How to Express Gratitude in the Acknowledgement Section: The Case of Thai EFL Graduate Students

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ABSTRACT

Completing a postgraduate dissertation requires various types of support, whether it be academic, moral, or financial. One way to express gratitude towards those who contribute is through the acknowledgement section. However, the guidelines provided by universities appear to be inadequate to support students, which poses challenges for those who are non-native English speakers. The present study, therefore, aims to examine the generic structure of the move patterns and the frequency of moves in the acknowledgement sections written by Thai EFL graduate students in applied linguistics. A corpus of 60 acknowledgements from the e-databases of two public universities was compiled. Hyland's (2004) framework of dissertation acknowledgements, consisting of three moves with their sub-units, was adopted as the analytical framework. The findings revealed that the thanking move appeared in every acknowledgement and was thus regarded as an obligatory move. However, both the reflecting and announcing moves were considered optional moves. Interestingly, one new move was found, suggesting a specific characteristic of Thai EFL graduate students in composing this section. The findings have pedagogical implications for both English for Academic Purposes (EAP) teachers and students in terms of raising their awareness of the diverse acknowledgement patterns that they can utilise.

Keywords: acknowledgement, move analysis, Thai EFL graduate students, MA dissertations, Hyland's (2004) framework of acknowledgements

Introduction

Showing gratitude to those who have provided us with assistance has long been regarded as a common practice within the scholarly community (Cronin & Overfelt, 1994; Hyland, 2003; 2004; Hyland & Tse, 2004; Yang, 2012; Jaroenkitboworn, 2014; Paul-Hus & Desrochers, 2019). It is evident that acknowledgement sections are present in various academic genres, including books, textbooks, dissertations, and research articles. Among these diverse genres, Hyland and Tse (2004, p. 259) argue that the act of acknowledging someone appears to be most prevalent in dissertations. They also emphasised that this section offers students with a specific rhetorical space to express their appreciation towards supporters and to communicate their academic and social identity. These supporters may include individuals who have provided academic assistance, funding, or moral support throughout the lengthy journey of their study. The notion of realising acknowledgement as a rhetorical space was echoed by Yang (2012, p. 52), who claimed that it demonstrates a "writer's personal identity and socio-cultural, contextual or conventional values". Moreover, the section can be viewed as a space to showcase interpersonal relationships, particularly when mentioning classmates who experienced hardships together. Acknowledgement can be perceived as a distinct genre that deserves attention because it provides a communicative space to express admiration and gratitude for those who have contributed to the completion of our academic work.

Despite the significance of acknowledgement sections as an academic genre, it seems that there are no available resources or guides to assist students in writing this section effectively. The guidelines and formats provided by several universities in dissertation manuals are also insufficient. For example, some universities in Thailand specify only the font size and a maximum length of one page in their publication manuals, without offering any exemplars. There is also a contradiction among universities in terms of the proper writing style, as some suggest using a personal tone, while others recommend an academic style. Although the content in acknowledgements can vary, ranging from pre-formulated structures to personal expressions of gratitude (Paul-Hus & Desrochers, 2019), the absence of proper guidelines or exemplars to support students in composing this section can pose a challenge for inexperienced researchers, particularly for non-native English as a foreign language (EFL) writers.

Genre analysis has long been adopted to analyse various components of research reports, namely abstracts (Santos, 1996; Darabad, 2016; Pratiwi & Kurniawan, 2021), introductions (Swales, 1981; Bunton, 2014), results and discussions (Yang & Allison, 2003; Amnuai & Wannaruk, 2013; Cotos et al., 2017), and entire research articles (Kanoksilapatham, 2005, 2015). The findings of these studies demonstrate that identified patterns can be effectively utilised as a promising tool for the teaching and learning process. Despite the plethora of genre-based studies, acknowledgement sections in dissertations, particularly in a Thai context, remain a relatively underexplored research area. Therefore, this study seeks to analyse the presence of moves within the acknowledgement sections written by Thai EFL graduate students. The classification of moves into obligatory, conventional or optional is later determined by their frequency of occurrence in terms of percentage. Additionally, the study examines the generic structures of the moves. To achieve these aims, three research questions are formulated:

1. What is the frequency of each move found in the acknowledgement sections written by Thai EFL graduate students?
2. Which moves/steps are classified as obligatory, conventional or optional?
3. What are the generic structures of the moves in the acknowledgement sections written by Thai EFL graduate students?

