractor does not have eye contact with the viewers, the tractor which manifests the identity of the man creates a strong gaze to viewers through its wheels.
M3S1	Based on Symbolic Attributive process, the man symbolizing a farmer, is Carrier while the tractor and his urban clothes are Possessive Attributes. This visual process converges with Relational clause in SFL: <i>“My father is a farmer”</i> in the verbal text where “My father” is Carrier and “a farmer” is Attribute.

#### 4.6 Examples of Moves and Steps

From the analysis, it is found that the Master’s dissertations were realized by 8 moves and 20 functional steps. In this section, the rhetorical functions of the moves and steps are presented with examples.

##### 4.6.1 Move 1: Introducing the Results-Discussion chapter

The move 1: Introducing the Results-Discussion chapter is found in all the dissertations chosen for this study. In all the texts this move appeared as the opening move. As we know the main intention of the opening paragraphs is to introduce the section and explain the procedure that is followed. Therefore, the writers through this move have attempted to draw the readers’ attention on the report they are about to present.

This move was also functional at the beginning of some of the sections inside the section. As shown in example 1, these opening paragraphs begin by stating the general overview of the study and the section.

### Example 1

**(M1-S1)** *“This chapter presents the findings of the study, particularly the rhetorical structure and thematic progression in English based on the data from Azzaman, an online newspaper in Iraq. This chapter focuses on the analysis of the rhetorical structure moves and thematic progression in each rhetorical section. All the data are discussed with specific references to the three research questions. The chapter provides the analysis and findings of the rhetorical structures and shows the rhetorical structure moves used in the selected opinion articles. The analysis is focused on each rhetorical section of the online opinion articles.”* **(D1)**

The underlined sentences above show the function of move 1 in the beginning paragraphs. In example 1 the section is initiated by stating the main purpose. This move was also frequent at the beginning of new sections inside R&D chapters.

### Example 2

**(M1-S1)** *“The study has investigated images and texts of dialogue sections of the Iranian English textbooks from the ideational perspective to understand how visual and verbal components independently structure experiences existing in the English textbooks. Next, the study will explore how these two semiotic modes integrate cohesively to realize the experiences.”* **(D3)**

The underlined sentence in Example 2 shows that with step 1 the writer has provided procedural information or aim of the study. The move 1 in this ESL corpus was realized by a combination of four steps. Details of these steps are given below with examples.

In move 1, M1S1: reviewing the background of the study and M1S2: how the chapter is presented appeared as obligatory steps and M1S4: justify procedure used in the study was found as a conventional step in this corpus. M1S3: reviewing the previous chapter appeared in only one dissertation which has made it an optional step. As a whole, move 1 can be labeled as an obligatory move as this is functional in the whole corpus. The steps in this move are detailed with examples in the following sections.

#### **4.6.1.1 Step 1: Reviewing the background of the study**

Step 1 in this move indicates the purpose/aim, objective, procedural info, theories, RQ, methods of this study. This step appeared in all the 10 dissertations in this corpus thus can be considered as an obligatory step. Example 6 shows the function of M1S1 in the corpus.

#### **Example 3**

**(M1-S1)** *“The first research question is how Gotcha calls are structured? There are four stages identified for the development of a Gotcha Call. These stages are: the opening, the violation of the maxim of quality and the maintenance of the frame.”* **(D10)**

#### **4.6.1.2 Step 2: How the chapter is presented**

Similar to the first step the second step was also found in all of the texts in this corpus. The main communicative purpose of this obligatory step is to provide a brief idea on how this chapter is about to be presented. Its function can be seen in example 4.

#### **Example 4**

**(M1-S2)** *“In this chapter, the researcher looks at how the Brahmins promote themselves in “Brahmins Matrimony” website based on Bhatia’s promotional genre analysis moves.”* **(D8)**



#### 4.6.1.3 Step 3: Reviewing the previous chapter

Compare to other three steps in move 1, the M1S3 was found in only one text. From its frequency, it was labeled as an optional step in the combined R&D corpus. This step, in general, appeared at the beginning of the chapter.

#### Example 5

**(M1-S3)** *“As highlighted in Chapter 1, one of the purposes of the current research is to identify then verbal and visual elements of the dialogues.” (D3)*

#### 4.6.1.4 Step 4: Justify procedure and terms used in the study

In the combined Master’s R&D corpus a new step was found in move 1. The main purpose of this step is to provide the purpose of a certain topic the study is looking at. This step was not found in the move framework followed for analysing this present corpus. Focusing on the contents and its place in the corpus it was identified as a step under move 1. Writers attempted to justify the procedure before they started reporting on the finding.

#### Example 6

**(M1-S4)** *“Through the use of theme and rheme, readers can understand how the information is conveyed in the article. The occurrence of the theme in the article gives the reader an idea as to what is being communicated, while rheme brings the focus on the message in the clause, and tells the reader new information about the theme.” (D1)*

Following Nwogu’s (1997) statement the M1S4: Justify procedure used in the study is considered as a new step as it is observed 100% of the corpus chosen for this study.

#### 4.6.2 Move 2: Reporting results

The move 2: reporting result also occurred in all the MA dissertations in the corpus. This move is also an obligatory move in the combined R&D sections. Move 2 was frequently found after move 1. The main purpose of this move in this corpus is to report the finding of the study. However, Move 2 did not necessarily occur only after move 1, it was also visible after other moves in the corpus. The function of move 2 can be seen in example 10. In this example, the writer appeared to be presenting the finding shown in a table.

#### Example 7

**(M2-S3)** *“When examining their Score B performance in detail, with reference to Table 4.9 above, it was shown that R27 demonstrated the highest improvement between the tests as her pre-test result was the lowest. With only 2 out of the 22 verbs given used correctly during her pre-test, R27 managed to improve her result by getting 15 out of 22 verbs correct during her post-test.” (D7)*

Move 2 is the only move which was realized by six steps. As can be seen from table 4.1 there are six steps in move 2. Among these 6 steps M2S2: locating graphics, examples, tables, M2S3: data Commentary or explanation and M2S4: reporting major finding appeared as obligatory steps. M2S5: referring to previous studies/ strategies and M2S6: introducing next section found as conventional steps as these steps were observed in 70% and 60% of the corpus. However, M2S1: Section structure was found in only 40% of the corpus which indicates its optional position. In reference to the frequency of these steps, we can say that the main intention of move 2 in this corpus is to locate the visuals or examples in the texts, provide explanations of described in the visuals and report the main findings. Alongside, the higher frequency of M2S4 shows writers on the major finding. The conventional M2S5:

referring to previous studies/ strategies and M2S6: introducing next section indicated the writer's typical convention in arranging their propositions.

In this move two new steps were identified, these are M2S3: data Commentary or explanation and M2S5: referring to previous studies and strategies. A new step in this move was taken from move 3 of Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2015) move model. Step 6: introducing next section of move 3 was placed in move 2 for this study. As in this study move 3 carries writer's comments on the findings, the step: introducing next section is not placed under this move. In this study, it was observed that this step tends to provide a brief on the finding that is presented in the following sections. Therefore, step 6 is labeled under move 2. In move 2, step 1 appeared only in 40% of the corpus which makes it an optional step. Other steps appeared either as obligatory (100%) or as conventional (99%-60%). Detail of each step is provided below.

#### **4.6.2.1 Step 1: Section structure**

The very first step of move 2 was found as an optional step in the corpus. This finding shows that ESL writers are not much focused on producing any detail for a section. The function of M2S1 is shown in example 10.

#### **Example 8**

**(M2-S1)** *“This first section evaluates the impact of cognitive apprenticeship on the learning of past tense forms in narrative writing by comparing the results between the pre-test and post-test with the intention of answering the following question.”* **(D7)**

#### 4.6.2.2 Step 2: Locating graphics and tables, examples

The step 2 of move appeared in all the combined R&D sections of this corpus. In most cases, this step was found before M2S3: data commentary.

##### Example 9

**(M2-S2)** *“From the distribution pattern for Score A as shown in Table 4.1, only one respondent scored within the category of 19 marks and below during the pre-test. With reference to the scores obtained by individual students in Table 4.2, R13\* was the one who scored 19 marks, the lowest score for the pre-test. [...]”.* **(D7)**

#### 4.6.2.3 Step 3: Data commentary or explanation

A data commentary involves “the linguistic presentation of graphs, figures, and tables” (Nordrum & Eriksson, 2014, p.1). As we can see in example 10, the writer has first added the table in the chapter and then has explained the contents of the table. However, this step is mostly found after M2S2.

