Research Paper

Analyzing the Rhetorical Move Structure of MOOC's Descriptions

Ahmad Hajeer[*]

[1]Budapest Business University, Department of International Business Languages
a7.hajeer@gmail.com

Abstract

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) provide digital learning opportunities for students worldwide. Most of the MOOC platforms include a course description which plays a critical role in informing potential participants about the course (e.g., requirements and syllabus) and in persuading them to enroll in it. Even though a large number of studies addressed MOOCs, except for Hajeer's (2020) pilot study, none of them have addressed the rhetorical function of MOOC descriptions. Therefore, this study sets out to reveal the rhetorical move structure of MOOC descriptions. A corpus of 70 MOOC descriptions was compiled from an online MOOC platform called Udemy.com. The outcomes of the rhetorical move structure analysis made it possible to propose a Rhetorical Move Structure (RMS) model for the study of MOOC descriptions and show that MOOC descriptions consist of seven main moves; namely, *Presenting Credentials, Introducing the offer, Highlighting Benefits, Incentivizing, Soliciting Action, Defining the Audience and Presenting Proof.*

Keywords: *Genre analysis, Course description, MOOC, Rhetorical Move Structure*

Introduction

Over the past few decades, the rapid growth of technology has revolutionized several aspects of human life, including education. With technology providing the tools to interact, the number of platforms MOOCs has augmented. Hoy (2014) defines MOOCs as "online classes that anyone, anywhere can participate in, usually for free. They are made up of short video lectures combined with computer-graded tests and online forums where participants can discuss the material or get help" (pp. 85-86). The objective of MOOC descriptions is therefore not merely to inform but also to attract students interested in a topic to take a specific course. This challenges

the application of the conventional perception of the aim of traditional course descriptions, which is to inform students taking a particular course about its aims, content, and requirements. Many studies have been conducted regarding the learners, instructors, and providers of MOOCs, among others (e.g., Hone & El Said, 2016; Hoy, 2014; Hew & Cheung, 2014; Guo et al., 2014; Christensen et al., 2013; Mackness & William, 2010), but none of them, to the best of my knowledge, have approached MOOC descriptions from a generic point of view. Therefore, based on corpus data, this research intends to explore the genre of MOOC descriptions to reveal its emerging stereotypical rhetorical move structure (RMS) and its communicative purposes. The current investigation intends to answer the following questions:

Q1. What is the rhetorical move structure of MOOC descriptions?
Q2. What is the communicative purpose(s) of each move and step?
Q3. How can the genre of MOOC descriptions be modeled in terms of its rhetorical move structure?

Theoretical Background
Swales's (1981, 1990) rhetorical move structure approach focuses principally on the communicative purpose of a section (a sentence or more) of a specific text. According to Swales (1981), a text consists of many parts and each part has a distinctive communicative function that it seeks to achieve; this communicative intent is not impartial as it contributes to the key intention of the whole text. Thus, as defined by Biber et al. (2007), a move "refers to a section of a text that performs a specific communicative function" (p. 23). To give an example, Bhatia's (1993) Sales Promotion Letter's model follows this form of scrutiny (i.e., rhetorical move structure) and it claims that the major goal of the SPL is to convince the recipient of the letter to purchase a product or a service. However, each move has its purpose; for instance, *pressure tactics,* which aim to put pressure on the client, at the same time contribute to the main goal of the letter, namely, to persuade. Another characteristic of moves is that they do not have a standard length, that is the length of the moves varies (Connor & Mauranen, 1999). Besides, some types of moves reoccur in a particular genre which is why they are called conventional, whereas other moves do not occur as frequently and are labeled as optional (Kanolksilpatham, 2007).

By applying RMS theory in the academic field (e.g., for the study of research articles), Swales (1981) worked toward helping non-native students enter the academic discourse community by facilitating the academic writing process. Put differently, when students are aware of the particles (i.e., moves or steps) that constitute a particular genre, it becomes easier for them to associate these parts with their functions (i.e., communicative purposes). This knowledge guides students in the process of producing effective academic research papers. RMS theory led to the development of the Create a Research Space (CARS) model by Swales (1990), which may be used to analyze the structure of the introduction sections of academic research articles.

Even though move analysis was first developed by Swales (1981) to help non-native speakers in writing research papers, the framework, thenceforth, has found its way into other areas of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teaching such as English for Business and English for Communication (Kanoksilapatham, 2007). For instance, to reveal the rhetorical move structure of the genre of Sales Promotion Letters, Bhatia's (1993) examination of this genre yielded a model that consists of seven moves, each of them with a communicative purpose to attain. These communicative purposes help achieve the overall communicative intent of this genre, which is to persuade the audience to buy a product or a service. These moves are,

establishing credentials, introducing the offer, soliciting a response, enclosing documents, and using pressure tactics.

Hajeer's (2020) RMS Model for the MOOC Descriptions Genre

The objective of this pilot study was to devise a model that is both theories- and data-based to make sure that it is capable of revealing the generic characteristics of the MOOC description genre in terms of its rhetorical move structure. This study used Biber et al.'s (2007) top-down approach (see Appendix B for more detail about the top-down approach) to identify the organizational pattern of MOOC descriptions. The first step of this approach is investigating the genre to gain a deeper understanding of its special nature (Biber et al., 2007). After studying a corpus that consists of altogether 15 MOOC descriptions, it was discovered that the genre shares many resemblances with Bhatia's (1993) SPL rhetorical move structure. Therefore, Bhatia's SPL model was chosen as a starting point for conducting the analysis (Hajeer, 2020).

Still, Bhatia's (1993) SPL move structure needed to be modified to make it compatible with the stereotypical generic characteristics of MOOC descriptions. These modifications were based on iterative text analysis (hence its data-based nature) and resulted in the final, theory- and data-based version of the model referred to here as the Rhetorical Move Structure of MOOC Descriptions Model (see Figure 1). This model is going to be used to analyze the MOOC Description corpus of the current study. The (preliminary) theory- and data-based MOOC Descriptions Model consists of seven main moves, namely, Personal Credentials, Introducing the Offer, Benefits, Incentivizing, Soliciting Response, Audience Targeting, and Proof. It is also worth noticing that the moves in MOOC descriptions lack a canonical order of moves/steps, as at this phase of the investigation it was not possible to spot a systematic arrangement of the moves in MOOC descriptions (Hajeer, 2020).