Literature Review

In this section, the significance of acknowledgement sections as a genre will be explored and discussed. Then, the origins and roles of move analysis as a tool for textual analysis are presented. Finally, two frameworks of dissertation sections and related previous studies are examined and discussed.

Significance of Acknowledgement Sections

> Acknowledgements are a taken-for-granted part of the background, a practice of unrecognized and disregarded value deserving of greater attention. …They are central to the academic practice of reciprocal gift giving and for this reason are particularly important to students. Acknowledgements can act as a means of demonstrating academic credibility, recognizing debts, and achieving a sense of closure at the end of a long and demanding research process.
>
> (Hyland, 2003, p. 243)

In comparison with other research genres, the number of scientific studies on the topic of acknowledgement sections remains relatively limited. The quote from Hyland (2003) points out the significance of acknowledging individuals who have contributed to our research endeavours, and highlights the need of the research community to pay more attention to this genre. Remarkably, even though this assertion was made nearly 20 years ago, its significance remains relevant, as evidenced by the inclusion of acknowledgements in the dissertation manuals of numerous universities.

Similarly, Paul-Hus and Desrochers (2019) highlighted the significance of acknowledgements, considering it as a crucial task in academic writing. They emphasised that it is an essential means for students to express gratitude to their mentors and supporters. Dissertation acknowledgements can reflect the writer's respect towards elders and individuals who played an important role in his/her life and academic success (Nkemleke, 2006). Additionally, Chan (2015, as cited in Jia & An, 2022) asserted that the acknowledgements serve as a tool to strengthen interpersonal relationships between their academic colleagues and professional communities while expressing gratitude. It can be argued that the acknowledgements as a distinct genre deserve greater attention and recognition.

Move Analysis

Move analysis, originally developed by Swales (1981), is considered a top-down approach for describing the organisational patterns of the components of research articles. The approach has not only ignited significant research on textual analysis in academic and professional settings (Biber et al., 2007), but also plays a key role in identifying functional units within a text that serve the overall communicative purpose of the genre (Connor et al., 2007). Therefore, move analysis serves as a valuable tool for examining text structure in academic texts across various disciplines (Kurniawan & Sabila, 2021).

Move analysis involves the use of two key elements: moves and steps, which serve as analytical units for examining text structure. In the context of genre analysis, a move can be conceptualised as "a genre stage" that encompasses sub-units aimed at accomplishing specific communicative purposes (Santos, 1996, p. 485). Swales (2004) defines a move as a coherent communicative unit that performs a discoursal or rhetorical function in written or spoken discourse. In summary, a move represents a unit of analysis within genre analysis that is closely tied to its communicative purpose. Conversely, a step is a sub-unit of a move that operates collaboratively with multiple elements to accomplish a move (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Kanoksilapatham, 2005).

This study utilised Kanoksilapatham's criteria (2005, 2015) to classify moves into three types: obligatory, conventional, and optional. According to these criteria, moves with 100% occurrence are classified as obligatory moves. Moves that occur in at least 60 percent of a corpus are referred to as conventional. Finally, moves with an occurrence below 60 percent are categorised as optional. By employing Kanoksilapatham's criteria, a greater level of specificity can be attained when evaluating moves compared to Swales (2004), who simply divides the classification into conventional and optional moves.

Frameworks of Dissertation Acknowledgements

Over the past two decades, two major frameworks for analysing the acknowledgements have been developed and expanded. Notably, both Giannoni's (2002) and Hyland's (2004) studies explored the acknowledgements within a variety of disciplines. However, these studies differ in terms of the genres they focused on and the languages they examined. Giannoni's study centred on acknowledgements in research articles, whereas Hyland (2004) focused on acknowledgements in dissertations. Additionally, Giannoni (2002) conducted a contrastive analysis between Italian and English writers, while Hyland's (2004) study exclusively explored the acknowledgements of MA and PhD writers in Hong Kong. The details of the two frameworks are displayed in Tables 1 and 2.