##### Example 10

**(M2-S3)** *“When examining their Score B performance in detail, with reference to Table 4.9 above, it was shown that R27 demonstrated the highest improvement between the tests as her pre-test result was the lowest. With only 2 out of the 22 verbs given used correctly during her pre-test, R27 managed to improve her result by getting 15 out of 22 verbs correct during her post-test.”* **(D7)**

#### 4.6.2.4 Step 4: Reporting major findings

Similar to M2S2 and M2S3 the M2S4 was found in all of the texts. Hence its frequency of 100% makes it an obligatory step in move 2.

#### Example 11

**(M2-S4)** *“The analysis of the dialogues in all three English textbooks reveals that Relational (57%) and Material processes (26%) are the most frequently found processes in the textbooks.” (D3)*

#### 4.6.2.5 Step 5: Referring to previous studies/ strategies

Step 5 in move 2 is an optional step, which appeared in 30% of the corpus. In move 2 this is a new step. The main communicative purpose of this step appeared to indicate approaches forwarded by previous researchers.

#### Example 12

**(M2-S5)** *“However, in this sense Gotcha Calls are quite different from the prank calls analyzed by Seilhamer (2010). In those calls the prankster would not even know the victim’s name. The call analyzed was based on a job advertisement.” (D10)*

Other examples for move 2 step 5 are provided below.

**(M2-S5)** *“Relying on O’ Halloran’s (2005) intersemiotic identification, Jones (2006) proposes intersemiotic identification in a two-folded system.” (D3)*

Unlike with M3S2: comparing result with literature this step was focused on to add a reference from the previous works particularly on the procedural information.

#### 4.6.2.6 Step 6: Introducing next section

The last step found in move 2 was functioning to provide a brief knowledge for the upcoming section. It appeared in 60% of the corpus. This is a conventional step in the corpus. Through this step, writers tried to inform us about the upcoming reporting and the finding.

#### Example 13

**(M2-S6)** *“The next section highlights the theme and rheme in the online article. The theme and rheme are analyzed stage by stage, which include the introduction stage, intermediate stage and coda.” (D1)*

In short, the repetition of locating graphs, tables or examples, explaining result and reporting major finding show writers’ continuous effort in reporting the result successfully. Conventional step, step 6: Introducing next section represents writers’ common practice in presenting their claims in writing R&D sections.

#### 4.6.3 Move 3: Commenting on result

In this corpus move 3: commenting on results was also identified as an obligatory move. This move was frequently found after move 2. The author produced this move for the purposes so as to provide subjective judgments about their studies’ findings, interpreting their findings, and comparing their studies with the literature (Nodoushan, 2012, p.114). Writers here provide their own judgments of the findings. The example below is representing the function of move 3 in the corpus.

## Example 14

**(M3-S1)** *“Though their post-test results were at par with the respondents in Group I, they did not show much difference in terms of improvement.” (D7)*

Move 3 was realized by four steps. The steps in move 3 are M3S1: interpreting results, M3S2: comparing results with literature, M3S3: evaluating results and M3S4: accounting for results (S4). The frequently found steps in move 3 were M3S1: interpreting results and M3S3: evaluating result. As can be seen from table 4.1 these two steps are obligatory in function. Other two steps in move 3 appeared as conventional steps. The M3S2: comparing results with literature and step M3S4: accounting for result appeared in 90% and 80% of the corpus. The steps are detailed in the sections below. The M3S5: section summary was not found in any of the texts in this corpus.

### 4.6.3.1 Step 1: Interpreting result

This step represents the writer’s “general claim” which has been derived from the results (Yang & Allison, 2003, p.378). In other words, Interpreting refers to providing a hypothesis of the finding. Examples of step 1 are given below.

## Example 15

**(M3-S1)** *“As seen in the above examples, clauses in English Textbook One are simple and short and there are only two entities linked in such a Relational process in order to identify attribute or possessiveness in these clauses. (D3)*

The example shows that the writer has not only directly described the contents of these tables but he also has provided a general idea of certain activities.

#### 4.6.3.2 Step 2: Comparing results with literature

The step, M3S2: comparing result with literature appeared in 90% of the corpus.

This step was the conventional step in this move.

#### Example 16

**(M3-S2)** *“This is one of the disadvantages stated by several researchers such as Smith (2005), Calzolari et al. (2002) and Wiktorsson (2001).”*

**(D6)** 4.6.3.3 Step 3: Evaluating results

Similar to the M3S1 this step was also found in all of the combined R&D sections.

Its occurrences in 100% of the corpus showed its obligatory position in this move.

#### Example 17

**(M3-S3)** *“Therefore, the response with answers to both types of Yes/No and Wh questions achieve the purpose of the questions in the Gotcha conversations.”* **(D5)**

#### 4.6.3.3 Step 4: Accounting for results

Following Chen and Kuo (2012) and Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2015), the rhetorical purpose of this step is identified as providing reasons for particular findings. This conventional step appeared in 80% of the corpus.

#### Example 18

**(M3-S4)** *“the difference in the mentality and thought pattern of Arabic and English speakers is a major factor in preventing target readers from correctly interpreting the ST. Due to the fact that, English and Arabic are the means of expression of two cultures which do not belong to the same civilisation in which some cultural elements cannot be translated.”* **(D2)**



#### **4.6.4 Move 4: Summarising result**

##### **4.6.4.1 Step 1: Making conclusion of result**

Move 4 is also found as an obligatory move in this corpus. This move was realized by only one step M4S1: making conclusion of result.

#### **Example 19**

*(M4-S1) “This research found that the 100 sample of compositions written by PASUM students show a tremendous use of high frequency words (words categorized in the Band 1 as generated by the Range programme) and a relatively low percentage in the use of Band 3 (AWL) and NIL words.” (D6)*

#### **4.6.5 Move 5: Summarising study**

##### **4.6.5.1 Step 1: Summarising the study briefly**

The move 5 appeared in 90% of Master’s combined R&D sections. This move was also realized by only one step, M5S1: Summarising the study briefly. The rhetorical purpose of this step is to provide a brief account of the main points from the perspective of the overall study. Example 20 is showing its function.

#### **Example 20**

*(M5-S1) “The findings for the rhetorical structure section reveal that the articles focused on three rhetorical sections such as introduction, intermediate and coda section, but they differ in the use of stages especially at the solution and moral stages.” (D1)*

#### 4.6.6 Move 6: Evaluating study

The sixth move in this corpus was found in only 40% of the corpus. This move appeared as an optional move.

##### Example 21

**(M6-S2)** *“The findings from this chapter will aid in lining up the suggestions to improve the current ESP course for the students of hospitality and tourism management.” (D9)*

From the move model, it can be seen that move 6 has three steps. However, out of these three steps, M6S2: indicating significance/advantage of the study and M6S3: evaluating methodology appeared as optional steps. The step M6S1: indicating limitations of the study was not found in the corpus. M6S3: evaluating methodology is the new step found in this corpus. The findings are described below with examples.

##### 4.6.6.1 Step 2: Indicating significance/advantage of the study

This step is labeled as an optional step as it has appeared in only 20% of the texts. The communicative purpose of this step can be seen in the example given below.

##### Example 22

**(M6-S2)** *“Apart from the types of narrative processes discussed, a new narrative category called Communication process is introduced in this study. Communication process which is realized by simultaneous occurrence of more than one vector illustrates the act of communicating.” (D3)*

#### 4.6.6.2 Step 3: Evaluating methodology

Unlike previous studies, this study has found a new step for this move. This step in move 6 tends to provide a reason for a certain method used in the study. However, this step is a new step for this move.

#### Example 23

**(M6-S3)** “*Bhatia’s promotional genre analysis moves was only used as a guide to see if the profiles match the moves used in job application letter.*”  
**(D8)**

#### 4.6.7 Move 7: Deductions from the (research) study

Move 7 was also found as an optional move in the corpus. This move appeared in only 30% of the corpus.

#### Example 24

**(M7-S3)** “*The lists of words should be revised and certain words such as television, cancer, hydropower and others should be removed from the current NIL list.*” **(D6)**

As can be seen from the model from table 4.1 the move 7 has 3 steps in it. The only step, M7S3: making suggestion appeared functional in this move. This step was found in 20% of the corpus. The other two steps M7S1: recommending further research and M7S2: drawing pedagogic implications were not found in the combined R&D sections. The M7S3: making suggestions is given below with an example.

