

Structuring Scholarly Discourse: A Six-Dimensional Meta-Framework for Academic Manuscripts

Zulkiffly Baharom

Tunku Puteri Intan Safinaz School of Accountancy (TISSA-UUM), College of Business, Universiti
Utara Malaysia, Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Academic writing instruction has traditionally relied on structural conventions such as the Introduction–Methods–Results–and–Discussion (IMRaD) format, genre-based move analysis, and discipline-specific style guides. While these frameworks address discrete aspects of scholarly composition, they rarely offer writers, particularly novice, doctoral, and multilingual researchers, an integrated, sequential model that links contextual framing to disciplinary voice. This conceptual article undertakes an integrative review of the academic writing, genre analysis, and scholarly identity literatures to propose a six-dimensional meta-framework: Context, Scope, Method, Evidence, Structure, and Voice (CSMESV), that positions manuscript development as a cumulative, recursive process rather than a template to be filled in. Each dimension is theorized through synthesis of the extant literature and mapped onto specific decision points that authors, supervisors, and journal reviewers encounter across the writing lifecycle. The article situates the framework in relation to existing structural models, including IMRaD and the symmetry-of-specificity model, as well as genre-based move analysis and discursal-identity scholarship. It further considers the emerging role of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools as scaffolds for applying the model, rather than as substitutes for scholarly judgment, and illustrates the framework's application through worked examples drawn from business, management, and social science manuscript types. The article contributes a parsimonious, transferable heuristic for academic writing pedagogy, doctoral supervision, and manuscript preparation across disciplines, and outlines an agenda for empirically validating the model in future research.

Keywords: Academic writing, scholarly discourse, higher education, genre analysis, CSMESV framework

INTRODUCTION

Producing a publishable academic manuscript requires writers to coordinate multiple, simultaneously operating demands: situating the work within a discourse community, bounding its claims, justifying its methodological or analytical choices, marshaling evidence, organizing argumentation, and projecting an appropriate scholarly voice. For experienced academics, these demands are often managed tacitly, drawn from years of enculturation into disciplinary norms accumulated through repeated cycles of drafting, submission, and review. For novice, early-career, and multilingual researchers, however, the same demands frequently surface as discrete, poorly integrated obstacles experienced sequentially rather than as a coherent whole. Doctoral writers report a wide range of obstacles, from negotiating unfamiliar disciplinary conventions to constructing a credible authorial voice, with institutional support for writing development often described in the literature as underdeveloped relative to its evident importance (Calle-Arango & Ávila Reyes, 2023).

A substantial body of scholarship addresses individual facets of this problem, yet these strands have developed largely in parallel, with limited cross-referencing between them. Genre theory and move analysis, following Swales' (1990, 2004) foundational account of the research article as a genre, map the rhetorical architecture of research article sections across disciplines, revealing shared macro-structures alongside considerable disciplinary variation (Kanoksilapatham, 2005; Samraj, 2002). Corpus-based studies of academic register likewise show that academic writing is compressed rather than elaborated relative to spoken registers, challenging simplistic assumptions about explicitness in scholarly prose (Biber & Gray, 2010). Identity-oriented

scholarship, in turn, treats authorial voice, particularly for doctoral and second-language writers, as a constitutive element of scholarly credibility rather than an optional stylistic flourish (Qi & Zhao, 2023). Structural models such as IMRaD have themselves been extended and critiqued from within the field: Eriksson's (2024) "symmetry of specificity" framework, for instance, argues that coherence in scholarly writing depends on maintaining a consistent level of granularity across sections rather than mechanically following a fixed template, while earlier commentators have argued that rigid structural templates can constrain rather than serve the communication of complex scholarly ideas (Kearns et al., 2007).

What remains comparatively underdeveloped is a comprehensive heuristic that integrates components such as context-setting, scope delimitation, methodological transparency, evidentiary standards, structural organization, and voice into a single, teachable sequence that is portable across disciplines. Present models tend to focus mainly on manuscript sections, rhetorical moves within those sections, or the evolving relationship between the writer and the discourse community. While each analysis level offers value, none provides writers and mentors with a concise set of decision points that are easily applicable across different manuscript types, fields, and career stages.

This article addresses that gap by proposing a six-dimensional meta-framework, denoted CSMESV, that synthesizes insights from academic writing pedagogy, genre analysis, and scholarly identity research into a cumulative model of manuscript development. The framework is conceptual rather than empirical: its purpose is to offer a parsimonious heuristic that writers, supervisors, and instructors can apply across disciplines and manuscript types, including conceptual papers, empirical studies, critical and narrative literature reviews, and doctoral theses. The remainder of the article proceeds as follows. The next section reviews the conceptual and theoretical foundations underpinning each dimension, followed by a description of the integrative review approach used to develop the framework. The CSMESV framework is then developed in detail and illustrated through worked examples before the article discusses its theoretical contribution relative to existing structural models and considers practical applications, including its use as a scaffold for generative AI-assisted writing. The article closes by outlining its limitations, presenting a future research agenda, and offering concluding remarks.

Theoretical And Conceptual Background

This section reviews four bodies of scholarship that jointly inform the CSMESV framework: structural models of academic writing, genre theory and move analysis, discursual identity and voice, and the emerging literature on generative AI as a writing scaffold. Each subsection identifies the specific theoretical constructs later mapped onto one or more of the framework's six dimensions.