Although Hajeer's (2020) pilot study investigated a yet uncharted genre at the time, it was a pilot study that studied a limited corpus consisting of 15 MOOC descriptions only. Still, as its findings brought new insights for several areas within genre analysis (the study of discourse and rhetorical move structure, ESP, etc.), it motivated further research in the field. Hence the present research. As, however, the current research is conducted on a considerably larger corpus, rather unsurprisingly, its outcomes demonstrate certain discrepancies with Hajeer's earlier 2020 study.

Method
Criteria and Procedures of Corpus Design

The procedure of corpus design took place over one the year 2020-2021. Altogether, a corpus of 70 MOOC descriptions was collected from one MOOC platform called Udemy.com. MOOC descriptions in Udemy.com are written by the tutors themselves; therefore, the odds of encountering irregularities and new techniques in the descriptions are higher than in a platform where the descriptions are written by the platform (i.e., marketing/sales specialists or directors). The criteria of selecting texts to be included in the corpus are based on the number of words which is between 600-1000 words as this is the average number of words in most of the observed MOOC descriptions. In addition, descriptions with this number of words are more likely to include pertinent data for the study

Procedures of Corpus Analysis

The procedures of data analysis started with incorporating the corpus into Atlas. ti v7.5.7. This software is used in qualitative research, and it provides a function that helps in manually assigning tags for text units. The process started by identifying the moves and the steps that were

previously identified for the rhetorical move structure analysis of MOOC descriptions in a pilot study (Hajeer, 2020; see Figure 1 for more detail).

After identifying the moves and steps following Hajeer's (2020) Rhetorical Move Structure model of MOOCs Descriptions (Figure 1), the moves and steps of the corpus were separated into sub-corpuses (henceforth SC). Each sub-corpus included one type of the identified moves. The analysis was thematic in the sense that the SCs were scrutinized to identify the communicative purposes of each move or step and the communicative strategies for achieving them. This stage was conducted manually by going through each move to identify the employed methods for achieving the communicative purposes.

Figure 1
Hajar's (2020, p. 14) Rhetorical Move Structure Model of MOOC Descriptions
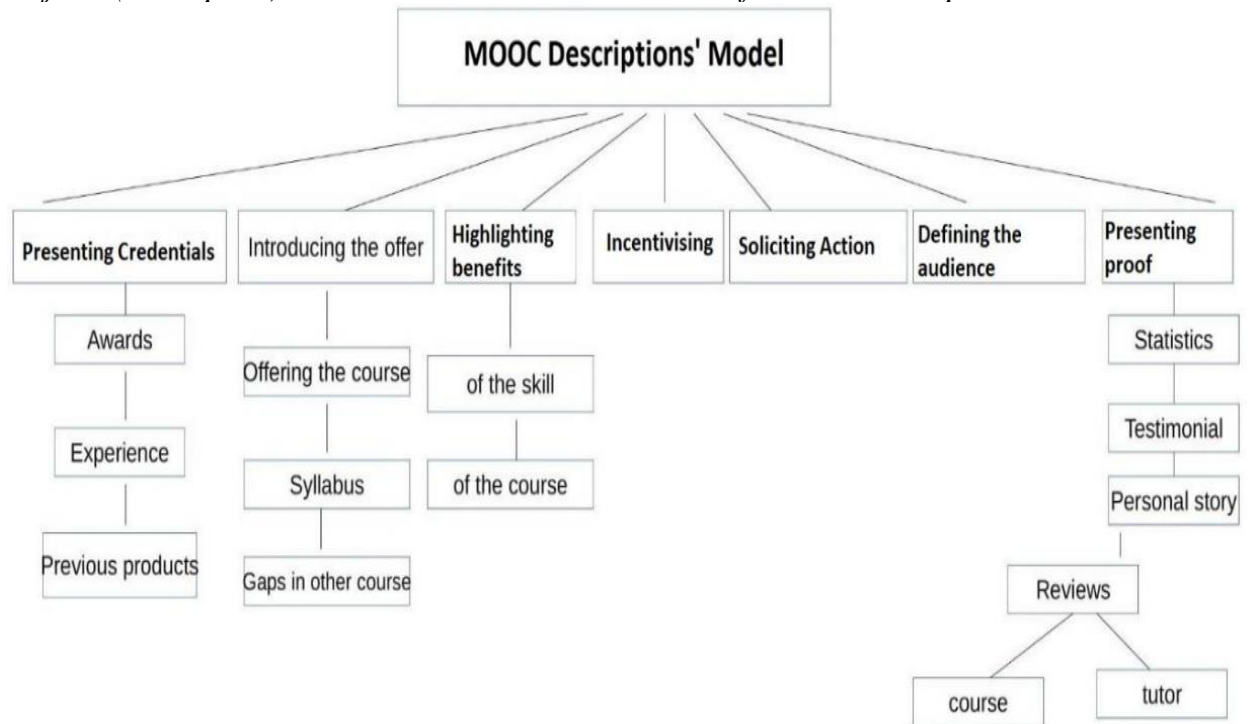
Note. Adapted from "Rhetorical Move Structure of Massive Open Online Courses' Descriptions" by A. Hajeer, 2020, *English for Specific Purposes World, 61*(22), p. 14. Copyright 2020 by English for Specific Purposes World.

Reliability and the Validity of the Coding Procedure

The process of ensuring the validity and reliability of the RMS started with training another coder (co-coder) to code the MOOC description by providing a definition and examples of each move and step. Afterward, ten MOOC descriptions were randomly chosen from the corpus using online software called random.org and separately coded by me and by another coder. Then, the two codings were compared, and the discrepancies (14%) were identified. These differences were negotiated with the co-coder after which an agreement was reached in each case.

Statistics Related to the Corpus

The MOOC description (MD) corpus consists of altogether 1,229 moves and steps. The largest number of moves belongs to the PROOF SC (M7), which consists of 315 steps. The

majority of the moves belong to the *Reviews* SC (M7-S1). The lowest number of moves belongs to the *Soliciting Action* SC (M5), with a total of 91 moves (see Table 1).