#### 4.6.7.1 Step 3: Making suggestions

This step suggests a possible solution to solve the problems identified by the research.

#### Example 25

**(M7-S3)** *“Perhaps, Laufer and Nation could refine the list of Band 1, Band 2 and AWL lists in order to give words like these a suitable category instead of placing them on the NIL lists and referred to as low frequency words.”* **(D6)**

#### 4.6.8 Move 8: Referring to other studies

Move 8 was found in 50% of the corpus in this study. This move was functioning to mention the following chapter and what it was about to present. An example can be seen below.

#### Example 26

**(M8-S5)** *“In the following chapter, aside from discussing the implications for the findings, suggestions for further research will also be put forth.”*  
**(D4)**

Although move 8 has 5 steps however only one of the steps was functional in this move. The step M8S5: *introducing the next chapter content* was visible in 30% of the combined R&D sections. The other four steps, M8S1: Providing background information, M8S2: Providing definition of terms, M8S3: Providing support or justification and M8S4: Summarizing the chapter did not appear in any of the texts in this corpus.

#### **4.6.8.1 Step 5: Introducing the next chapter content**

Similar to step 1 in move 8, step 2 was also found as an optional step as it appeared in 30% of the corpus.

#### **Example 28**

**(M8-S5)** *“The next chapter will present the conclusion and recommendation for this study.” (D1)*

The following sections present the finding from metadiscourse (MD) analysis in detail.

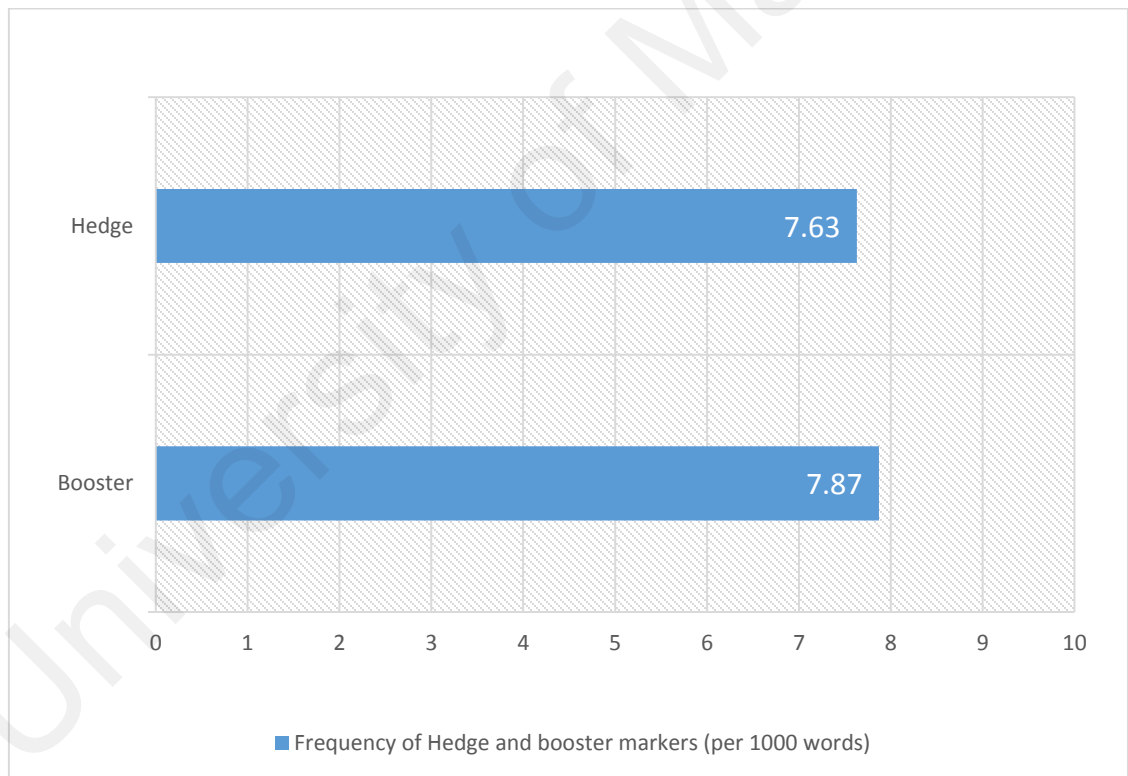
### **4.7 Metadiscourse in combined result and discussion (R&D) sections**

#### **4.7.1 Introduction**

This section presents the overall findings for the hedge and boosters in the combined result and discussion (R&D) sections of master’s dissertations. As discussed in chapter 3, the analysis for hedge and booster markers was conducted in several stages. At first, the 10 chosen texts were run through a software TagAnt. This software initially identified the forms of hedges and boosters in the texts. In the second stage, the files received from TagAnt were analyzed in the software AntConc to compile the forms and frequencies. Finally, the texts were re-analyzed to understand the markers in the context of the texts. With this procedure, the frequency of the hedge and booster markers were collected. Following the analytical procedure, the chapter starts by presenting the overall frequency of hedge and booster markers in the corpus. This is followed by a report on the forms of these metadiscourse markers. A comparison of these two features is also included. The closing section will present an overall summary.

#### 4.7.2 Overall frequency of hedge and boosters

The third aim of this study was to find out the forms of hedges and boosters used in the ESL written texts. This procedure began by analyzing the R&D sections of Master's dissertations from applied linguistics (AL) discipline. By identifying the frequency of hedges and boosters we can get information about the basic pattern in the words chosen in textual construction. The study found a higher prevalence of booster markers in this ESL writing than hedge marker. The amount of these MD features were investigated per 1000 words in this corpus. The ESL corpus contained 7.63 hedges and 7.87 booster markers per 1000 words. The differences in this frequency can be seen in figure 4.5.



**Figure 4.5:** Overall frequency of Hedges and Boosters in the R&D corpus

### 4.7.3 Forms of hedges and boosters in the result and discussion (R&D) sections

This section presents the forms of hedges and boosters found in the corpus. The frequency of these forms was investigated per 1000 words.

#### 4.7.3.1 Hedge forms in the combined R&D section

Table 4.6 shows the forms of hedging found in the ESL combined R&D sections. The highest and lowest occurred hedge markers can be seen in the table.

**Table 4.6:** The frequency of hedging forms in the corpus

Hedging forms	Adverbial constructions	Epistemic lexical verbs	Epistemic Adjectives	Modal Verbs	Epistemic Nouns
	Almost-17 Generally-16 Relatively -9 About-7 Nearly- 5 Probably-4 Roughly -3 Slightly-3 Hardly- 2 Likely -2	Considered-44 Appears -32 Appear -19 Tend to -17 Suggests -15 Believed -13 Suggested -12 Suggest -11 Trying- 9 Believe- 8 Appeared- 8 Consider -5 Considers -3 Tends to- 2 Think- 1	Likely -12 Possible -7	Can -166 Would -118 Could -82 May -70 Might -44 Will-11 Could not-10 Would not -9	Tendency- 5 Assumption-4 Indication -3 Interpretation -3 Possibility- 3
Total	68	199	19	510	18
Per 1000 words	<b>0.64</b>	<b>1.87</b>	<b>0.17</b>	<b>4.78</b>	<b>0.16</b>
Total hedging					
<b>7.63</b>					

It can be seen from table 4.1 that the total frequency of hedge marker is 7.63 per 1000 words in this corpus. The highest frequency of hedging form appears in the modal verb which appeared 4.78 times per 1000 words. The lowest frequency was seen in epistemic nouns and adjectives which occurred only 0.16 and 0.17 times per 1000 words. In the combined R&D corpus, the modal verb 'can' appeared greater in frequency than other hedge forms. This modal was found 1.56 times in per 1000 words. This is followed by another modal 'would' which appeared 1.10 times per 1000 words. Another two modals 'could' and 'may' were seen 0.76 and 0.67 times per 1000 words. Lexical verbs 'think' and 'tends to' and adverbs 'hardly' and 'likely' seemed to be the least occurred hedge markers in this corpus. In hedging, the claims 'can' is the most common expression among all the forms which can be seen in table 4.1.

#### **4.7.3.2 Booster forms in the combined R&D sections**

Table 4.7 shows the forms of booster found in the ESL R&D corpus. The highest and lowest occurred booster markers can be seen in the table.