Structural Models of Academic Writing

The IMRaD format remains the dominant structural convention in empirical scholarly writing, offering a predictable sequence that supports reader navigation, disciplinary comparability, and editorial efficiency. Its ubiquity across the natural, social, and health sciences has made it something close to a default expectation for empirical manuscripts, and departures from it are typically permitted only in explicitly non-empirical genres such as conceptual papers, critical reviews, and essays. Its limitations, however, have been increasingly noted within the academic writing literature itself. Eriksson (2024) contends that IMRaD specifies section labels without guiding the writer on how specific, abstract, or detailed each section should be relative to the others, and proposes symmetry of specificity as a complementary organising principle: coherence depends on funnelling from general to specific in the introduction and reversing that funnel in the discussion, with the methods and results sections maintaining a matched level of granularity throughout. This principle reframes structural coherence as a property that cuts across sections rather than one that can be secured merely by supplying the conventional section headings.

Complementary practitioner-oriented models reinforce this same insight. Dubey's (2026) integrative toolkit for manuscript development traces a writer's progression from title and problem formulation through literature synthesis, gap identification, objective formulation, methodological alignment, results presentation, and contribution development, underscoring the internal consistency and correspondence between the quality of the

research and the architecture of the manuscript that determine publication readiness. Broader reviews of the academic writing field corroborate the centrality of these concerns: a large-scale bibliometric analysis of academic-writing scholarship published between 2012 and 2021 identified writing for publication and rhetoric of the scholarly text among the most persistent thematic clusters in the field, suggesting that structural competence remains a live and unresolved concern rather than a solved problem (Raitskaya et al., 2022). Earlier provocations on scholarly structure caution even more strongly against treating any single template as universally binding, arguing instead that authors should deliberately engineer their documents for the specific audiences they intend to reach rather than assuming a generic reader (Kearns et al., 2007). Taken together, this literature suggests that structural models should be understood as heuristics for maintaining coherence rather than as rigid templates to be filled mechanically, an assumption that motivates the dimensional, rather than purely sectional, logic of the framework proposed in this article.

A further strand of structural scholarship approaches coherence computationally. Corpus and network-based analyses of scientific texts have begun to formalize discourse cohesion as a measurable property of scholarly writing, using lexical and structural network representations to quantify how well a manuscript's sections cohere and to generate targeted feedback on where cohesion breaks down (Bhatnagar et al., 2022). While such computational approaches operate at a different level of granularity than the conceptual synthesis undertaken here, they lend independent support to the claim that structural coherence is a distinct, identifiable property of scholarly texts, one that can be diagnosed and improved through deliberate attention rather than left to intuition.

Genre Theory, Move Analysis, and Disciplinary Variation

Genre-based scholarship, originating with Swales' (1990) account of the research article as a genre and subsequently revised and extended (Swales, 2004), has generated an extensive empirical record of how sections of research articles are rhetorically organized. Swales' Create-a-Research-Space (CARS) model proposes that research article introductions typically accomplish three moves: establishing a territory, establishing a niche, and presenting the present work, each realized through a set of obligatory, conventional, and optional steps. Move analysis of research article introductions across disciplines consistently identifies these moves as broadly obligatory, while also revealing systematic disciplinary variation in how they are realized linguistically and sequentially (Kanoksilapatham, 2005; Samraj, 2002). Comparative studies across applied linguistics, chemistry, biochemistry, civil and biomedical engineering, tourism, and economics confirm that while the broad rhetorical logic of "claim centrality, indicate a gap, announce the study" travels across fields, the specific steps used to accomplish each move, their sequencing, and their linguistic realization are markedly discipline-specific (Kanoksilapatham, 2012; Ozturk, 2007).

This disciplinary variation is not incidental but systematic. Studies contrasting soft and hard science introductions, for example, find that hard-science writers are more likely to state explicit research questions or hypotheses, while soft-science writers rely more heavily on discursive justification of the research problem, and that these differences persist even among novice writers from the same national and linguistic background (Kanoksilapatham, 2012). Cross-linguistic comparisons add a further layer of variation, showing that even within ostensibly comparable disciplines, writers socialized into different rhetorical traditions, for instance, Anglo-American reader-oriented traditions versus more writer-oriented traditions common elsewhere, differ systematically in how explicitly they signal structure and orient to an international readership (Khoutyz, 2023; Duszak, 1994). This body of work has direct pedagogical implications: genre awareness and sensitivity to the rhetorical moves and steps that are conventional within a given discourse community, rather than imitation of a single universal template, equip writers to adapt their manuscripts to their specific target discourse community (Lu et al., 2021).

Genre pedagogy embedded within doctoral programs has also been shown to help early-stage researchers revise their understanding of what doctoral and disciplinary writing requires, while simultaneously supporting the emergence of voice and stance and a conscious, reflective awareness of writing as a rhetorical practice rather than a purely mechanical one (Donaghue, 2025). This insight, that genre competence is inseparable from community membership and evaluative norms, anticipates the framework's treatment of Context as logically prior to, and constitutive of, the remaining five dimensions.

Discoursal Identity, Voice, and Audience

A parallel strand of research treats voice not as a stylistic ornament layered onto otherwise complete writing but as a constitutive element of scholarly credibility, negotiated continuously between writer and reader. Discoursal scholarly identity is discursively constructed, dialogically negotiated with readers and gatekeepers, and developed through social practice rather than acquired once and definitively; a recent synthesis of two decades of research in this area identifies three main streams of inquiry, focused respectively on how such an identity is manifested in written texts, how it is reconstructed by readers, and how it is constructed through social practices such as supervision, feedback, and community participation (Qi & Zhao, 2023).