Giannoni's (2002) Framework of Research Article Acknowledgements

The first model, Giannoni's (2002) two-tier structure of research article acknowledgements, comprises two main moves, with each consisting of three steps.

Table 1

Giannoni's (2002, p.10) Two-tier Framework of Research Article Acknowledgements

1. Introductory Move (Framing)	Contextualises or frames the information that follows
a. Citing parent texts or events and/or b. Acknowledging those involved and/or c. Asserting commonality/authorship	
2. Main Move (Crediting) a. Acknowledging institutional support and/or b. Acknowledging individual contributions and/or c. Accepting responsibility	Allocates credit to various people

Hyland's (2004) Framework of Dissertation Acknowledgements

The second framework, Hyland's (2004) move structure of dissertation acknowledgements consists of three main moves, accompanied by four steps within move 2 and two steps within move 3, as shown in Table 2. This framework has been used by some researchers (e.g., Yang, 2012; Borlongan, 2017) to analyse the acknowledgements.

Table 2

Hyland's (2004, p. 308) Move Structure of Dissertation Acknowledgements

1. Reflecting move	Introspective comment on the writer's research experience
2. Thanking move	Mapping credit to individuals and institutions
a. Presenting participants	Introducing those to be thanked
b. Thanking for academic assistance	Thanks for intellectual support, ideas, analyses, feedback, etc.
c. Thanking for resources	Thanks for data access and clerical, technical or financial support
d. Thanking for moral support	Thanks for encouragement, friendship, sympathy, patience, etc.
3. Announcing move	Statements delineating responsibility and inspiration
a. Accepting responsibility	An assertion of authorial responsibility for flaws or errors
b. Dedicating the thesis	A formal dedication of the thesis to an individual(s)

Upon reviewing the two frameworks, it is evident that the framework of Giannoni (2002) is better suited to an analysis of research article acknowledgements, as they tend to be more concise in nature. In contrast, Hyland's (2004) framework is specifically designed for analysing dissertation acknowledgements, offering comprehensive details for each move/step. Consequently, Hyland's framework was chosen as the analytical framework for this study.

Previous Studies of Move Analysis of Acknowledgements

Several previous studies have examined the content of acknowledgements by analysing their move structures and linguistic patterns. While some research has focused on the acknowledgements at the PhD level (e.g., Yang, 2012; Jaroenkitboworn, 2014; Borlongan, 2017), Hyland (2004) conducted a comparative study between students at the master's and PhD levels.

In a comprehensive study by Hyland (2004), the researcher examined the generic structure of the acknowledgement sections written by postgraduate students at the master's and PhD levels from five universities in Hong Kong. The study collected 240 dissertations and included interviews with supervisors and students. The corpus comprised twenty MA and twenty PhD dissertations from each of six academic disciplines, namely electronic engineering, computer science, business studies, biology, applied linguistics, and public administration. the results revealed that PhD acknowledgement sections were nearly twice as long as those in master's theses. Supervisors were mentioned in all acknowledgements, while friends and teachers were commonly cited. Additionally, all acknowledgements began with the thanking move, which was therefore classified as an obligatory move. The move was framed by the reflecting and announcing moves, which occurred less frequently. Further analysis of the thanking move indicated that expressing gratitude for academic assistance was consistently present across all texts in the corpus. Interviews with students highlighted the acknowledgement section as an important means of showing gratitude to advisors, lecturers, and family members who provided encouragement during the dissertation process. However, a few students demonstrated less attention to this section, stating that its inclusion in the dissertation was unnecessary.