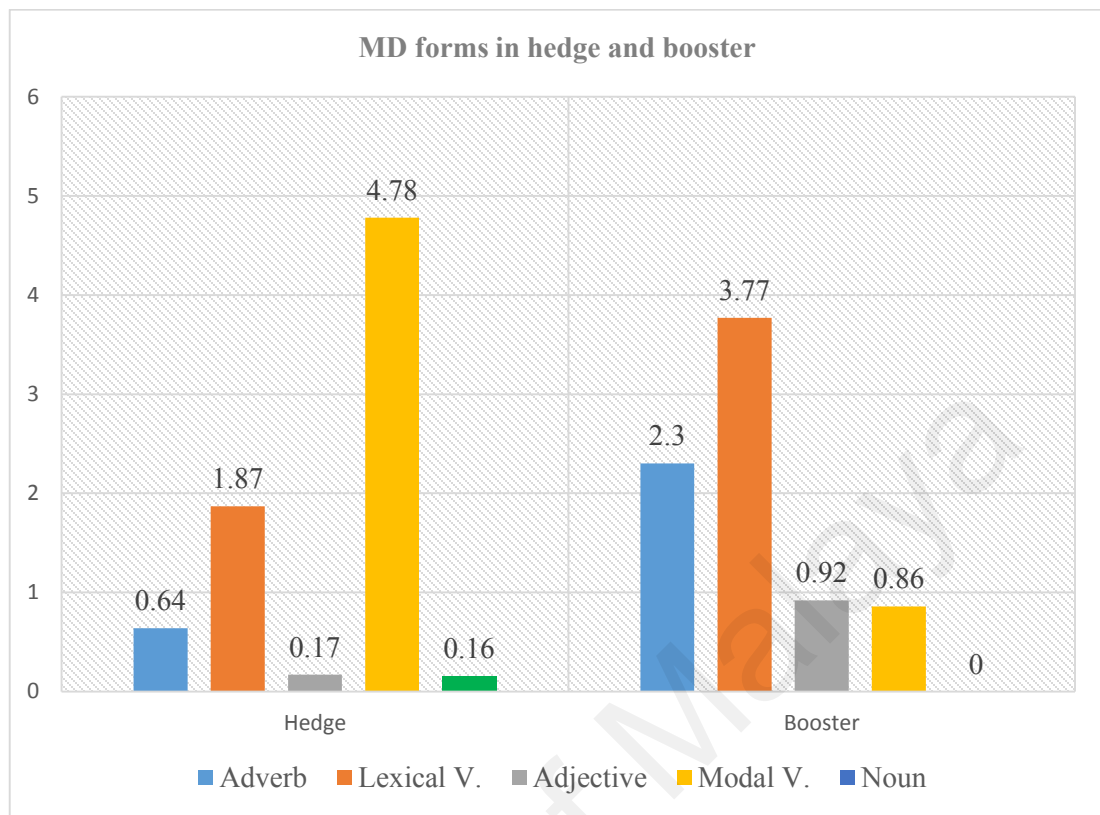
**Table 4.7 :** The frequency of booster forms in the corpus

<b>Booster forms</b>	<b>Adverbial constructions</b>	<b>Adverbial constructions</b>	<b>Lexical verbs</b>	<b>Adjectives</b>	<b>Modals</b>
	Especially- 31 Clearly -19 Actually -13 Easily-11 Definitely- 10 Finally -9 Always- 8 Drastically -6 Eventually -6 Exactly -5 Commonly- 4 Explicitly- 2 Apparently- 2 Consistently- 2 Dominantly- 1 Exclusively- 1	Frequently - 18 Highly -17 Usually -15 In fact -14 Particularly -9 Widely -9 Specifically- 8 Significantly- 5 Really- 5 Fully -4 Mainly- 4 Obviously -3 Mostly- 2 Necessarily- 2 Typically- 1	Found- 114 Shows -70 Show - 59 Established- 31 Find- 29 Know- 20 Showed -18 Sure- 9 Known- 8 Confirm- 7 Establish- 6 Conclude- 6 Prove- 5 Proved- 4 Shown -4 Realize- 3 Realized- 3 Thought- 3 Demonstrate- 1 Establishes- 2	Clear- 40 Certain- 19 Essential - 13 Evident- 12 Obvious -12 Obviously- 3 Apparent -2 Absolute- 1	Should - 75 Must -16 Shall - 1
<b>Total</b>	246		402	99	92
<b>Per 1000 words</b>	<b>2.30</b>		<b>3.77</b>	<b>0.92</b>	<b>0.86</b>
<b>Total Booster</b>	<b>7.87</b>				

From table 4.7, we can see that the total frequency of booster marker is 7.87 per 1000 words in this corpus. The highest frequency of booster form appeared in the lexical verbs which were 3.77 times per 1000 words. The lowest frequency was seen in modals that was only 0.86 times per 1000 words. The lexical verb 'found' appeared 1.06 times per 1000 words. Another lexical verb 'shows' was observed 0.66 times per 1000 words. 'Should' was also enlisted as the frequent booster markers in this corpus. This modal was found 0.70 times per 1000 words. In the forms of booster several least occurred forms were observed, which include the adverbs- 'apparently', ' dominantly', 'exclusively', 'typically', 'necessarily', 'mostly', lexical verbs -'demonstrate', ' establishes', adjective , ' absolute', ' apparent' and modal- 'shall'. These different forms occurred only 0.01 times in this total corpus. From the findings it can be said that the lexical verbs 'found' and 'show' were the most common forms booster observed.

#### **4.7.4 Comparison between the forms of hedge and booster**

One objective of this study was to identify the forms of hedges and boosters ESL writers use in their results and discussions. For this purpose, the study requires a comparison between these two features. An understanding of the differences in the forms of hedge and booster can be effective in providing a clear answer to the question. Figure 4.6 presents the frequencies of different forms hedges and boosters per 1000 words.



**Figure 4.6:** MD forms in hedge and booster

From the figure the differences in frequency of hedges and boosters forms become visual. In reporting the findings ESL writers are mostly dependent on booster markers. The frequency of hedge appears to be lower than the booster in this corpus. The most common forms of booster used in this corpus were the lexical verb. Compared to lexical verbs the adverbs, modals, and adjectives appeared less frequently in expressing boosters in the corpus. Unlike boosters in hedging the propositions, writers used more modal verbs. The use of adverbs differed immensely in these two groups. While in hedging the adverbs were used only 0.64 times, in the case of presenting certainty of finding the adverbial forms appeared 2.3 times per 1000 words. The frequency of adjectives also appeared higher in boosting propositions compare to hedges. However, in case of booster, no cases of nouns were

perceived. These differences in the forms are elaborated with examples provided in the next section.

#### 4.7.5 Examples and forms of Hedges and Boosters

This section of the chapter presents the forms chosen in expressing hedge and booster in this corpus.

##### 4.7.5.1 Example of hedging forms

Although the hedges appeared with lower in frequency, they were found throughout the corpus. In the R&D sections of the MA dissertation, modals were the most frequently chosen hedging device. The forms ‘would’ and ‘can’ were the most common modals and most frequent forms used to hedge in this corpus. Example 29 is showing these modals in the context.

#### Example 29

*“Therefore, the images in the dialogues **can** be categorized as given information while verb [...].” (D3)*

*“of great importance to students as they **can** act as apprentice in learning something meaning [...].” (D7)*

In Example 29 the writer used the modal ‘can’ to present the possible effect the information may get. As we can observe, the first example in 29 shows the writer expressing a possible categorization of the images in the dialogues. The writer presented the reliability of his statement by informing about a possibility. Another frequent modal in hedging is ‘would’. Examples for ‘would’ are provided below.

#### Example 30

*“Learners **would** be more aware of their common errors.” (D7)*

*“The proverb **would** have been better translated into either [...].” (D2)*

Other modals such as ‘may’ and ‘could’ also appeared frequently in the corpus. Besides, ESL Master’s dissertation writers employed epistemic lexical verbs the second most in hedging their claims. These verbs were used 1.87 times per 1000 words. The most common types of verbs used in hedging were ‘considered’ and ‘appears’. Example 31 is taken from the corpus.

### **Example 31**

*“other words, physiological action of speaking is illustrated in the images. Hence, it can be **considered** to be a dynamic manner of Verbal process. Such process occurred 11 times in the data which [...]”.* (D3)

*“The analysis discovered that Verbal process **appears** in 12% (n=21) of the total processes and the frequency of Verbal process across all dialogue”* (D3)

The other forms of hedges found in the corpus were epistemic adverb, epistemic noun, and epistemic adjective. The third highest hedge markers used in this corpus is the epistemic adverbs. It was found 0.68 times per 1000 words. In this form, the most common types of adverbs used are ‘almost’ and ‘generally’.