Empirical studies of doctoral and multilingual writers document voice development as a gradual, often affectively charged process, mediated by disciplinary apprenticeship, community feedback, and supervisory relationships that function as a form of mentored socialization into scholarly conventions (Zhang & Hyland, 2021). Longitudinal and case-study research on master's and doctoral thesis writing shows that the linguistic features associated with a confident authorial voice frequently develop more slowly than the content-level sophistication of a writer's argument, with novice writers continuing to present as tentative even as the substantive quality of their claims improves across drafts (Zhao & Liu, 2021). Reader-perspective studies reinforce this picture from the evaluator's side: supervisors report finding it genuinely difficult to define and locate authorial voice in student texts, even while insisting that its presence is critical to their overall assessment of a manuscript's quality, and note that their own disciplinary background shapes what they recognize as an adequate voice (Morton & Storch, 2019).

Citation practice offers a further, more linguistically specific window onto voice construction. Corpus-based comparisons of novice and expert citation practices show that novice writers rely disproportionately on integral, author-fronted citation forms that foreground the cited authors' voices, and use proportionally fewer non-integral forms that would allow the writer's own evaluative stance to remain prominent; the effect, across a large comparison corpus, is that novice writers' own authorial voice is comparatively “drowned out” by the voices of the sources they cite, particularly in background and literature sections (Liu, 2025). This finding usefully connects the Evidence and Voice dimensions of the framework proposed later in this article: how a writer handles citation is not merely a matter of correct attribution but is itself a mechanism through which authorial voice is constructed or suppressed.

Reader-oriented accounts of academic discourse further show that constructing an appropriate voice is inseparable from audience awareness. Analyses of reader-oriented discourse in international, English-language journals find that authors writing for such venues carefully structure their papers to comply with journal requirements, state their research aims clearly, and use explicit linking devices to keep readers oriented, practices less consistently observed in more writer-oriented academic traditions (Khoutyz, 2023). These findings collectively support treating voice as the final, integrating dimension of manuscript development in the CSMESV framework, one that presupposes and is substantially constituted by prior clarity about context, scope, method, evidence, and structure, rather than as a discrete competency taught in isolation from those other dimensions.

Generative AI as a Writing Scaffold

Large language model-based tools introduce a new consideration for manuscript development that intersects with every dimension of the proposed framework. Evidence from the simulation, medical, and reproductive-science literatures suggests these tools can support material organization, draft generation, and proofreading, but carry well-documented risks of fabricated citations, homogenized prose, and diminished authorial ownership if used uncritically (Cheng et al., 2025; Dergaa et al., 2023; Semrl et al., 2023). Systematic and scientometric mapping of the rapidly growing literature on generative AI in scholarly writing identifies ethical risk, practical application, and pedagogical innovation as the dominant thematic clusters within this emerging field, reflecting a scholarly community still actively negotiating norms of disclosure and accountability rather than one that has settled on stable conventions (Lendvai, 2025; Lund et al., 2023).

Survey and interview-based research on researchers' and students' actual use of these tools paints a more granular picture than the polarised “friend or foe” framing common in early editorial commentary (Altmäe et al., 2023). Adoption appears to be driven less by simple ease of use than by researchers' trust in a given tool and its perceived fit with a specific writing task, suggesting that generative AI is being integrated selectively into particular stages of the writing process (Garcia, 2025). Studies of student writers similarly find that generative AI is used predominantly to support brainstorming, organisation, and both global concerns (argument, structure, coherence) and local concerns (syntax, diction, grammar), while writers simultaneously report two persistent dilemmas: balancing the productivity benefits of AI assistance against the risk of eroding their own authentic voice, and weighing potential learning losses against new forms of AI-human collaborative learning (Wang, 2025).

Reflexive frameworks for AI-assisted academic writing emphasize that such tools are most defensible when used to scaffold, rather than replace, the writer's own structural and argumentative decisions, and propose that researchers assess AI use along dimensions such as its effects on writing methods, on the writer's relationship to their audience, and on writing outcomes (Johnson et al., 2024). This is consistent with more recent, tool-specific guidance distinguishing AI-assisted literature discovery and drafting support from AI-generated scholarly claims that substitute for the writer's own critical judgment (Lim, 2026), and with emerging institutional norms: surveys of journal author guidelines find that a growing minority of journals now require explicit disclosure of generative AI use in manuscript preparation, with continuing disagreement among academics about which uses. Grammar correction versus substantial rewriting, for instance, warrant disclosure at all (Chemaya & Martin, 2024; Tang et al., 2024). Some commentators go further, arguing that the use of undeclared AI should itself be treated as a form of research misconduct, akin to falsification (Tang, 2025). This literature motivates the framework's positioning of AI tools, discussed further in **Section Scaffolding Generative-AI-Assisted Drafting**, as scaffolds for applying the CSMESV dimensions deliberately and transparently, rather than as a substitute for the judgment the framework is designed to structure.

Review Approach And Framework Development

This article was developed as an integrative conceptual review, a review type distinguished from systematic and meta-analytic reviews by its explicit aim of generating new conceptual synthesis rather than exhaustively cataloging or statistically aggregating a bounded set of empirical findings. Integrative reviews are particularly well suited to topics such as academic writing pedagogy, where relevant insights are distributed across methodologically and disciplinarily heterogeneous literatures; corpus linguistics, genre analysis, doctoral education research, and, increasingly, human-computer interaction research on generative AI, that are rarely read together despite addressing overlapping concerns. Consistent with guidance distinguishing integrative reviews and conceptual-theoretical articles from other manuscript types, this article's primary contribution is theoretical rather than a fully executed, protocol-driven synthesis of a bounded empirical literature.