Table 1
The Number of Words per Moves

	Move	Word	Avg. word/move
Move	N=1229	N=58960	
M1 Presenting credentials	**131**	**4564**	
M1-S1 Experience	85	3173	37
M1-S2 Other products	21	550	26
M1-S3 Qualification	14	279	19
M1-S4 Addressing needs	11	562	51
M2 Introducing the offer	**156**	**17024**	
M2-S1 Procedure description	70	7294	104
M2-S2 Syllabus	51	8108	159
M2-S3 Gaps	35	1622	46
M3 Highlighting benefits	**203**	**9276**	
M3-S1 of the course	137	5837	42
M3-S2 of the skill	66	3430	52
M4 Incentivizing	188	4792	25
M5 Soliciting action	91	1775	19
M6 Defining the audience	145	7678	53
M7 Proof	**315**	**13851**	
M7-S1 Reviews	232	10678	46
M7-S2 Facts	47	1654	35
M7-S3 Personal story	22	1272	58
M7-S4 Statistics	14	247	18

The current MD corpus consists of 58,960 words in total, and the average number of words per one MOOC description is 842 words. The second SC (i.e., *Introducing the Offer*) includes altogether 17,024 words, which is thus the most dominant move from the point of view of word frequency, while the lowest number of words belongs to *Soliciting Action* SC (M5). As for the steps, the largest number of words are used to write about REVIEWS (M7-S1), while the lowest is to describe *Statistics* (M7-S4) (see Figure 2). As for the average number of words per move or step, *Syllabus* (M2-S2) ranks number one with 159 words per move/step whereas *Statistics* is the last on the list with 19 words only (see Figure 3).

Figure 2
The Number of Words per Sub-corpus
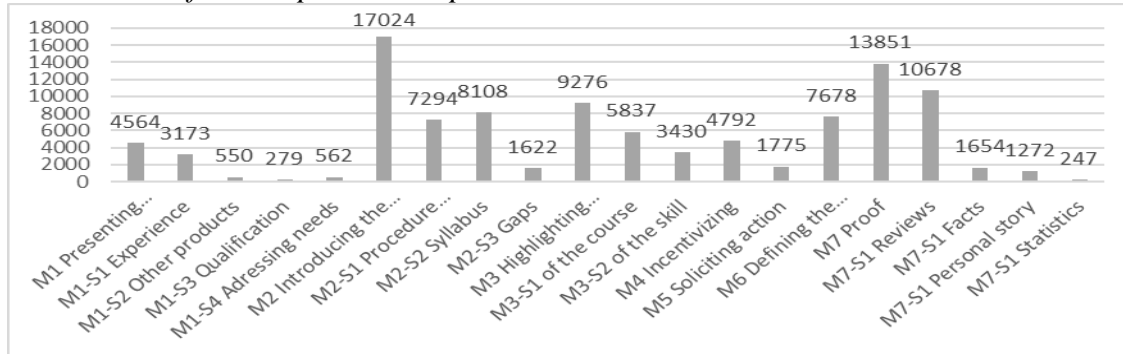
Figure 3
The Number of Words per Move
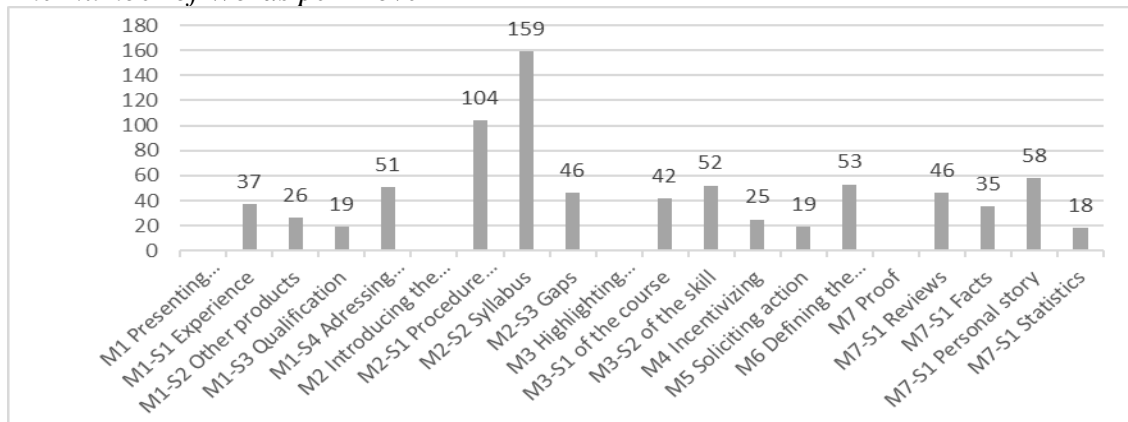
Results and Discussion

This section presents the results of the RMS analysis of the sub-corpuses and discusses these results. The discussion is provided in the following seven subsections devoted to the various moves.

Move 1: *Presenting Credentials* Sub-corpus

According to Hajeer (2020), the main aim of this move is to show the credibility of the tutor of the course. He claimed that it consists of three steps which are *Awards, Experience*, and *Previous Products*.

The present analysis revealed two additional steps, which are *Addressing Needs* (M1-S4) and *Qualifications* (M1-S3). It was also observed that the step *Awards*, which was discovered by Hajeer (2020), occurred only four times in the corpus of the current investigation, three of them were in one MOOC description, therefore, it was deleted.

Experience SC (M1-S1)

One of the employed means to demonstrate the credibility of the tutors is highlighting their experience in a particular field (Hajeer, 2020). This step is customarily introduced in one of three ways. First, starting with a question, for example, "*What makes me qualified to teach you?*" (MD6). Second, when the tutors introduce themselves, for instance, "*I'm David Bombal, and I have been teaching networking courses for over 15 years*" (MD13). Finally, starting this step without an introduction, to illustrate, "*This is based on my 25 years of experience as an SAP*

management consultant" (MD52). The current scrutiny showed that the tutors establish their experience not only in their specializations but also in the field of teaching, for instance, "*quality Instructor who has a corporate training and university teaching background and continues to be an active investor*" (MD30).