#### **4.7.5.2 Example of booster forms**

In the present corpus, the booster marker appeared higher in frequency. In the combined R&D sections, lexical verbs were the mostly chosen form in booster. ‘Shows’ and ‘found’ are the most common lexical verb found in the ESL text. The examples in 32 are presenting these verbs in the context.

### Example 32

*“This process is not as frequently **found** compared to narrative action processes.” (D3)*

*“While all the respondents in this study **found** modelling beneficial to them.” (D7)*

The verb ‘found’ mostly is functioning to show that the writer is certain about the claim.

The similar function is found in the use of verb ‘shows’.

### Example 33

*“in phrase-medial position in this experiment **shows** a downward pitch direction.” (D3)*

*“The correlation coefficient of 0.2840 **shows** a statistically significant difference between [...]” (D5)*

Although many instances of the verb ‘show’ are observed, in most of the cases it was functioning merely as an indicator. For example, *“Figure 4.6 and 4.7 show the distribution of the Yes/No questions[...].”* From the examples above it can be said that with the use of verbs *found* and *shows* writers attempted to provide evidence of their propositions. In this way, writers provided strong commitment and convictions towards their propositions.

The other forms of boosters such as adjectives and adverbs are also apparent in this corpus. The most common types of adverbs found in this corpus are, ‘especially’, ‘frequently’ and ‘highly’. Their functions as booster can be seen from the examples 34.

### Example 34

*“It was found that collaborative learning is **especially** beneficial to weaker learners whereby peer learning provides them with the confident and [...]”.* (D7)

*“Relational process (42%) is nevertheless the most **frequently** found as compared to the other processes presented in the dialogue sections of English Text.”* (D3)

*“Move 2 was **highly** used by the male subscribers rather than the female subscribers.”* (D8)

The ESL writers tended to use less adjective forms in showing certainty or conviction of their claims. This form was found 0.92 times per 1000 words. The most common types of adjectives used in the texts are ‘clear’ and ‘certain’. Example 35 is the example of epistemic adjectives taken from the ESL corpus.

### Example 35

*“Therefore, it was very **clear** how the two contextual issues were relevant”.* (D10)

*“was found that the matriculation students used **certain** words repeatedly [...]”.* (D6)

The diversity of hedging and booster forms are much noticeable in the ESL Master’s dissertations combined R&D sections. In the case of booster, the diversity is much higher. There are 65 different forms of boosters used in this corpus. In contrast, only 40 different hedge forms were identified in the corpus.

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

The chapter presented the finding from the analysis. It began by reporting the overall structure of the combined R&D sections and narrowed down to the reporting of rhetorical move/step. The frequency of moves and steps allowed us to understand the communicative purpose of this combined R&D sections. This included the presentation of sequence and cyclicity of moves and steps. The finding for the metadiscourse features such as hedges and boosters were also presented with examples. The next chapter will discuss the findings reported in this chapter.

University of Malaysia



## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The present study aimed to look at the writing patterns and the communicative purposes of the ESL Master's combined results and discussion (R&D) sections. Another purpose was to investigate the interactional strategies ESL writers apply in reporting their findings. In achieving the second aim, the interactional markers, such as hedges and boosters were investigated. In this chapter, the findings of this study are discussed in reference to the research questions proposed. This chapter also provides the concluding remarks for the entire study. The discussion includes cross-referencing previous studies conducted with a similar research field and focus. First, this section discusses the move analysis findings. This part includes the communicative purpose and the rhetorical structure of the combined R&D sections. Following this, the findings from the metadiscourse analysis are discussed. In conclusion, a brief overview of this study is provided. A summary of this study and the limitations of this study are also addressed.

### **5.2 Communicative purpose of the combined R&D sections**

The first aim of this study was to identify the communicative purpose of the combined results and discussion sections. In this purpose, the texts were analysed by using a move analysis framework proposed by Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2015). The moves and steps were subsequently classified by following Kanoksilapatham's (2005) move classification. Next, the frequencies were categorised into obligatory (100%), conventional (99%-60%) and optional (less than 60%) sets. The findings showed a higher frequency of move 1, move 2, move 3, and move 4. These moves functioned as obligatory moves in the corpus. Other moves, such as move 5 were the conventional move, while move 6, move 7, and move 8 were

optional moves in this corpus. The frequency of the steps appeared to be consistent with the frequency of the moves. Almost all the steps of the obligatory moves appeared in the ten combined R&D sections. However, with this aim to understand the communicative functions of the ESL texts, the study proposed to answer the question of what to highlight the characteristics of this genre. The next sections discuss research question one (1).

### **5.2.1 What are the communicative purposes of the combined Results and Discussion sections in MA Applied Linguistics dissertations?**

As stated by Chen and Kuo (2012), “the occurrence of the first three moves represent the primary function of the corpora” (p.37). The frequency of the moves can be helpful in determining the communicative purpose of the R&D genre. According to Ng and Peh (as cited in Davis, 2015), the purpose of the results section is “to present the main data collected and the observations made during the research”. They also pointed out that this section “provides interpretation of the analysed data and does not contain details on the methods, materials or discussion”. A similar communicative purpose is found in the combined R&D sections of Master’s dissertations. The analysis shows that the main communicative purpose of the combined R&D sections is to provide a report of the analysis and comment on the findings. In reporting results, writers particularly indicate the visuals, an explanation from the visuals, and deliver the major finding. Additionally, through their comments, writers focus on interpretation and evaluation of the results. Moreover, these combined R&D sections also intend to provide background information and a summary of the results.

To understand the function of moves and their purposes, the study also investigated the cyclicity of moves/step and their sequences. Through the investigation of the moves cycle and sequences, it is possible to identify the communicative purpose of a particular move or step in depth. In the corpus, the most common move sequence observed is a combination of

two move sequences, which is M2-M3 (M2: reporting result- M3: commenting on the result). Other frequently occurred sequences were M1-M2-M3 and M1-M2-M1. A two-move sequence was also cyclical in this corpus, for example, M2-M3-M2-M3. Likewise, the steps in the moves can also be classified in the obligatory, conventional and optional categories. In this study, seven (7) obligatory, five (5) conventional, and seven (7) optional steps were found. Similar to other studies, steps also occurred in a cyclical manner either in a 2 step cycle or 3 step cycle. The frequent 2 steps cycle found for this study was M2S2-M2S3 and the three steps cycle was M2S2-M2S3-M3S1. Moreover, from this finding, it can be concluded that move 2 and move 3 are more frequently occurring moves. These moves were also identified by the steps.

However, the finding does not stand with the study on international Master's dissertations (e.g. Chen & Kuo, 2012). In that study, the major step cycle observed was M2S2: reporting major findings - M3S1: interpreting results. In contrast, the most frequent step cycle in the ESL dissertations is M2S2: locating table and graph- M2S3: data commentary. Similar to the previous studies (e.g. Nguyen & Pramoolsook, 2015; Chen & Kuo, 2012) step M2S2: locating graphics and tables were found more frequently in the step cycle. Related to the study by Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2015), this combined R&D section also reported on the greater frequency of move 3: commenting on result steps, especially M3S1: interpreting result and M3S3: evaluating the result.

Moreover, these differences in the step cycle show that when international writers (e.g. Chen & Kuo, 2012) tend to interpret results after locating graphics whereas EFL writers (e.g. Nguyen & Pramoolsook, 2015) focus on major findings, ESL writers focus on providing data commentary. In this way, ESL texts provide a detailed, summary of the visuals added in the results report. Alongside the M2S2-M2S3-M3S1 sequence, it revealed that similar to the

EFL writers, ESL writers also provided comments on the findings (M3) after presenting the graphics. As concluded by Ruiying & Allison, (2003), the result sections do not only report results, but also “comment on results and thus the cyclic pattern of reporting and commenting is evident” (p.381).