The literature underpinning the framework was identified through iterative, purposive searching of peer-reviewed sources addressing academic and scholarly writing, genre analysis and move structure, doctoral writing pedagogy, authorial voice and discursive identity, and generative AI in scholarly publishing. Search terms combined core constructs (for example, “academic writing,” “genre analysis,” “move structure,” “authorial voice,” “doctoral writing,” “IMRaD,” “generative AI academic writing”) with methodological and disciplinary qualifiers. Sources were prioritized for inclusion where they offered either (a) an explicit structural, genre-based, or identity-based model of academic writing, (b) empirical evidence bearing directly on one of the six dimensions later proposed, or (c) a critical perspective on the limitations of existing structural models. Following common practice in integrative and conceptual reviews, the aim was conceptual saturation and representative coverage of relevant theoretical positions, rather than exhaustive retrieval of all empirical studies addressing academic writing.

Framework development proceeded abductively: candidate dimensions were provisionally identified from recurring constructs across the reviewed literature (for example, “context,” “audience,” and “venue” recurring across reader-oriented discourse and genre scholarship; “voice,” “identity,” and “stance” recurring across doctoral-writing scholarship), consolidated into a smaller set of non-redundant dimensions, and iteratively checked against the reviewed sources for coherence and non-overlap. This process is consistent with the

categorization approach to integrative reviews, in which authors identify underlying similarities and differences across a heterogeneous body of literature and use them to develop new theoretical categories rather than merely summarising prior findings. The resulting six dimensions: Context, Scope, Method, Evidence, Structure, and Voice, are presented and justified individually in **Section CSMESV Meta-Framework** below.

The Csmesv Meta-Framework

Building on the literature reviewed in **Section Theoretical and Conceptual Background** and the review process described in **Section Review Approach and Framework Development**, this article proposes six interdependent dimensions that structure academic manuscript development: Context, Scope, Method, Evidence, Structure, and Voice (CSMESV). The dimensions are presented sequentially to reflect a typical order of decision-making, broadly mirroring the order in which a writer might first encounter these questions when planning a manuscript, but they are conceptualised as recursive rather than strictly linear: decisions made in later dimensions routinely require writers to revisit earlier ones, consistent with characterisations of doctoral and scholarly writing generally as an iterative, non-linear, and often recursive process rather than a single forward pass from blank page to final draft (Naidoo et al., 2025).

Table 1 summarizes the six CSMESV dimensions and their definitions in a single point of reference before each dimension is developed in detail below.

Table 1: Summary of the CSMESV Framework Dimensions

Dimension	Definition	Central Question
Context	Establishes the publication venue, disciplinary domain, and intended audience before drafting begins.	For whom, and for which venue, is this manuscript being written?
Scope	Defines the study's boundaries, including the theoretical framework, research question parameters, and constraints.	What will the manuscript claim, and what will it explicitly not claim?
Method	Establishes the transparency and defensibility of the analytical or reasoning process underlying the manuscript's claims.	How were sources or data identified, selected, and analyzed?
Evidence	Governs how sources are selected, weighted, and attributed.	Does citation practice support the argument while preserving the writer's own voice?
Structure	Addresses organizational patterns, transitions, and section integration.	Does the manuscript follow a coherent, genre-appropriate sequence?
Voice	An emergent property of the preceding five dimensions: register, objectivity, and scholarly distance.	Is the register measured, confident, and discipline-consistent throughout?

Context

The Context dimension establishes the publication venue, disciplinary domain, and intended audience before any substantive drafting begins. In practical terms, this includes identifying disciplinary conventions, gauging readers' background knowledge, and clarifying the target journal or venue's requirements, including preferred manuscript types, structural conventions, and citation style. Reader-oriented discourse studies show that authors publishing in international, English-medium journals must adjust their writing to reader-oriented conventions that differ from more writer-oriented traditions, including explicit statement of aims and detailed methodological reporting, and that failure to make this adjustment is a recognizable marker of writing not yet fully socialized into the target discourse community (Khoutyz, 2023).

Context-setting is not a one-off administrative step but an interpretive act that conditions every subsequent dimension. A manuscript's Context determines which structural conventions are expected, which citation and evidentiary norms apply, and which register of voice will be read as appropriately authoritative rather than either presumptuous or excessively tentative. Establishing context early, therefore, anchors subsequent decisions within the remaining five dimensions and substantially reduces the likelihood of a mismatch between manuscript conventions and venue expectations that frequently underlies desk rejections and major-revision decisions.

Scope

The Scope dimension requires writers to explicitly define the boundaries and limitations of a study, including the theoretical framework, research question parameters, and methodological or conceptual constraints. Symmetry-of-specificity theorizing suggests that scope decisions make possible, or, if neglected, actively undermine, coherence across the manuscript: a broadly framed research question paired with a narrowly bounded method produces an asymmetry that readers and reviewers readily detect and typically flag as a fundamental weakness rather than a minor stylistic issue (Eriksson, 2024).