The analysis also demonstrated that some MOOC tutors took a quantitative approach to substantiate their experience by highlighting the years of experience or the number of students who took the tutors' courses, for instance, "*I have 10+ years' experience in the digital marketing industry*" (MD35) and "*Over 28 000 students have taken my course*" (MD31). Moreover, many tutors took a qualitative approach to display their experience by accentuating the positive influence of the course on these students, for instance, "*I will go out of my way to help you succeed just like I've done for thousands of my other students*" (MD33).

Working toward stressing their experience, many MOOC descriptions' writers provided the names of the institutions in which they have taught, for example, "*I used to manage a suite of transferable skills courses at the University*" (MD62). They also mentioned the companies that they have worked for, for instance," having *worked with big companies like IBM, Mitsubishi, Fujitsu and Saab in the past*" (MD18).

The results of the analysis may have many implications. One of them is that there might be a correlation between the number of years of experience or the number of the previously taught student and the quality of the course. That is, the higher the numbers the more qualified the instructor is to teach the course. The other implication is regarding the correlation between the mentioned institution or workplace and the quality of the course. Put simply, the more prestigious the institution is, the more qualified the teacher is to teach a MOOC.

Other Products SC (M1-S2)

The goal of this step is to demonstrate the exceptional knowledge of the tutors by revealing information about their contributions to the field that they specialize in. Some instructors name a website that they manage, for example, "*I run a website called The IELTS Teacher*" (MD4). Others cite other MOOCs that they uploaded onto the same platform, for instance, "*My other Udemy courses are the perfect complement to 'German Made Simple*" (MD3). In a different case, the tutor mentioned a book they authored, for instance, "*The professor of this course is also the author of '101 Crucial Lessons They Don't Teach You in Business School'*" (MD39). Another MOOC description included a reference to the positive feedback that the previous courses received, for instance, "*And I have already made an online hacking course which has 20000+ students, and people seemed to like it*" (MD17).

Qualifications SC (M1-S3)

This step was observed 14 times out of altogether 1,229 moves and steps. The purpose of this step is to strengthen the credibility of the tutors by bringing their qualifications to light. The types of these qualifications vary depending on the subject of the MOOC. Some tutors appertain to their university degrees (e.g., BA, MA, or Ph.D.), while others refer to the certificates or the tests which they passed, as the following examples show, "I have a Ph.D. in molecular biology and a master's degree in technical communication" (MD6), and "I hold a chemical engineering degree from the 'Ecole Nationale Supérieur de Chimie de Paris, Chimie ParisTech', one of the top tier chemical engineering schools in Europe" (MD56).

Addressing Needs SC (M1-S4)

The current step was detected 11 times throughout the corpus, nonetheless, it was not discovered in Hajeer's (2020). In Bhatia's (1993) analysis of the SPL, he revealed that one of the ways to present the sender's credential is by addressing the needs of the letter's receiver.

Mentioning the needs of the target audience reflects the knowledge and the experience of the sender in a particular field. This step was used in the present context (i.e., MOOC description) for the same reason. That is, when the tutors addressed the potential students' needs, they indicated that they (i.e., the tutors) have enough experience to scrutinize what the audience needs.

Move 2: Introducing the Offer SC

Hajeer (2020) claimed that "the communicative purpose of this move is to present the offer (i.e., the course) to potential students" (p. 15). Moreover, he stated that this move incorporates three steps, namely, *Offering the Course, Syllabus,* and *Gaps In Other Courses.*

Based on the results of the current larger-scale analysis, two modifications needed to be introduced. Firstly, *Offering the Course* was deleted. Hajeer (2020) defined this step as the step that "provides a concise description of the course that is being offered" (p. 15) and he provided the following example, "Are you ready to take your career to the next level? In this course, you will learn everything you need to know about business from starting a company to taking it public" (p.15). Hajeer's (2020) definition states that this step is a concise description within the MOOC description, which implicates that *Offering the Course* is a summary of the MOOC description. Such description was not detected during the current investigation. Moreover, the previous example which was provided by Hajeer (2020) does not include a concise description of the course, but it mentions the benefits of taking the course. This may indicate that Hajeer's (2020) choice of the example, or perhaps the methods of analysis, depended on the location of the step at the beginning of the MOOC description, rather than depending on the function of the step. The second modification, however, was the addition of a step labeled PROCEDURE DESCRIPTION (M2-S1). This step and the other two steps (i.e., M2-S2 *Syllabus* and M2-S3 *Gaps in Other Courses*) are discussed in further detail in the following subsections.

Procedure Description SC (M2-S3)

The key function of this step is to offer further information regarding how the MOOC is delivered. To accomplish this communicative purpose, MOOC descriptions' writers offered various information regarding the structure, methods of teaching, and tools, among others. The tendency of MOOC instructors to mention further details might be to reduce ambiguity and thus, provide reassurances to the potential students.

One type of the provided detail touches upon the length of the MOOC and the needed time to finish it, for instance, "*This program will take 3 to 4 months till you can complete the course*" (MD45). Moreover, MOOC authors also highlighted the length of the course itself, that is, the combined length of the video recordings, to illustrate, "*This course contains 20 lectures and over 1 hour of video content*" (MD57). Another type of information that MOOC tutors provided is connected to the order of the topics in the course, for example, "there are 3 ways to take this course:1. You can take the entire course in order.2. You can take the entire course in order and then skip ahead when prompted in the lessons to do so" (MD9).

Furthermore, other instructors linked the described course to another one. To explain, they referred to the ideal order of taking the sections in the current course and another MOOC (advertised by the same tutor) on the platform, for instance, "*The ideal path is to study both the Classic interface utilizing this course as well as the Lightning Experience interface using my ADX201 course series*" (MD12).

The authors of MOOC descriptions may also provide further detail regarding the structure of the MOOC by offering a step-by-step guide about how they are going to proceed with the course; for instance, "*First, you will implement modern SEO for your blog, eCommerce, or business. Next, you will build up your social media marketing*" (MD33).