Yang (2012) conducted research to examine PhD dissertation acknowledgements (DA) written by Taiwanese EFL writers in an English-speaking context. The materials were 120 texts in various disciplines, including English linguistics, English language education, and English literature. The study aimed to find out whether disciplines would affect the construction of DA. The researcher adopted Hyland's (2004) three-tier framework to examine generic structure and linguistic realization. The results revealed that the generic structure of the present corpus was mostly consistent with Hyland's (2004) three-tier model of DA. However, there were slight

differences between the two science areas in terms of the generic construction and lexical realizations that modify the thanking acts.

Similar to Yang (2012), Jaroenkitboworn's (2014) study also examined dissertation acknowledgements composed by EFL PhD students by analysing their generic moves and linguistic patterns. These students were advanced learners of English in the area of the English language. The findings showed that among the three moves, the thanking move was identified as obligatory, while the announcing and signing-off moves were found to be optional. Although the study utilised Hyland's (2004) analytical framework, no reflective move (M1) was identified. Also, certain adjustments were made to the thanking move, dividing the expression of gratitude for resources into expressing thanks for data and documentation work support, as well as for financial support. Moreover, a conclusion of thanking was introduced as a final step of this move. Another adaptation made to Hyland's (2004) framework was the inclusion of a signing-off move, which consists solely of the researcher's name.

Borlongan (2017) examined acknowledgements from Philippine English writers in doctoral dissertations, with the aim of identifying the moves and steps utilised in these acknowledgements. Twenty dissertation acknowledgements from the fields of Arts and other disciplines were compiled as a corpus. The framework employed in this study was adapted from Hyland (2003, 2004) and Hyland and Tse (2004). The findings revealed that these dissertation acknowledgements did not completely adhere to the framework proposed by Hyland (2003, 2004) and Hyland and Tse (2004) because a newly identified move, "thanking god", emerged from the analysis.

Zare-ee and Hejazi (2019) conducted a study aimed at investigating the occurrence and variation of moves and steps in acknowledgements written by both Persian native speakers and English native speakers. They employed Hyland's (2004) framework for acknowledgements to analyse 150 acknowledgement sections from theses and dissertations. The findings showed that acknowledgements written by native Persian speakers adhered to all the moves and steps outlined by Hyland (2004). Interestingly, a similar observation was made in Borlongan's (2017) study, where the inclusion of the thanking god move was identified. The thanking and reflecting moves were found to be the most frequently used moves, while the least commonly utilised moves were accepting responsibility and dedicating the thesis.

Instead of utilising Jaroenkitboworn's (2014) revised framework, which primarily focused on Thai EFL students similar to this study, Hyland's (2004) framework was still employed for the analysis. This choice was made because Jaroenkitboworn's (2014) study included the signing-off move, which did not correspond to the defined criteria for a move, as it requires the presence of linguistic patterns and communicative purposes. Moreover, the addition of the step "conclusion of thanking" was deemed insignificant, as it was observed in only one instance.

Methodology

Corpus Compilation

The corpus utilised in this study comprises 60 acknowledgement sections extracted from MA research reports in applied linguistics. These reports were sourced from four different programmes offered at two public universities in Thailand. Although the nomenclature of these reports may differ depending on the specific study programmes and obtained credits, for the purpose of this study, all reports are referred to as "dissertations".

In the compilation process, the data selection was carried out with specific criteria. Firstly, the data was purposefully taken from the four programmes. Additionally, the length of the data and the corpus size were taken into consideration. Given the time constraints, a manageable number of 60 acknowledgements with an approximate length of 200-300 words were chosen. This ensured that the moves could be distinctively made without the section being too brief. To maintain balance within the corpus, dissertations spanning from 2012 to 2021 were retrieved from

the e-databases of the two universities. Acknowledgements authored by international students were excluded from the analysis. Detailed information about the e-databases contained within the corpus is presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Details of the E-Databases in the Corpus

Database	Programmes of study	No. of texts	No. of words	No. of sentences	Avg. length/text
University A	Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)	15	3,589	138	239.27
	English as an International Language (EIL)	15	3,822	153	254.80
University B	English Language Teaching (ELT)	15	3,591	155	239.40
	Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)	15	3,590	156	239.33
Total		**60**	**14,592**	**602**	**243.20**

Table 3 shows that the corpus consists of 60 acknowledgements, with 15 acknowledgements taken from the following four programmes—TEFL and EIL from University A, and ELT and TEFL from University B. The total number of tokens is 14,592 words, derived from 602 sentences, resulting in an average of 243 words per text.