Explicit scoping also directly supports the “establishing a niche” move that genre-based scholarship identifies as central to effective introductions, in which authors indicate a gap in existing knowledge that their deliberately bounded study is positioned to address (Samraj, 2002). Disciplinary variation in how this niche-establishing move is accomplished is itself well documented: introductions in more established, theoretically consolidated fields rely on a narrower, more predictable range of scoping strategies, while introductions in newer or more fragmented fields exhibit greater variability, since writers cannot assume shared agreement on what counts as an adequately bounded contribution (Ozturk, 2007). Scope decisions therefore cannot be made in isolation from Context: what counts as an appropriately bounded contribution in one discourse community may be judged either trivially narrow or implausibly broad in another.

Method

The Method dimension concerns the transparency and defensibility of the analytical or reasoning process underlying the manuscript's claims: outlining the analytical procedure, specifying evidence-evaluation criteria, and articulating quality-assurance protocols appropriate to the manuscript type. This dimension applies with particular force to empirical manuscripts reporting primary data collection, where methodological transparency is a well-established quality marker, but it applies with almost equal force to conceptual and review articles, where no primary data collection occurs but where an explicit reasoning methodology; how sources were identified, selected, and synthesised, constitutes an increasingly expected quality marker (Torraco, 2016; Whittemore & Knafl, 2005).

Large-scale reviews of the academic writing field corroborate the centrality of this concern, identifying methodological transparency as one of the recurring thematic clusters that characterize contemporary scholarship on writing for publication (Raitskaya et al., 2022). Writers preparing conceptual or critical-review manuscripts, in particular, benefit from making the Method dimension explicit even in the absence of a formal “Methods” section, since editors and reviewers increasingly expect an account of how the reviewed literature was identified and why particular sources were prioritized for synthesis over others (Callahan, 2010).

Evidence

The Evidence dimension governs how sources are selected, weighted, and attributed, encompassing distinctions between primary and secondary sources, citation and attribution standards, and expectations of methodological rigor appropriate to the claims being made. Corpus-based analyses of novice writers' citation practices show that inexperienced authors tend to over-rely on integral, author-fronted citation forms that foreground cited authors' voices at the expense of their own, a pattern associated with weaker authorial positioning and, in the most pronounced cases, with a text that reads as a sequence of paraphrased claims rather than an argument controlled by the writer (Liu, 2025).

Attending deliberately to evidentiary standards therefore serves a dual function within the framework: it satisfies disciplinary expectations of rigor and traceability, while also preparing the ground for the authorial voice cultivated in the framework's final dimension. A writer who has evaluated sources critically and deliberately varied citation forms is better positioned to make claims in their own voice, rather than allowing the manuscript to read as a summary of others' positions. This connection between Evidence and Voice illustrates the framework's recursive, rather than purely linear, logic: evidentiary choices made early in drafting have direct downstream consequences for how confidently a writer's voice can subsequently emerge.

Structure

The Structure dimension addresses organizational patterns, transitions and flow, logical argument progression, and section integration strategies. This dimension draws most directly on genre- and move-based scholarship, which has empirically demonstrated that research article sections follow identifiable, if discipline-variable, rhetorical moves and steps that serve specific persuasive and orienting functions for the reader rather than being arbitrary conventions (Kanoksilapatham, 2005, 2012). Rather than prescribing a single universal template, the Structure dimension directs writers to make deliberate, genre-aware choices about sequencing and integration, choices informed by the Context established earlier, consistent with evidence that disciplinary variation in move structure is the empirical norm rather than the exception, even within apparently unified fields such as applied linguistics (Ozturk, 2007).

Computational approaches to discourse cohesion offer a complementary, more fine-grained account of what effective structural integration looks like, modeling lexical cohesion across a document as a network property and using this to localize specific regions where a manuscript's structural flow breaks down (Bhatnagar et al., 2022). The underlying insight, that structural coherence can be diagnosed section by section rather than treated as a single global judgment, is directly transferable to manual self-review and supervisory feedback practices, discussed further in **Section Practical Applications**.

Voice

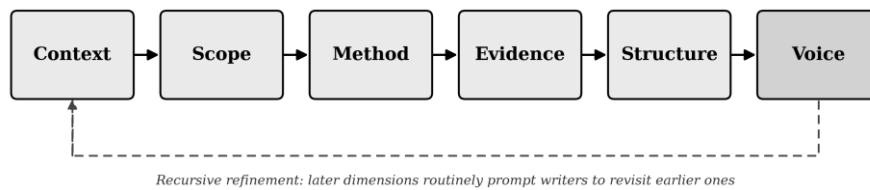
The Voice dimension, positioned last in the sequence, concerns the maintenance of disciplinary conventions, objectivity and scholarly distance, appropriate tone and register, and technical precision. Voice is theorised here as an emergent property of the preceding five dimensions rather than a discrete stylistic add-on to be corrected through surface-level editing: a writer who has clearly established context, bounded scope, made method transparent, handled evidence rigorously, and organised argumentation coherently is structurally positioned to project a confident, discipline-appropriate voice, whereas a writer attempting to “fix” voice in isolation, for instance, through generic instructions to “sound more confident”, is likely to find such advice difficult to operationalise if the underlying dimensions remain unresolved.

This sequencing is consistent with identity-oriented scholarship showing that authorial voice develops interactively, through engagement with disciplinary and institutional resources, rather than as an isolated linguistic skill (Qi & Zhao, 2023; Zhang & Hyland, 2021), and with reader-perspective research showing that even experienced supervisors struggle to define voice in the abstract and instead recognise it relationally, in how well a text's evaluative stance and argumentative confidence cohere with one another (Morton & Storch, 2019). Positioning Voice as the culminating dimension, therefore, reflects both a pedagogical claim that voice is best addressed after the other five dimensions and a theoretical claim that it is a relational, emergent property of a text's overall coherence rather than an independent, separately teachable competency.