Apart from explaining the structure, many MOOC tutors made sure to discuss their methods and styles of teaching. Most of the tutors described their MOOCs to be engaging, fun, and interactive, for example, "*we've tried extra hard to make this course fun, relevant, entertaining, and punchy*" (MD43). Other tutors assured the potential students that the classes are highly practical with limited theoretical parts, for instance, "*There is little theory – mainly examples, a lot of tips from my own experience*" (MD31). Others, delved into the detail of the teaching methods, for example, "This course is taught with The BA Guide's TEACH, SHOW, DO" (MD37). The reason for this delineation might be argued to be reducing the level of uncertainty regarding the teaching methods. Additionally, some tutors provided explanations and definitions to clarify complicated terms for potential students, for example, "*Modeling is the concept of making complex thoughts, ideas, requirements, and processes easier to understand*" (MD37).

Syllabus SC (M2-S2)

Hajeer (2020) recognized the *Syllabus* (M2-S2) as an incorporated step in the *Introducing the Offer* (M2) move. This step includes an account of the topics that are covered in the course, arguably, to familiarize the potential students with the contents of the course. This information is presented in one of two layouts: bullet points or a block of text (see Table 2).

Table 2
The Layouts of the Syllabus Step (M2-S2)

Bullet points	Block of text
Operations and rules of equations	We start with an overview of the quantitative
Simple equations and advanced equations	research process and discuss the main
Like terms	components which include research questions,
Functions and manipulating functions	research hypothesis, research design, data
Inequalities and graphing inequalities	collection, and data analysis.
Graphing points, lines, parabolas, and circles	methods (MD51)
(MD2)	

As shown in Table 13, the two methods of presenting the SYLLABUS (M2-S2) are either a narrative block of text or a list with bullet points. However, in some blocks of text, tutors used boldface letters too to highlight the main sections of the syllabus.

The writers of MOOC descriptions used various ways to organize the syllabus such as dividing them into modules, sections, parts, or topics. For example, "*The course covers the following topics*" (MD13). Furthermore, the tutors utilized different methods when introducing the syllabus. Some provided the syllabus without an introduction while others would add an introductory line such as "*Here is what you will learn*" (MD15).

As for the topics of the syllabus, different approaches characterized their representations. One method is to mention a list of the topics which can be seen in Table 2 above. Other tutors took it a step further by providing a detailed description of each topic, for example, "*Section 2 - Key Insights about the Tourism Industry - Discover Key Insights about the Tourism Industry and its contribution to Global GDP*" (MD69). However, the following example suggests that the

writer supplied detail about the practical implications of the topic, i.e., how this topic would help improve the potential students' knowledge or skill, for example, "*The working basics of the three most fundamental Theories of International Relations, so that you can incorporate the principles of those theories to your arguments* (MD59).

Gaps in Other Courses SC (M2-S3)

According to Hajeer (2020), this step "is utilized by some tutors to accent the excellence of their courses compared to other MOOCs online" (p. 17). That is the writers of MOOC descriptions highlight or implicate the drawbacks of the other courses in the platform to gain a competitive edge over them. Highlighting such gaps in other courses may be accomplished by mentioning them explicitly, for example, "*Unlike another SAP course that just covers a single module, this course covers SD, MM, IM, WM, LE and much more*" (MD53). Notwithstanding, implicating the gaps could also be achieved by highlighting the positive features of the current course compared to others, for instance, "*Drawing Academy is one of, if not the most comprehensive character drawing course out there*" (MD64).

There have been many factors that the tutors exploited to demonstrate the competitiveness of their MOOCs over others' in Udemy.com. Firstly, mentioning the quantity of the material, for instance, "*this course is longer than any other train-the-trainer course on this platform "(*MD8). Others, however, claimed that their methods of teaching are superior to others, for instance "*in schools, colleges, and universities, Quantum Physics is taught with a dry and almost exclusively technical approach which furnishes only a superficial insight on its foundations*" (MD58).

Another aspect that was brought up when the tutors compared their MOOCs to others' is whether such courses are updated or outdated, for example, "*A lot of other courses on Udemy get released once, and never get updated.*" (MD18). Furthermore, the practicality of the course was also a factor that the tutors used to further portray a positive image of their courses, to illustrate, "*The challenge with learning HTML5 today is that most courses focus only on theory and cover every tag without seeing the big picture. However, in my course, you will code HTML, CSS, and JavaScript in more than 25 real-world projects*" (MD23). One more factor of comparison was the sources based on which the course was created, for example, "*Some of the research references include studies from the Harvard Business School, Kelley School of Business, and McKinsey Global Institute.*" (MD32). In this instance, the tutor refers to sources that sound prestigious to distinguish his course.

Apart from painting a favorable image of the courses, some MOOC descriptions included comparisons between the tutors. Surprisingly enough, only the aspect of the experience was considered in these comparisons, "*and you will struggle to find someone with as much industry and training experience as your instructor Frank has*" (MD21).

The communicative purpose of this move was achieved by comparing the promoted MOOC to other MOOCs from many perspectives. The perspectives which were revealed through the analysis are the material quantity, practicality, and the contemporaneity of the course or the experience of the tutors.

Move 3: Highlighting Benefits SC

According to Hajeer (2020), "to add value to the course itself, tutors tend to outline the benefits that readers would receive if they decided to enroll in the course" (p.17). He also mentioned that this move constitutes two steps: *of the Skill* (M3-S2) and *the Course* (M3-S1). The former refers to the benefits of taking the described course itself, while the latter mentions the benefits of learning the skill or the subject itself. The outcomes of the current investigation

coincide with Hajeer's (2020) study in the sense that both studies list the same two steps under this move. The following two subsections attempt to deliver further information regarding these two steps.

Benefits of the Course SC (M3-S1)

The goal of this step is to list the benefits that potential students would gain if they took the course. In most cases, this step is future-oriented, and it discusses the future of the enrollees themselves.

Some tutors claim that taking their courses would improve the professional performance of the students or equip them with the right set of skills that are needed for a particular job, for example, "*In short, you will learn specifically why, what, when, where and exactly how to sell more*" (MD29). Other tutors went as far as guaranteeing that their courses can positively alter the attitude of the students towards their professions or boost their confidence when applying for a job, for instance, "*you will love public speaking by the end of this course*" (MD9). Moreover, in some cases, the writers of MOOC descriptions believe that their courses equip the learners with the knowledge they need to pass an exam in a particular skill and get certified, for example, "*These courses will help you be fully prepared for the CCNA 200-125 exam, or CCENT 100-105 exam, or ICND2 200-105 exam!*" (MD13).