Although this present study is focused on the combined R&D sections from an applied linguistics discipline, the finding however, is somewhat different from previous studies (e.g. Dobakhti, 2016; Nguyen & Pramoolsook, 2015; Soleimani & Soleimani, 2015; Jalilifar et al., 2012; Chen & Kuo, 2012; Ruiying & Allison, 2003). Ruiying & Allison (2003) identified three dominant moves, move 1: preparatory information, move 2: reporting results and move 3: commenting on results in the result chapters. In the discussion section, move 3: commenting on results was more frequent and move 2: reporting result was found as quasi-obligatory. Nodushan (2012) and Chen and Kuo (2012) conducted their studies by following Ruiying & Allison’s (2003) move framework. Nodoushan (2012) reported of 3 obligatory moves in the discussion chapters, move 2: reporting result, move 4: commenting on the result and move 7: deduction from research. In another study, Chen and Kuo (2012) identified two obligatory moves, which consist of reporting major findings and providing background information in the result sections. Other moves like interpreting the results, indicating the method and locating the graph were found to be conventional moves in reporting the results. However, in chapter four (4), which was the discussion, the moves that are move1, move2, move 3, and move 4 appeared to be obligatory moves. Unlike the separate R&D chapters in the eleven (11) combined R&D chapters of the EFL Master’s dissertation, Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2015), found 8 moves and 25 steps. According to their findings, move 1: introducing the results-discussion chapter, move 2: reporting result, and move 3: commenting on the result were obligatory moves. In another recent study following Swales (1990), a move

analysis framework Dobakhti (2016) followed Swales (1990) on 15 qualitative research articles (RAs). The result revealed 11 moves and 15 steps in the applied linguistics (AL) discussion chapters. MIS1: state finding was found in 100% of the corpus. Move 2: referring to data, move 3: comment on findings, and move 5: compare findings with literature appeared as a conventional move in her corpus. Moreover, despite all the applied linguistics results and discussion chapters carrying similar communicative purposes, the differences in the move/ step function in the applied linguistics R&D sections appears to be carrying similar communicative purposes. A comparison with previous studies is visualised in Table 5.1.

The communicative purpose is a key element in identifying genre because this assists in differentiating genres and grammatical features of a text. In the ESP approach, the genre analysis emphasises “on the means that text realizes its communicative purpose rather than on establishing a system for the classification of genres” (Dudley-Evans, p. 219). The findings of this study and previous studies indicate that reporting the result and commenting on its findings are two essential moves in reporting the results and discussion of a study. In the field of AL, only reporting the result is not enough. However, commenting on the finding is equally necessary. Because many interpretations in a finding can be derived, a clear comment by the researcher is very important. The main point is that a good discussion is not solely saying, “what the study has done, but also what does it mean?” (Paltridge & Starfield, 2007, p. 154). Furthermore, Basturkmen (2009) stated that commenting on findings is necessary because writers try to persuade the reader through their explanations on the finding. Therefore, researchers in the Applied Linguistics field seem to make necessary comments on their findings besides simply reporting.

**Table 5.1**

Comparison of the main rhetorical functions of the R&D sections in AL Master's dissertation

<b>Moves/ Subjects</b>	<b>This study</b>	<b>Ng. &amp; Pram. (2015)</b>	<b>Chen &amp; Kuo (2012)</b>	<b>Nodushan (2012)</b>
	<b>Malaysian ESL Combined R&amp;D</b>	<b>Vietnamese EFL Combined R&amp;D</b>	<b>International (online database)</b>	<b>Iranian EFL</b>
<b>Move 1: Introducing the Results-Discussion chapter</b>	100%	100%	R-100%	-
			D-100%	D-93%
<b>Move 2: Reporting results</b>	100%	100%	R- 100%	-
			D-100%	D-100%
<b>Move 3: Commenting on results</b>	100%	100%	R-100%	-
			D-100%	D-100%
<b>Move 4: Summarizing results</b>	100%	45%	R-30%	-
			D-100%	D-93%
<b>Move 5: Summarizing the study</b>	90%	0%	-	-
			-	D-83%
<b>Move 6: Evaluating the study</b>	40%	18%	R-30%	-
			D-0	D-61%
<b>Move 7: Deductions from the (research) study</b>	20%	27%	R-0	-
			D-0	D-100%
<b>Move 8: Concluding one's study/section</b>	30%	100%	R-0	-
			D-0	-

As can be seen from Table 5.1, the first three moves appeared with similar importance in all the groups of the MA applied linguistics dissertations. Therefore, quoting from Chen and Kuo (2012), it can be emphasised, “the occurrence of the first three moves representing the primary function of the corpora” (p.37).

### **5.3 Rhetorical structure in the combined R&D sections**

The previous section discussed the communicative purpose of the combined R&D sections. Besides identifying the main functions, this is also crucial to look into the overall structure of a genre. In this procedure, we can have an understanding of the writing practice of a community. Hence this section is aimed to answer the second research question proposed for this study.

#### **5.3.1 What are the rhetorical structures of the combined Results and Discussion sections?**

The finding of this study shows that the ESL Master’s dissertations are comprised of 8 moves and 20 functional steps. The frequency of these moves ranges from 20% to 100%. All the moves were realised by a variety of steps. Each move has one to six steps. Although the move framework adapted for the analysis has 28 steps in it, however, in this ESL corpus, 20 steps appeared as functional. The frequency of the steps ranges from 10% to 100%. As can be seen from Table 5.2, the ESL texts also have steps that newly appeared. The rhetorical structure is given in the table below.

**Table 5.2**

The rhetorical structure of R&amp;D section

<b>Move 1: Introducing the Results-Discussion chapter</b>	
	Reviewing the background of the study
	How the chapter is presented
	Reviewing the previous chapter
	* Justify procedure and terms used in the study
<b>Move 2: Reporting results</b>	
	Section structure
	Locating graphics and tables, examples
	*Data commentary or explanation
	Reporting major findings
	*Referring to previous studies/ strategies
	Introducing next section
<b>Move 3: Commenting on results</b>	
	Interpreting results
	Comparing results with literature
	Evaluating results
	Accounting for results
<b>Move 4: Summarising results</b>	Making conclusions of results
<b>Move 5: Summarising the study</b>	Summarising the study briefly
<b>Move 6: Evaluating the study</b>	
	Indicating significance/advantage of the study
	*Evaluating methodology
<b>Move 7: Deductions from the (research) study</b>	
	Making suggestions
<b>Move 8: Concluding one's study/section</b>	
	Introducing the next chapter content

*New steps \**



In comparison to the previous studies, the present study found variances in the ESL rhetorical structuring. Ruiying & Allison, (2003) studied the results, discussion, and the following sections of RAs. They identified 6 moves and 7 steps in the result sections. Additionally in the discussion section, 7 moves and 10 steps were identified. Nodushan's (2012) study on Iranian Master's discussion chapters reported seven (7) moves in the corpus. In this study, move 1, move 2, move 3, and move 5 had no steps and other moves had 3 to 4 steps. Chen and Kuo (2012) in their study identified seven (7) moves in the results chapters along with seventeen (17) steps in them. In the discussion chapters, they discovered eight (8) moves, which include 15 steps. Another comparative study, (e.g. Jalilifar et al., 2012) conducted on Iranian and international journals, discussion chapters reported nine (9) moves. Their study followed the framework by Dudley and Evans (1994) for the analysis. In the chosen discussion corpus, two (2) frequent moves, such as information move and claims were observed. The first one refers to providing background information and the latter one is generally found at the end of the discussion.

Some current studies (Nguyen & Pramoolsook, 2015; Soleimani & Soleimani, 2015) also attempted to find rhetorical patterns in the Master's results and discussion (R&D) chapters. Nguyen and Pramoolsook's (2015) study on twenty-four (24) Vietnamese Master's TESOL dissertations revealed 7 moves and 23 steps in the results chapters. In the discussion chapters, 8 moves and 20 steps were identified. All of the moves consisted of steps. Unlike the separate R&D chapters in the combined eleven (11) R&D sections, they found 8 moves and 25 steps. In these, move 1: Introducing the Results-Discussion chapter, move 2: reporting results, and move 3: commenting on results appeared as obligatory moves in the combined R&D corpus. Another study by Soleimani and Soleimani (2015) concentrated on MA TEFL Iranian students' dissertations discussion chapters. By following the framework by Hopkins

and Dudley Evans (1988), they analysed 30 discussion chapters. Six moves were identified in this corpus, in them, move 2: statement of the results appeared as an obligatory move and move 1: information appeared as a conventional move. Dobakhti (2016) followed Swales (1990) move framework in order to analyse 15 qualitative RAs. The results revealed 11 moves and 15 steps in the applied linguistics (AL) discussion chapters. However, move 2, 6, 7, 8, 10 and 11 were not realised by any step. Move 1 step 1: state finding was found in 100% of the corpus. Move 2: referring to data, move 3: comment on finding and move 5: compare finding with literature were found as a conventional move in the corpus.