Illustrative Application

To make the framework more concrete, this section illustrates how the six CSMESV dimensions apply to two common manuscript types in business, management, and social science research: an empirical journal article and a conceptual or critical-review article. Figure 1 summarizes the framework's sequential and recursive logic; Tables 2 and 3 then translate each dimension into a guiding question and an illustrative writing action for the two manuscript types. These illustrations are offered as heuristic worked examples rather than as empirical case studies, consistent with the conceptual, non-empirical status of the article as a whole.

Figure 1: The CSMESV Framework: Sequential and Recursive Application



Note: The six dimensions usually follow a drafting sequence, but the dashed arrow shows that issues in Voice often lead writers to reconsider Context, Scope, Method, Evidence, or Structure instead of editing Voice alone.

An Empirical Journal Article

Consider a researcher preparing an empirical manuscript examining a governance or sustainability-related outcome for submission to an internationally indexed management or accounting journal. Table 2 works through each CSMESV dimension for this manuscript type.

Table 2: Applying the CSMESV Framework to an Empirical Journal Article

Dimension	Guiding Question	Illustrative Writing Action	Key Source
Context	Which journal, readership, and disciplinary conventions is this manuscript written for?	Identify the target journal's manuscript length, preferred theoretical lenses, and citation style; gauge the readership's likely familiarity with the constructs involved.	Khoutyz (2023)
Scope	What theoretical contribution, empirical setting, and limitations will the study claim?	Bound the contribution, setting, and limitations with a specificity that matches the paper's central claims.	Eriksson (2024)
Method	How transparent and reproducible is the analytical procedure?	Document data sources, variable construction, and analytical procedures so an informed reader can evaluate the logic.	—
Evidence	Does citation practice preserve the writer's own evaluative voice?	Distinguish foundational theoretical sources from recent empirical sources; vary citation form so the writer's voice remains visible.	Liu (2025)
Structure	Does the introduction and discussion follow a recognizable, genre-appropriate sequence?	Organize the introduction as territory–niche–present work; mirror the specificity funnel in reverse in the discussion.	Samraj (2002)
Voice	Is the register measured and discipline-consistent throughout?	Review the draft for claim-making that is neither overstated relative to the bounded scope nor undercut by excessive tentativeness.	—

A Conceptual or Critical-Review Article

Now consider a writer preparing a conceptual or critical-review article that synthesizes a body of literature to propose a new framework or typology, a manuscript type structurally similar to this article itself. Table 3 works through each dimension for this manuscript type.

Table 3: Applying the CSMESV Framework to a Conceptual or Critical-Review Article

Dimension	Guiding Question	Illustrative Writing Action	Key Source
Context	Does the target venue distinguish integrative reviews from conceptual or theoretical articles?	Clarify the venue's expectations for theoretical contributions before drafting, as the two manuscript types have different expectations.	Callahan (2010)
Scope	Which literatures are central versus adjacent, and what does the contribution claim to explain?	Bound the literature under review and state explicitly what the proposed contribution does and does not explain.	—
Method	How was the reviewed literature identified, selected, and synthesized?	Specify an integrative review approach for identifying, selecting, and synthesizing sources.	Torraco (2016); Whittemore & Knafl (2005)
Evidence	Does the synthesis read as the writer's own argument rather than a summary?	Evaluate sources individually and vary citation form so the synthesis advances the writer's own argument.	—
Structure	Does the review build cumulatively toward the proposed contribution?	Organize the review to be integrative, definitive, and provocative rather than merely descriptive.	Torraco (2016)
Voice	Is the register assertive about the contribution's value while transparent about its non-empirical status?	Adopt a register that is confidently argumentative yet transparent about the conceptual, non-empirical status of the claims.	—

Theoretical Contribution And Positioning

The CSMESV framework makes three principal contributions relative to existing structural, genre-based, and identity-oriented models of academic writing. First, it integrates strands of the academic writing literature that have largely developed in parallel and are rarely read together. Where IMRaD and its extensions primarily address section-level organization (Eriksson, 2024), and genre-based move analysis primarily addresses rhetorical patterning within sections (Kanoksilapatham, 2005; Samraj, 2002), CSMESV operates at a level above both, offering cross-cutting decision points: context, scope, method, evidence, structure, and voice, that apply regardless of whether a manuscript follows IMRaD, a thematic conceptual structure, or a critical review format. This cross-cutting property deliberately avoids anchoring the model to any single manuscript type so that it remains usable across the full range of article types authors are typically expected to produce.

Second, by positioning voice as the culminating, emergent dimension rather than a discrete, separately taught competency, the framework offers a theoretically motivated account of why voice is so frequently reported as the most persistent challenge for novice and multilingual writers (Qi & Zhao, 2023; Morton & Storch, 2019). Voice difficulties are often downstream symptoms of unresolved decisions about context, scope, method, evidence, or structure, rather than a standalone deficit remediated through generic-style instruction alone. Rather than instructing a struggling writer simply to “write with more confidence,” a supervisor applying the framework is prompted instead to ask which prior dimension remains unresolved.

Third, the framework is explicitly discipline- and manuscript-type-agnostic, addressing recurring calls for writing guidance that generalizes across conceptual papers, critical reviews, and empirical studies, rather than guidance narrowly tailored to a single genre (Raitskaya et al., 2022). This generality is a deliberate trade-off: the

framework sacrifices some of the fine-grained prescriptiveness offered by move-analysis studies of particular sub-disciplines (Kanoksilapatham, 2012) in exchange for a set of dimensions portable enough to structure feedback across a cohort of students working in different sub-fields, or across the several article types many contemporary academics are expected to produce.