Data analysis and Coding Procedures

To investigate the generic structure of the moves in the acknowledgement sections, the programme called Notepad++ was utilised to facilitate the checking and the cleaning of the texts. In order to protect the anonymity of individuals mentioned in the acknowledgements, their names were replaced with their respective roles enclosed in parentheses. Upon the initial reading of each text, each text was manually divided into distinct units of analysis based on their communicative purposes, using Hyland's (2004) framework for dissertation acknowledgements. All the texts were subsequently entered into the Microsoft Excel programme for the coding process and the computation of descriptive statistics, namely the frequency and the percentage.

Table 4

A Comparison of the Move Structures in Dissertation Acknowledgements Between Hyland's (2004) Framework and the Structure Observed in Thai EFL Graduate Students' Acknowledgements

Move/Step	Hyland's (2004)	Move/Step	Thai EFL graduate students
M1	**Reflecting move**	**M1**	**Reflecting move**
M2	**Thanking move**	**M2**	**Thanking move**
M2.1	Presenting participants	**M2.1**	Presenting participants
M2.2	Thanking for academic assistance	**M2.2**	Thanking for academic assistance
M2.3	Thanking for resources	**M2.3**	Thanking for resources
M2.4	Thanking for moral support	**M2.4**	Thanking for moral support
M3	**Announcing move**	**M3**	**Announcing move**
M3.1	Accepting responsibility	**M3.1**	-
M3.2	Dedicating the thesis	**M3.2**	Dedicating the thesis
	-	**M3.3****	Making recommendations to the readers

**Note: A new move

Although the data was coded independently by one of the researchers, another coder who is an English lecturer at a university and holds a master's degree in TEFL was invited to cross-check the analysis. Specifically, 15% of the corpus data (nine out of 60 texts) were rechecked. The reliability agreement rate was 91.89%. Some mismatches were resolved through discussion. A few units which conveyed the same communicative purpose but did not fit into Hyland's (2004) framework were found. These units were therefore grouped as a new move called "making recommendations to the readers (M3.3)", as shown in Table 4. All the moves and steps were later classified into either obligatory, conventional or optional moves, adopting the criteria of Kanoksilapatham (2005, 2015). In the final step, the frequency of move patterns was identified and calculated as a percentage.

Results and Discussion

The findings of the study are presented in alignment with the research questions. In the first section, the frequency of each move and step is displayed, accompanied by the categorisation of moves and steps into obligatory, conventional and optional moves in the second section. The third section presents the generic structures of the acknowledgement sections found in the corpus. To ensure clarity in the classification of each move, two samples are provided alongside each move and step.

Frequencies of Moves and Steps

Table 5

The Distribution of the Move Frequencies in the Acknowledgement Sections of Thai EFL Graduate Students

Move/*Step*	Code	Frequency (n = 60)	Percentage (%)	Category
Reflecting move	**M1**	**8**	**13.33**	**Optional**
Thanking move	**M2**	**60**	**100**	**Obligatory**
Presenting participants	M2.1	43	71.67	Conventional
Thanking for academic assistance	M2.2	60	100	Obligatory
Thanking for resources	M2.3	39	65	Conventional
Thanking for moral support	M2.4	60	100	Obligatory
Announcing move	**M3**	**4**	**6.67**	**Optional**
Accepting responsibility	M3.1	-	-	-
Dedicating the thesis	M3.2	1	1.67	Optional
*Making recommendations to the readers**	M3.3	3	5	Optional

* Note: the newly identified move

Table 5 illustrates the distribution of move frequencies in the acknowledgement sections of Thai EFL graduate students, so as to answer the first research question. Out of a total of 60 acknowledgements, the most prevalent move was found to be the thanking move (M2), constituting 100% of the occurrences. Consequently, it was classified as an obligatory move.