The finding for this study is consistent with the previous studies by Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2015) as well as Chen and Kuo (2012). These studies were also conducted on AL Master's dissertations. However, unlike the present study, the moves in the EFL combined R&D chapters consisted of 25 steps. The ESL texts in the present study found 20 functional steps. Chen and Kuo (2012) carried out an analysis of 20 international Master's dissertations. They identified seven (7) moves and seventeen (17) steps in the result chapters and eight (8) move in the discussion chapters, which consisted of 15 steps. Therefore, the ESL dissertations in this study also have a similar number of moves in the R&D chapters. However, from the discussion, it is evident the number of steps appearing in this study is distant from the previous studies. From the rhetorical structure presented, the AL combined R&D section also carries a similar communicative purpose like the EFL group of texts.

In the rhetorical structure, each of these moves includes steps. As discussed above, some of these steps are obligatory, some are conventional, and some are optional. A move is a communicative unit in a text that carries a specific communicative purpose and might carry several steps. However, while the move carries a general communicative purpose, the step presents the "rhetorical means of realising the function of Move" (Ruiying & Allison, 2003,

pg. 370). In this present study, the first three moves function as the main communicative purpose of the chosen genre. Among these three moves, the representing result and commenting on results appeared to be more frequent. The steps in moves 2, such as M2S2- Locating graphics and tables, examples, M2S3-Data Commentary or explanation and M2S4- Reporting major findings described the main rhetorical purpose of the moves 2. In move 3, M3S1-Interpreting results and M3S3-Evaluating results appeared in 100% of the corpus. Therefore, these two steps show the rhetorical function of that move. However, although move 1 is the obligator moves in this text, their appearances in a text segment is less than move 2 and move 3. This shows that moves 2 and move 3 play the most important role in presenting the results and discussion of the Master's dissertations. A possible interpretation for this is that "in the Discussion section the communicative focus is on 'Commenting on results' whereas the focus is on 'Reporting results' in the Results section" (Ruiying & Allison, 2003, p. 377).

#### **5.4 Metadiscourse in R&D sections**

The present study also aimed to observe the metadiscourse (MD) forms used in the ESL Master's dissertations. It looked particularly into the hedge and booster forms. In this purpose, Hyland's (2005, 1995) metadiscourse framework was followed. This framework was chosen because of its holistic and reliable nature. Through this framework, it was possible to answer the third research question, reach. In this section of the study, a discussion on the on the MD features identified is presented.

##### **5.4.1 How are the interactional metadiscourse devices used in the combined Results and Discussion sections?**

From the discussion above, a key feature of academic texts depends on the writer's way of reporting and commenting on the findings of previous studies. A major expectation

for academic writing is writers must refer to the works of others (Hyland, 2002, p.115). Reporting this information does not only depend on the general way of structuring a sentence. Rhetorical features, such as reporting verbs, modals, adverbials etc. are highly used in academic writing in creating a rhetorically correct sentence. By applying these features, writers create a text which stands with that discourse community and creates a clear communication with the readers.

The data illustrated in the previous chapter shows that the ESL Master's students applied hedge markers less frequently than boosters. Additionally, the finding shows that writers might have been facing difficulties in using different forms and varieties of hedges. The finding can be linked with the study by Kim and Lim (2015). Their analysis of the L2 research articles discussion chapters showed second language learners' inability in hedging research claims. A similar observation was reported in Wishnoff's research (2000). Wishnoff (2000) also reported the possible struggles students face in hedging their writing. As a result, the L2 writers' writings appeared to be "direct" and "offensive" (p.123). He reasoned that the inability in acquiring the pragmatic fluency "to convey and interpret meaning" (p.120) possibly hinders the L2 writers in producing successful writing. From his statement, it can be said the writers' L1 community has a large effect on L2 students' textual constructions. This is a point similar to Hyland's (2004) observation on the L2 Hong Kong students. He emphasised that "the way writers express themselves have a close connection with the context and community" (p.148).

#### **5.4.1.1 Hedging in ESL corpus**

From the analysis, it can be seen that ESL writers have chosen some hedge forms more frequently than others. The writers in reporting and discussing their findings depended mostly on modals. The epistemic modals in hedging typically showed writers' "assumptions and assessment of possibilities" (Coates, as cited in Hardjanto, 2016, p.38). According to

Coates (1987), “epistemic modality in most cases indicates the speaker’s confidence or lack of confidence in the truth of the proposition”. This definition is much related to the findings of this study. The higher frequency of modals shows that writers using modals presented uncertainty in their propositions. After the epistemic modals, the epistemic lexical verbs and adverbs appeared frequently in this corpus. This finding can be supported by the studies conducted on different groups of genres. Tran and Duong (2013) conducted a comparative study between two disciplinary genres. Their findings reported that the applied linguistics discipline consists of more modal verbs. Similar to this study, they found that epistemic lexical verbs appeared as the second highest and adverbs as the third highest. A recent study (Hardjanto, 2016) also reported that the linguistics discipline mostly consisted of modals in hedging. He emphasised that the modals are central to any academic writing. Through these verbs, writers can present their claims with caution and precision.

The most prevalent modal in the ESL corpus was ‘can’. This verb also appeared in other forms such as ‘could’ in the corpus. The second most frequent modal used in hedging was ‘would’. At this point, the finding is identical to the study by Hardjanto (2016). ‘Would’ was the second most frequent hedge form in the linguistics RAs. Unlike this study, the word ‘may’ was the most frequent modal used in hedging. This is an obvious difference with Hyland’s (1998) corpus. The modal ‘would’ was deliberately reported as the most frequent hedge marker in his study.

The result for this part of the analysis has shown most MD markers appeared in move 3, commenting on results. This is followed by move 2 and the least number of MD appeared in move 1. Move 3 is “arguably the key communicative focus of the discussion of results section” (Basturkmen, 2009, p.242). A possible example can be Ruiying and Allison’s (2003) study. They have reported the higher frequency of move 3 in the discussion sections of

Applied Linguistics (AL). According to them, move 3 ‘involves the ways results can be interpreted in the context of the study’ (p.374). Therefore, commenting on the result reflects writers’ ways of successful presentations of propositions. This helps in understanding the discourse community and their communicative purpose. Thus, the higher usage of MD marker in move 3 is not surprising. According to the finding, move 3, commenting on the result was heavily hedged in comparison to other moves. However, the booster markers were used more frequently in move 2, reporting the result.

The most frequently used hedge markers found in move 3 are: can, could, would and may. As can be seen in Table 3.2, Hyland (1998) classifies accuracy-oriented hedges as a type of content-oriented hedge that include two types of attribute hedges and reliability hedges. Accuracy-oriented hedges “imply that the proposition is based on plausible reasoning in the absence of certain knowledge” (Hyland, 1996, p. 440). Attribute hedges that are mostly expressed through precision adverbs allow increasing the accuracy of the proposition. Reliability hedges (Hyland, 1998) state the degree of certainty that “indicates the writers’ confidence in the truth of a proposition” (Hyland, 1996, p. 441). The main motivation for using these types of hedges is the writer’s “desire to clarify the state of knowledge, a hedge against complete accuracy, rather than a wish to seek protection against overstatement” (Hyland, 1998, p. 167). In this study, in commenting on the result, writers mostly have used accuracy-oriented hedges or writer-oriented hedges that are mostly modal verbs (e.g. can, could, may, would). Some examples of modal verbs in move 3 are listed below,

*“Therefore, the images in the dialogues **can** be categorized as Given information while [...]”.*

*“However, this establishment of the frame **can** be considered to be insignificant since it occurs[...].”.*

*“This suggests that the durational results **could** be due to phrase-final lengthening.”*

*“The use of low frequency words inaccurately **may** actually distort an essay.”*

All of the sentences are examples of move 3, where writers commented on their findings. Therefore, writers of Master's dissertations can attempt to use modal verbs like *can or could or may* in order to downplay their certainty about the hypothesis.

#### **5.4.1.2 Boosters in ESL corpus**

In comparison to the hedge markers, the frequency of boosters appeared slightly higher in this corpus. The finding can be seen in Table 4.7. Additionally, the Master's dissertations consisted of various forms of the booster. The higher frequency of boosters in the AL discipline is consistent with the finding from the previous studies (e.g. Hu & Cao, 2015; Peacock, 2006). However, the frequent use of boosters indicated the writer's awareness of the target audience (Hyland, 2005). Peacock's (2006) study on 216 RAs showed a higher incidence of booster markers in the discipline of language and linguistics. He added that the greater use of boosters indicates its significant function in persuading the target audience. In another study, Hu and Cao (2015) analysed 120 post-method sections of three (3) social science disciplines. They also reported a higher frequency of boosters in Applied Linguistics (AL) research articles (RAs). They pointed out that boosters were functioning as the knower coder in this genre. The function of knower coder highlights the "unique insight of the knower" (Maton, as cited in Hu & Cao, 2015, p. 20).