Table 4 summarizes how CSMESV positions itself relative to IMRaD and Swales' (1990, 2004) CARS model, the two structural and genre-based reference points most frequently invoked in the discussion above.

Table 4: CSMESV Compared with IMRaD and CARS

Feature	IMRaD	CARS	CSMESV
Level of operation	Manuscript section labels (Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion)	Rhetorical moves within a section (typically the introduction)	Cross-cutting decision points applicable across all sections and manuscript types
Scope of application	Empirical manuscripts	Research article introductions	Empirical, conceptual, and review manuscripts alike
Treatment of voice	Not addressed	Not addressed	Modeled explicitly, as an emergent property of the other five dimensions
Primary use case	Section-level organization	Diagnosing and teaching introduction structure	Supervision, editorial review, and AI-assisted drafting across the writing lifecycle

Note. CSMESV is not proposed as a replacement for IMRaD or CARS but as a complementary, higher-level heuristic that can be applied whichever section-level or move-level convention a manuscript ultimately follows.

Practical Applications

Doctoral Supervision and Writing Pedagogy

As a supervisory tool, CSMESV offers supervisors and writing-center practitioners a shared, relatively low-jargon vocabulary for diagnosing where a manuscript draft is struggling and for communicating that diagnosis in actionable terms. Systematic reviews of obstacles to doctoral writing identify negative self-perception, low self-regulation, and unclear expectations as recurring barriers, alongside a documented need for structured, specific feedback rather than global evaluative comments (Calle-Arango & Ávila Reyes, 2023). A dimensional framework allows feedback to be localised, distinguishing a Scope problem (an unbounded research question) from a Structure problem (a poorly sequenced argument) or an Evidence problem (over-reliance on paraphrased secondary sources), rather than delivered as an undifferentiated judgement that the writing is simply “unclear,” feedback that research on doctoral apprenticeship suggests is often experienced as demoralising precisely because it does not indicate which dimension requires attention (Zhang & Hyland, 2021).

Embedding the framework within structured, genre-aware writing pedagogy, as documented for early-stage doctoral researchers, may further support the affective and identity-related dimensions of doctoral writing development that purely technical feedback often overlooks (Donaghue, 2025). Because CSMESV treats voice as emergent from the other five dimensions, supervisors can use the framework to reassure anxious writers that voice difficulties are frequently addressable indirectly, by resolving upstream issues of scope or evidence handling, rather than requiring a separate, often more intimidating, intervention focused directly on confidence or “natural” writing ability.

Illustrative Feedback Vignettes

- Vignette 1 (Scope). A doctoral candidate's draft introduction claims to explain "corporate financial sustainability across emerging markets," but the study analyzes only Bursa Malaysia-listed firms. Rather than commenting generically that the introduction "overclaims," a supervisor applying CSMESV can localize the issue as a Scope problem: the claimed boundary does not match the bounded setting, and the candidate is directed to narrow the claim or justify the broader framing explicitly.
- Vignette 2 (Voice). A reviewer describes a manuscript's discussion section as reading "tentative" despite methodologically sound analysis. Applying CSMESV, the supervisor traces the tentativeness back to the Evidence dimension: the writer relies almost exclusively on integral, author-fronted citations that foreground other scholars' claims rather than the writer's own evaluative stance. The feedback therefore targets citation practice rather than instructing the writer simply to "sound more confident."

Manuscript Preparation and Editorial Review

For authors preparing manuscripts across article types; conceptual papers, critical reviews, and empirical studies, the framework offers a pre-submission checklist function: verifying that context, scope, method, evidence, structure, and voice have each been deliberately addressed before submission, rather than assuming adequate performance on some dimensions compensates for neglect of others. This diagnostic use aligns with practitioner-oriented manuscript-development toolkits that similarly trace internal consistency between a paper's architecture and its claims as a marker of publication readiness (Dubey, 2026), and with editorial guidance distinguishing the specific expectations of conceptual articles from those of integrative literature reviews, a distinction authors frequently blur in practice (Callahan, 2010).

For editors and reviewers, the framework offers a complementary diagnostic vocabulary for structuring review comments, allowing reviewers to indicate more precisely than "the paper needs revision" which of the six dimensions a manuscript has and has not yet satisfied. This may be of particular value for reviewers working with manuscripts from multilingual or early-career authors, where the underlying contribution may be sound but obscured by unresolved issues in one or two specific dimensions rather than by a wholesale absence of scholarly merit.

Scaffolding Generative-AI-Assisted Drafting

Given the rapid uptake of generative AI tools in scholarly writing, the CSMESV dimensions can also function as structured prompts that direct such tools toward scaffolding support, for example, requesting that a tool evaluate whether a draft introduction adequately performs the Context and Scope functions, or whether a literature review's citation pattern preserves the writer's own Voice rather than merely paraphrasing sources sequentially, rather than toward generating unsupervised content the writer then adopts wholesale. This use is consistent with reflexive-workflow guidance cautioning that generative AI should be positioned as a writing partner engaged deliberately at specific points in the process, with the writer retaining responsibility for argumentative and evidentiary decisions (Johnson et al., 2024), and with disclosure norms increasingly required, though still inconsistently enforced, by journals and professional bodies (Cheng et al., 2025; Tang et al., 2024).