Looking more closely within the individual steps of M2, thanking for academic assistance (M2.2) and thanking for moral support (M2.4) were equally present in all texts; making them obligatory moves. Presenting participants (M2.1) appeared in 43 texts, accounting for 71.67% of the occurrences, while for resources (M2.3) occurred in 39 texts, representing 65%. Thus, M2.1 and M2.3 were classified as conventional moves.

The Classification of Moves: Obligatory, Conventional, or Optional

In terms of the classification of moves, both the reflecting move (M1) and the announcing move (M3) were classified as optional moves, as they were present in merely eight texts (13.33%) and four texts (6.67%) respectively. It is worth noting that there was no instance of accepting responsibility (M3.1) within the analysed corpus. However, a previously unrecognised step, which does not fit into Hyland's (2004) framework, was identified within the announcing move (M3). It was later designated as making recommendations to the readers (M3.3). The definition and samples of this move are shown in Table 6. This move occurred three times, representing 5% of the total occurrences.

Figure 1

Percentage of Each Move in the Acknowledgement Sections Based on the Programme of Study

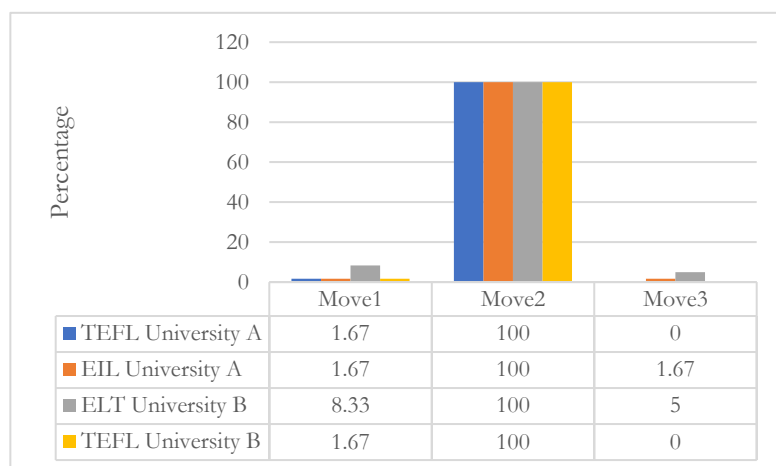|	Move1	Move2	Move3
■ TEFL University A	1.67	100	0
■ EIL University A	1.67	100	1.67
■ ELT University B	8.33	100	5
■ TEFL University B	1.67	100	0

Figure 1 illustrates that the thanking move (M2) exhibited the largest proportion in the acknowledgement sections authored by Thai EFL graduate students across all programmes, representing 100% of all occurrences. On the other hand, the announcing move (M3) had the smallest proportion, accounting for 6.67% altogether. Notably, there was some variation in the utilisation of the reflecting move (M1) among these programmes. The highest occurrence of the reflecting move (M1) was found in the ELT programme at university B, with a percentage of 8.33%. In contrast, the remaining programmes—TEFL and EIL at university A, as well as TEFL at university B—exhibited a smaller proportion of this move (1.67%). Additionally, the presence of the announcing move (M3) was found only in the ELT programme of university A (5%) and the ELT programme of university B (1.67%).

Generic Structure of Moves and Move Patterns

The analysis of the corpus indicates that all three moves outlined in Hyland's (2004) framework were utilised by the Thai EFL postgraduate students. However, the step known as accepting responsibility (M3.1) was not observed, while a previously unidentified step, making recommendations to the readers (M3.3), emerged within the corpus. Table 6 provides samples of the acknowledgement statements for each move and step. The definition of the newly found move (M3.3) is clarified in the table below.