In an attempt to highlight the benefits of taking the course, several tutors portrayed bright images of the future of potential enrollees. These bright images promise outstanding jobs, more money, a better life, or the chance to start more enjoyable jobs, for example, "*You're one of a kind and this course helps you market your unique talents so your business can succeed*" (MD34). Other tutors, however, concentrated on the financial aspect by promising the potential students a higher income, for instance, "*start attracting and enrolling more students and earning passive income from your course every single month*" (MD10).

Benefits of the Skill SC (M3-S2)

The communicative purpose of this step is to present the benefits of the taught skills. That is, it differs from the previous step (i.e., *Benefits of the Course*) in the sense that when instructors present the benefits of acquiring the skill, they refer to the positive outcomes that potential students would gain if they learned the skill itself regardless of what MOOC they choose to enroll in. The tactics which the tutors use to achieve the communicative purpose of this step work in tandem to form a favorable future for the potential enrollees.

Ostensibly, many tutors indicate the importance of the skill in the market. For example, "*Companies throughout the world (from the smallest to the largest) rely on networks designed, installed, and maintained by networking engineers*" (MD13). Other tutors indicate that by referring to the new job opportunities that would be available to the potential student, "*Now is a great time to learn Salesforce and change your career to the cloud*" (MD12). Furthermore, some tutors claimed that the skills which they are teaching would guarantee the potential students an enjoyable work in the future, for instance, "*. You can find the true hacker in yourself. It is a very creative and exciting job*" (MD17). Last, there were surplus references to the high salary jobs that are awaiting the potential students, for instance, "*To get those high paying jobs you need an expert knowledge of Python*" (MD18).

Like the *Benefits of the Course*, the current step aims at accomplishing the local function (mentioning the benefits of learning the skill) and the global one which is to convince the reader to take the course.

Move 4: Incentivizing SC

The Incentivizing SC included 188 (M4) moves. The writers of MOOC descriptions "offer the advantages that a potential student would gain if they decided to enroll in the course. These incentives are designed to give the impression of gaining something extra—other than the recorded lectures—after joining the course" (Hajeer, 2020, p. 18). In other words, the instructors attempt to attract potential students to enroll in their MOOCs by offering them additional gains. The current analysis reveals four main methods which the tutors exploited to incentivize the students which are: personal support, extra material, course updates, and risk-free experience.

First, potential students were offered help by the tutors in many ways. One of these is offering to answer the student's questions regarding the course, for example, "*Free helpful support in the course Q&A when you have questions or get stuck*" (MD22). Another approach was through offering the students to review their projects and give feedback, for instance, "*I'll read your outline and give you my thoughts*" (MD5). Finally, tutors would also offer to add the students to online platforms where they can discuss their questions with other students and with the tutors themselves, for example, "*There is also a Facebook Group for participants on this course. This will allow you to communicate with other people on the course*" (MD26).

Second, some tutors offered the readers additional materials other than the recorded lectures like web-based resources, electronic books, worksheets, and exercises, for instance, "*Plus you get worksheets, checklists, resource lists, real-world examples, and demos so you can apply everything you learn to market your online course*" (MD10).

Third, updating the course is argued to be one of the utilized ways to incentivize the potential students to take their courses. This is a promise to keep the MOOC updated with the latest information available in a particular field, for example, "*I regularly update this course to reflect the current marketing landscape*" (MD33). Finally, a risk-free experience was also offered in almost all the descriptions in the corpus. According to Udemy.com, this incentive is offered by the platform itself, for example, "*you have 30 days to ask Udemy for a refund*" (MD11).

Offering updates, personal support, risk-free experience, and extra materials are how the readers were incentivized to take the course. Incentivizing the students by offering the previously mentioned benefits may be believed to further convince the potential students to enroll in these courses.

Move 5: Soliciting Action SC

As suggested by Hajeer (2020), *Soliciting Actions* (M5) is used by the writers of MOOC descriptions to "remind the readers, more than once, if necessary, to enroll in the course" (p.18) using indirect language. Notwithstanding, the evidence which was collected during the current study suggests otherwise. The results of the analysis demonstrate the usage of not only indirect but also direct means to urge the potential students to enroll in the course, for example, "*Order this course now*" (MD5).

The writers of MOOC descriptions employed many ways to directly encourage the potential students to participate in the course, for example, "*Enroll in this Train the Trainer course today*" (MD8). The orders, nonetheless, were not simply about purchasing or enrolling in the course. Firstly, some of the orders were about gaining the benefits of enrolling in the course such as advancing one's career, increasing one's salary, passing an exam, or gaining a competitive advantage; For instance, "*enroll in this course and get your work done in a very concise, coherent and stylish way*" (MD49). Secondly, another way of instructing the students to take the course was through asking them to join the other students who already joined the course, for instance, "*Join over 13,000 students from 150 different countries*" (MD4). Thirdly, in some

cases, the students were cautioned not to miss the opportunity that the advertised MOOC offers, for example, "*You will not want to miss out on this course*" (MD8).

Apart from the direct imperative method, other tutors applied two indirect approaches to encourage the readers to take their MOOC. The first one includes a question to the potential students, such as "*are you ready?*" (MD39) or "*Why not get started today?*" (MD21). Secondly, some MOOC descriptions exhibited the usage of polite statements that can be interpreted as a warm invitation to enroll in the course. For example, "*I will see you in lesson 1*" (MD44).

Move 6: Defining the Audience SC

Hajeer (2020) mentioned that the objective of the current move is "defining the potential beneficiaries either by listing the features of the MOOC itself or by describing the target audience (i.e., potential students)" (p. 18). The features of the course include the level of difficulty as well as the orientation of the course whether practical or theoretical and the characteristics of the potential enrollee such as age and profession, among others (Hajeer, 2020).