Dimension-specific prompting may also mitigate some commonly reported risks of generative AI use. Because the Evidence dimension explicitly requires source-by-source evaluation and attribution, a writer applying CSMESV is structurally prompted to verify AI-suggested citations against original sources rather than accepting them uncritically, an important safeguard given well-documented risks of AI-fabricated or misattributed references (Cheng et al., 2025; Dergaa et al., 2023). Similarly, because Voice is treated as an emergent, writer-owned property, a writer applying the framework is less likely to delegate voice construction to an AI tool wholesale, and more likely to use such tools narrowly, retaining ownership of the manuscript's substantive claims.

Cross-Disciplinary and Second-Language Writing Support

Because the framework's dimensions are derived from literature spanning multiple disciplines and explicitly incorporate findings on multilingual and second-language academic writers, it may be of particular value in cross-disciplinary and second-language writing support contexts, such as English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programs and university writing centers serving international doctoral populations. Research on EAL (English as an additional language) doctoral writers consistently identifies audience-related uncertainty, disciplinary-convention unfamiliarity, and voice-related self-doubt as compounding challenges (Phyo et al., 2025; Langum et al., 2020). A framework that explicitly sequences Context and Scope before Voice may help such writers understand that early difficulty in adopting a confident register is a normal, structurally explicable stage connected to still-developing familiarity with disciplinary context and conventions, rather than a personal deficiency in their command of English or capacity for scholarly thought.

Limitations And Future Research

As a conceptual synthesis developed through an integrative review process, this article does not empirically test the CSMESV framework's effects on manuscript quality, reviewer evaluations, or writers' self-efficacy; this limitation should be stated plainly. The dimensions proposed here were derived through abductive synthesis of a purposively, rather than exhaustively, sampled literature; while this approach is well established for integrative and conceptual review articles (Torraco, 2016; Callahan, 2010), it is not equivalent to a fully protocol-driven systematic review, and readers should treat the six dimensions as a theoretically motivated proposal rather than an empirically validated taxonomy at this stage.

A second limitation concerns the framework's current grounding, predominantly in English-medium and substantially Anglo-American or European academic writing scholarship. Although the reviewed literature includes cross-cultural comparisons (Khoutyz, 2023; Duszak, 1994) and research on non-native English-speaking doctoral writers (Langum et al., 2020; Morton & Storch, 2019), the framework's six dimensions have not yet been tested against academic writing traditions organized around substantially different rhetorical norms, and their applicability outside English-medium scholarly publishing remains an open empirical question.

Three research directions follow directly from these limitations. First, corpus-based studies could code published manuscripts against the six dimensions to assess whether accepted papers exhibit more coherent context–scope–method–evidence–structure–voice alignment than rejected or heavily revised manuscripts, potentially using computational discourse-cohesion techniques (Bhatnagar et al., 2022) as a methodological starting point. Second, intervention studies that embed the framework within doctoral writing pedagogy, following the model of embedded genre-based interventions (Donaghue, 2025), could assess effects on writers' confidence and revision efficiency using comparison-group designs. Third, given the framework's engagement with generative AI as a scaffolding tool, future research should examine whether prompting AI systems according to the six dimensions yields more disciplinarily appropriate output than unstructured prompting, and whether such structured use affects novice writers' development of independent scholarly judgment over time (Wang, 2025; Kim, 2024).

A concrete starting point for the second direction above would be a small-scale pilot study with doctoral writers, for example, ten to fifteen candidates in a single business or accounting doctoral program, in which participants receive CSMESV-structured feedback on one manuscript draft and a matched comparison group receives standard, undifferentiated supervisory feedback. Pre- and post-revision measures could include reviewer or supervisor ratings of manuscript coherence, writers' self-reported confidence, and revision turnaround time, providing an initial, feasible test of the framework's practical value before a larger, multi-site intervention study is attempted.

A fourth direction concerns the framework's boundary conditions. Because CSMESV was developed primarily with journal-article-length manuscripts in mind, its applicability to book-length works, such as doctoral monographs, or to substantially shorter forms, such as research notes or extended abstracts, has not been examined here. Similarly, because the framework treats Voice as emergent from the prior five dimensions, future research might usefully test whether explicit voice-focused instruction retains independent value once context, scope, method, evidence, and structure have been addressed, or whether the framework's stronger claim holds across the writer populations to which it might be applied.

CONCLUSION

Academic writing competence is often treated as a diffuse, slowly acquired craft, learned tacitly through years of disciplinary enculturation and repeated cycles of drafting, feedback, and revision. This article has argued that six identifiable, teachable dimensions; Context, Scope, Method, Evidence, Structure, and Voice, underlie that craft, and that making these dimensions explicit offers a parsimonious heuristic for writers, supervisors, and editors alike. By synthesizing structural, genre-based, and identity-oriented strands of the academic writing literature into a single cumulative framework, and by positioning voice as an emergent outcome of the preceding dimensions rather than an isolated stylistic skill, CSMESV offers both a theoretical contribution to the study of scholarly discourse and a practical tool for manuscript development in an era increasingly shaped by generative-AI-assisted writing.

The framework's value, ultimately, lies less in any single dimension than in the discipline of moving through all six deliberately and recursively, using earlier dimensions to diagnose difficulties that surface later, most notably, treating persistent voice difficulties as a signal to revisit context, scope, method, evidence, or structure rather than as an isolated problem to be corrected through style advice alone. Future empirical work, outlined in **Section Limitations and Future Research**, is needed to test the framework's explanatory and pedagogical value across disciplines, manuscript types, and writer populations.

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