The most frequently used booster form in this corpus was lexical verbs. This finding is relatable with the study by Dobakhti (2013). She studied 200 discussion chapters of applied linguistics (AL) research articles (RAs). The study showed that writers of the AL disciplines used lexical verbs more than other forms of the booster. The predominant lexical verb in her corpus was 'show'. This verb also appeared highest in frequency in the study by Peacock (2006). Similar to their studies, the present study also identified the higher frequency of the

word ‘show’, which appeared in different forms, such as shows, shown, showed, etc. Similar to her work, the second most frequently occurred booster form was ‘adverb’ and this is followed by adjectives. From this finding, it can be said that the ESL writers attempted to show evidence of their claims. With the usage of the two frequent lexical verbs ‘found’ and ‘show’, writers possibly were trying to “to minimise their personal involvement in their findings, exercise caution, and appear more objective [...]” (Peacock, 2006).

The result has shown that most booster markers appeared in Move 2, reporting the result. The most prevalent category was lexical verbs. Similar to hedges, all the verbs that had the same meaning were put together to have a more accurate idea about the occurrence of that verb. According to the finding, the predominant verbs are ‘found’ and ‘show’ in move 2. The verb ‘show’ appeared more than other verbs in this move. The verb was used mostly with reference to the findings to demonstrate that the proposition is drawn from the evidence and the writer is certain about the outcomes of the study. As Hyland (1998, p. 370) also found in his corpus, in this context, the writers used boosters “to stress the strength of warrants, suggesting the efficacy of the relationship between the data and claims”. The verb ‘found’ was used in presenting writers’ voices about the finding than showing any consistency with other literature. Unlike this study, Dobakhti (2011) reported that writers used the lexical verb ‘found’ in order to compare the findings with the literature. In short, it can be said that in presenting the finding, writers showed their certainty in the finding. Some examples are given below,

*“A total of 355 nouns out of 631 NIL words were **found** in the 100 compositions.”*  
(D6)

*“Action process is the most frequently **found** process (37%) in all the dialogue [...].”*  
(D3)



*“in their Score A while 23 respondents **showed** a decline in performance during their post-test.” [D7]*

*“Both examples (example 25 and 26) **show** their own maturity of writing and the way of thinking.” [D8]*

The function of the booster in written texts undoubtedly is essential and complementary. However, researchers of genre analysis who are focused on these rhetorical features have shown concern about being too direct in propositions. In academic writings, writers particularly need to be persuasive and polite in order to present their claims. This requires them to distance themselves from the claims they make to build a vigorous discussion. Alternatively stated, writers need to be less straightforward or direct in presenting their propositions. Hence the higher frequency of boosters in L2 academic texts is a concern that needs to be addressed.

Directing to L2 writing, Hyland (1994) stated that the proper application of hedging devices is yet to be mastered by the second language speakers. As a result, L2 learners appear more direct in English academic writings. In a recent study, Kim and Lim (2015) concluded that the application of hedge in writing is critical for L2 writers. Hence, the L2 groups of writers seemed to be dependent on certainty markers, such as booster. Hyland (2005) also reported that the boosters were more frequently found features in L2 writers' texts. This often leads to an informal form to “strengthen claims and emphasise the truth of a statement” (p. 131). This similar tendency is noticed among students from Hong Kong University. Accordingly, Hyland (2005) found over half of the epistemic devices in the L2 essays functioned as boosters. This similar finding was seen in Vassileva's (2001) work. She also observed the higher frequency of booster in English texts written by the Bulgarian academics. She reported, “greater detachment and more commitment” in Bulgarian writers' propositions.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented a discussion of the findings. All of the three research questions are addressed in this chapter. First, the finding from the move analysis was discussed. In this part, the communicative purpose of the combined R&D sections was discussed. This part of the chapter also focused on the move/ step frequencies and the cyclicity. Following the discussion on the communicative purpose, the next section addressed the rhetorical structure of the R&D texts. Afterwards, the metadiscourse devices identified in the corpus were discussed. In the section on metadiscourse discussions, hedging and boosters were presented.

### **5.5.1 Overview of the study**

This genre-based study looked to study the pattern of the genre and interactional metadiscourse (MD) features, such as hedges and boosters in the combined results and discussion chapters of Master's (MA) dissertations. The study aimed to find out the generic pattern and the communicative purpose of the applied linguistics Master's dissertations. The study also sought to identify the forms of hedges and boosters in this combined result and discussion (R&D) chapters. The corpus chosen for this study is compiled of Master's dissertations produced in the University of Malaya. The texts were taken from the university online repository. For the purpose of genre analysis, Nguyen and Pramoolsook's (2015) framework was followed. Hyland's (1996, 1998, 2005) interactional taxonomy was adapted to analyse the hedge and booster markers. The corpus was analysed using two concordance software, which are AntCont and TagAnt. This software allowed us to find out the moves/steps coded previously and to identify the forms of hedge and booster markers in the corpus. The theoretical framework of move analysis allowed us to understand the moves and

steps in the chosen corpus. It helped in understanding the functions of the text and its communicative purposes. From the theoretical framework of hedges and boosters, it was possible to understand the identified words in the corpus, which are actually functioning as forms of hedge and booster.

### **5.5.2 Summary of the findings**

The study aimed to pursue three objectives. The first objective was to look at the communicative purposes of the combined result and discussion (R&D) chapters. The study looked into the functions of each sentence. From the frequency of the move and step, the communicative purpose was revealed. The study found four (4) obligatory moves in the combined R&D chapters. These moves are, move 1: introducing the results-discussion chapter, move 2: reporting results, move 3: commenting on results, and move 4: summarising results. The analysis shows the main communicative purposes of these combined results and discussion chapters are to provide a report of the analysis and comment on the findings. In reporting results, writers particularly indicate the visual aids, an explanation from the visuals, and deliver the major findings. Alongside through the comments, writers focus on interpretation and evaluation of the results. In addition, this combined R&D chapters also intends to provide background information and a summary of the results. The study also attempted to find out the generic structure of the combined R&D chapters. The structure of the R&D chapters consisted of 8 moves and 20 functional steps. All of the moves have 1 to 6 steps. In relation to the previous studies on the similar discipline and genre, the combined R&D chapters of ESL texts also have 8 functional moves in it. This showed the effect of the disciplinary community and the genre community.

The investigation continued to find out the forms of hedges and boosters in this corpus. It was the third objective of the study. The findings showed that the frequency of boosters and hedging are not very distant. However, these ESL groups of writers applied more boosters than the hedge makers. This also indicates the balance in the use of these two metadiscourse markers shows the effective roles writers have in presenting their claims. In hedging, writers applied different forms of modal verbs that show “speaker’s confidence or lack of confidence in the truth of proposition” (Coates, 1987). In contrast, in expressing certainty, writers are mostly dependent on the different forms of lexical verbs. In short, it can be said the ESL writers in presenting their findings and discussions have shown confidence and certainty. The finding of this study is consistent with the study by Dobakhti (2011).

### **5.5.3 Limitation of the study and suggestion for future research**

The findings from this present study have already created a place for future research. This comes with several limitations that show future recommendations for more research. One of the main limitations of this study is the number of studies chosen for the corpus. Because this study is mostly qualitative in nature, only 10 files are analysed. In future studies, an investigation on a large group of corpus may bring forth a robust outcome. This study also concentrated only on the combined results and discussion chapters as it is prevalent in students’ papers. However, an analysis of different organisational patterns of results and discussion chapters may benefit in looking at the textual constructions from different perspectives. Additionally, this study has only chosen one chapter from ESL Master’s dissertations. In future studies, an analysis of the complete dissertations may put insights into the textual construction of other parts of the texts.

In terms of studying metadiscourse features, the present study focused only on the forms of hedge and booster markers. A future study might investigate the forms and functions

of all the metadiscourse features in the dissertations that can be beneficial. Future research can also extend this study by investigating metadiscourse forms in moves and steps as well. This may help in understanding how writers achieve a communicative purpose through these rhetorical devices.

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