The present research reveals many ways of defining ideal candidates for MOOCs. First, some instructors defined the audience by mentioning their profession or occupation, for instance, "*Who this course is for: Professionals who manage virtual teams, Project Managers, IT Managers, Virtual Team Leaders, Directors*" (MD32). Second, other tutors defined the ideal candidates by referring to their level of knowledge; for instance, the tutor of the following course mentions that the course is for "*Students who took my Beginner's Guide to Information Technology course and want to dive deeper into the world of IT*" (MD70). Other MOOC descriptions' writers chose to widen, instead of narrowing, the criteria for the potential students, for instance, "*Anyone interested in shell scripting or shell programming*" (MD15). Arguably, this might be because they wish to increase the number of enrollees.

The third way of selecting the right audience for the MOOC was through addressing the wishes of the potential students. One of these needs was to pass a particular exam, for example, "*College students taking the course(s) in IT that want to do well on their tests*" (MD70). Other aspirations were linked to improving the potential students' careers or increasing their income. For instance, "*Established coaches, consultants and other service professionals with a desire to turn their expertise into a passive income stream*" (MD10). Some tutors tackled the aspirations of those potential students who would like to improve their knowledge or master a definite subject or skill. To give an example, "*Students who want to learn English: use of articles, prepositions, correct punctuation and idioms*" (MD63).

The analysis divulges some of the tactics that were used such as addressing the needs of the students, mentioning the level of the students or the difficulty of the course, among others. Such techniques might be considered as a way to further persuade the readers to take the course by convincing them that it matches their needs. This, consequently, helps in accomplishing the aim of the MOOC description.

Move 7: Proof

Hajeer (2020) claims that "this move includes many forms of proof that tutors use to back their statements such as statistics, reviews, testimonials, or personal stories" (p. 19). Nonetheless, the results of the current analysis show that *Testimonials* were used only once in the MD corpus, therefore it was excluded. Alternatively, another step labeled FACTS was introduced to the present move as there were many instances where the instructors of MOOCs used unsupported facts to back their claims.
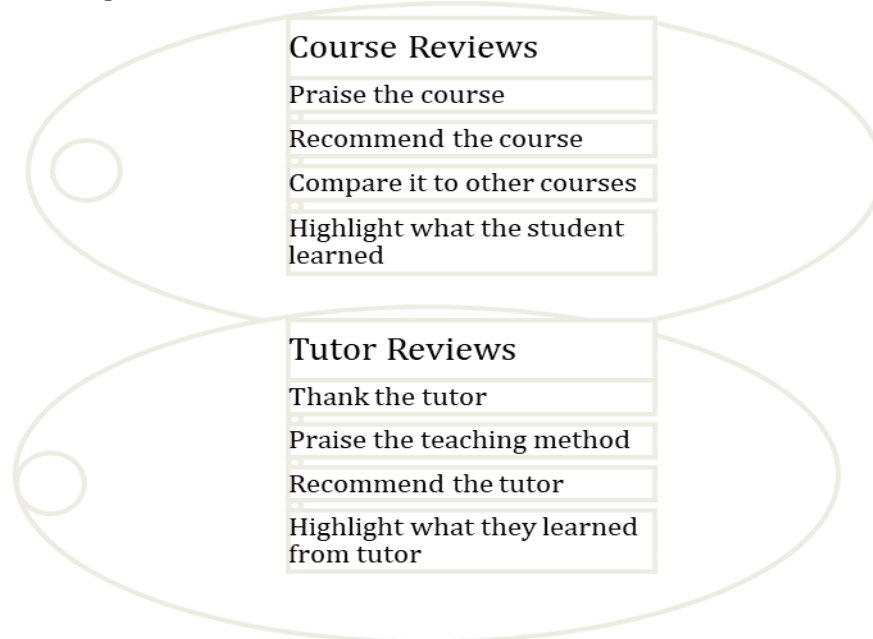
Reviews SC(M7-S1)

Hajeer (2020) defined *Reviews* as "the opinions of previous students regarding the course or the tutor. These reviews are copied from the 'Reviews' section—designed by the platform—and pasted in MOOC descriptions" (p. 19). He also pointed out that there are two types of reviews. The first type provides feedback about the course while the second type is about the tutor.

Although the feedback about the courses was given by a large number of students who came from different backgrounds, four patterns were identified (see Figure 4). The first pattern was found in the reviews which praised the course itself without giving many details, for example, "*Excellent for exam preparation!*" (MD14). Secondly, some students recommended the course to other students. For instance, "*I lovely recommend the course to everyone who wants to improve his speech*" (MD9). Moreover, much feedback was comparison-oriented in the sense that the students were comparing the courses to other ones in the Udemy platform or across MOOCs' platforms. To illustrate, "*, I can say this course is the most practical and readily applicable course on web design and development I have taken*" (MD22). Finally, other students took the feedback a step further and provided detail about what they learned from the course or they mentioned how the course helped them achieve their goals. To give an example, "I have learned a lot from the first few sections. It has taken me from essentially zero programming skill to a level where I'm comfortable using Python to analyze data for my lab reports" (MD18).

As for the feedback on the tutors, the reviews' writers utilized many ways to express their satisfaction with the tutors (see Figure 4). First of all, many of them extended their gratitude towards the tutor by thanking them for providing the course or/and praising the tutors for their experience, helpfulness, knowledge, or style, among others. For instance, "*Thank you Krista for making this so clear and understandable! You are a fantastic tutor*" (MD2). Other than praising the tutors, some other students applauded the teaching methods of the tutors. For example, "*Andy is great. He used visuals for everything he says. I was able to pause him and go to my site and test my understanding*" (MD25). Apart from raising and thanking, many students demonstrated their satisfaction by recommending the tutor (and thus the course) to the readers, for example, "*. His pace is perfect for the beginner so don't be intimidated! Highly recommend*" (MD3).

It is worth mentioning that all the reviews that the students provided were positive. This might be attributed to the fact that these reviews were selected from a set of reviews (provided by the students in the review section) by the instructors and introduced to the MOOC descriptions. Given the promotional nature of MOOC descriptions, it may be argued that the tutors tend to ignore the negative or critical reviews and focus on the favorable ones. It might also be argued that with the difficulty of verifying these reviews, it is easy to assume that they were possibly tampered with.

Figure 4

Communicative Purposes in Course and Tutor Reviews

Course Reviews

Praise the course

Recommend the course

Compare it to other courses

Highlight what the student learned

Tutor Reviews

Thank the tutor

Praise the teaching method

Recommend the tutor

Highlight what they learned from tutor

Facts (M7-S2)

Even though the manifestations of this step do not vary in the style or the communicative purpose (i.e., to back the claims), still, the present research revealed that there are two chief types of the presented facts. The first type provides information about the field, the skill, or the industry itself, for instance, "*The training industry is going through dramatic changes in this current digital era. Just showing up for a day, standing in front of people and reading a few bullet points will no longer cut it*" (MD8). The second type, however, exhibits statements regarding those who are involved in a particular field. For example, "*Many developers make a generous living off of creating custom WordPress themes and selling them on websites like ThemeForest.*" (MD24).

Even though the current step is called *Facts*, this does not imply that the statements themselves are facts, but they were presented as facts. The evidence demonstrates the lack of hints or reference to the sources of such information which is why it seems plausible to regard them as unsupported statements/facts.

Personal Story SC (M7-S3)

The personal stories which were located in MOOC descriptions were mainly about the story of the success of the writers and/or how they helped other students. Put simply, the main aim of this step is to prove to the potential students that the skills developed, or the knowledge taught in the advertised MOOC are indeed useful since they (the skills) proved to be helpful to the tutors themselves. For example, the following extract shows how the instructor provided a personal story to prove the efficiency of the skills that he teaches. For instance, **"**I completely changed my approach. I learned how to maintain a high closing percentage...work less, earn more and enjoy the process a lot more" (MD29).

Some other tutors took this a step further by referring to their role in helping other students succeed. Seemingly, this is a way of proving the practicality of the course by showing that it was not only useful for the tutor, but also other students. For instance, "We've (the tutors) since

helped many team members buff up their data analysis skills and helped students land jobs" (MD43).

Statistics SC (M7-S4)

As ascertained earlier, the key aim of the *Statistics* step is to back the claims of the tutors with different types of (numerical) proof. *Statistics* thus uses the power of numbers to support the statements of the descriptions. Numbers were chiefly used in connection with the number of students who attended the course and the rankings (the students' collective evaluation of the MOOC) of the courses themselves. To give an example regarding the number of enrollers and reviews, "*there are around 100,000 students who have left around 19,000 reviews*" (MD18). The following example, however, exemplifies the usage of the ranking of the courses within the Udemy platform to promote the course and portray it in rather a favorable image, "*#1 MOST PURCHASED BUSINESS COURSE ON UDEMY!*" (MD39).

Conclusions

The current study sought to investigate the genre of MOOC descriptions to uncover its RMS and communicative purpose to be able to propose a theory and data-based model to analyze the RMS of MOOC descriptions. The current investigation revealed that the RMS of MOOCs comprises seven main moves, namely, Presenting Credentials, Introducing the offer, Highlighting Benefits, Incentivizing, Soliciting Action, Defining the Audience, and Presenting Proof. As for the communicative purpose(s) of the moves and the steps, it might be argued that each move or step attempted to positively influence the readers by highlighting the credibility of the tutors, providing extra materials for the students, and criticizing other courses, among others. This may be considered as an attempt to accomplish the main aim of MOOC descriptions, which is to persuade potential students to enroll in a particular MOOC.

The theory- and data-based model, constructed based on the present investigation is shown in Figure 5. The differences between the current RMS analysis and Hajeer's (2020) were taken into consideration. That is, to ensure that the model is sufficiently comprehensive, the moves and steps that were not discovered by Hajeer's (2020) investigation were added to the model (e.g., M1-S4 *Addressing Needs*), whereas the moves and steps which were identified in his study were kept in the model.

Figure 5
The RMS of MOOC Descriptions
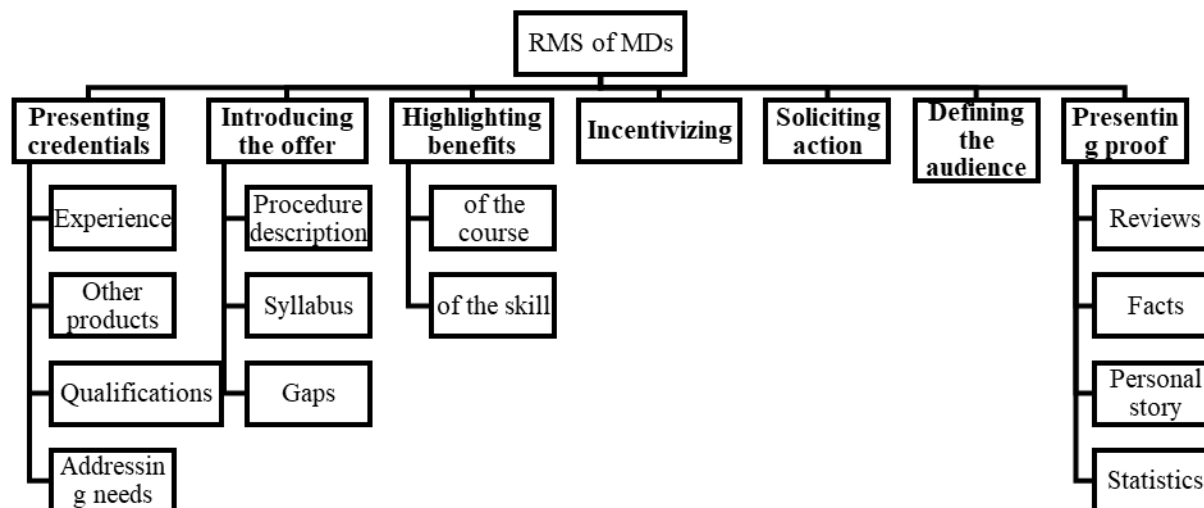
Although the current study is conducted on a corpus that is larger than Hajeer's (2020) pilot study, still, it focused on the MOOC descriptions of one platform (Udemy). Therefore, for future research, conducting a study that compares MDs of different MOOC platforms is expected to yield interesting outcomes for the field of genre analysis. Such research might be able to identify the differences and similarities between the moves which are employed by the tutors. It would also be possible to see the differences and similarities between the MOOC descriptions which are written by the tutors themselves (e.g., Udemy platform), and those which are authored by specialists hired by the platform.

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