Table 6

Samples of the Acknowledgement Statements for Each Move and Step

Move and step	Samples of the acknowledgement statements
M1: Reflecting move	(1) This thesis is a great milestone in my life that I would have never accomplished without the support of many generous people. (#TEFL 2) (2) I am really proud that I had the chance to study for a master's degree in English Language Teaching, [name of the institute, university]. (#ELT 35)
M2: Thanking move **M2.1 Presenting participants**	(3) I would like to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to all the people who were involved and helped me in my research study. (#ELT 36) (4) This study could not have been completed without the kind support from many honorable people and institutes. (#TEFL 51)
M2.2 Thanking for academic assistance	(5) My gratitude is also extended to my committee members, [name of the committee members with their academic titles 1 and 2] for their insightful comments and suggestions, which very much helped enhance the quality of my research study. (#EIL 17) (6) First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor, [name of the advisor with the academic title 1], for her kind assistance and guidance throughout this Independent Study. (#TEFL 46)
M2.3 Thanking for resources	(7) My heartfelt thanks go to [name of the school principal with the academic title 1], who granted the official permission to collect data from the students at [name of the school]. I would like to also thank [name of the school] teachers [name of teachers with their academic title 1 and 2] for devoting their time to help me throughout the data collection process. (#EIL 16) (8) My gratitude is also extended to the English major students from [name of faculty, university] for their valuable cooperation during the data collection process. (#TEFL 55)
M2.4 Thanking for moral support	(9) Last but not least, my deepest gratitude goes to my beloved family members, whose unconditional love and unfailing encouragement are with me in whatever I pursue. (#TEFL 9) (10) Most importantly, I owe a debt of gratitude to my cherished family, my dearest mother, my beloved father, and my caring aunty for their love, trust, patience, and support. (#ELT 45)
M3: Announcing move **M3.1 Accepting responsibility**	-
M3.2 Dedicating the thesis:	(11) This thesis is dedicated to my beloved family for their endless love, continuous support, and encouragement throughout my lifetime. (#EIL 29)
M3.3 Making recommendations to the readers* refers to a recommendation to readers who are interested in the research topic	(12) And finally, I do hope that anyone who is interested in a corpus-based study of synonyms will find this study useful. (#ELT31) (13) Apart from for myself, this research paper will certainly have a lot of importance for those who are interested to know more about this subject. I hope they will find it comprehensible and easy to understand. (#ELT 37)

It is worth noting that in thanking for resources move (M2.3), students primarily thanked individuals who provided sources of information. In particular, they expressed appreciations towards participants involved in the study and those who assisted them in data collection. Also, the name of the organisation that provided financial support was acknowledged.

With regard to expressing thanks for moral support (M2.4), students typically mentioned their family first, followed by classmates and friends, recalling the precious moments that they

shared together. Furthermore, lecturers and faculty staff members were included in this move, with the writer acknowledging their memorable relationships, in addition to the appreciation for guidance and academic support. Some students also expressed gratitude towards their beloved idols, who inspired them to complete the study.

In the newly identified move, "making recommendations to the readers" (M3.3), the writers aimed to introduce readers to the topic of the study and convey its worthiness. This move resembles the preface of a book, where the writer invites readers to engage with the topic. Typically, this move was placed towards the end of the acknowledgements, serving to introduce and emphasise the importance and value of the study.

Move Sequence Patterns

The table displays the 24 move patterns utilised by Thai EFL graduate students in the analysed corpus. Their frequency and percentage of occurrences are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Move Patterns in the Acknowledgement Sections Written by Thai MA Graduate Students

No.	Move patterns	Frequency (n = 60)	Percentage (%)
1.	M2.1-M2.2-M2.3-M2.4	15	25.00
2.	M2.1-M2.2-M2.4	10	16.67
3.	M2.1-M2.2-M2.4-M2.3-M2.4	6	10.00
4.	M2.1-M2.2-M2.3-M2.2-M2.4	3	5.00
5.	M2.2-M2.3-M2.4	3	5.00
6.	M1-M2.1-M2.2-M2.4	2	3.33
7.	M2.1-M2.2-M2.3-M2.4-M1	2	3.33
8.	M2.2-M2.3-M2.2-M2.4	2	3.33
9.	M2.2-M2.4-M1	2	3.33
10.	M1-M2.1-M2.2-M2.3-M2.4	1	1.67
11.	M1-M2.2-M2.4-M3.3	1	1.67
12.	M2.1-M2.2-M2.4-M1	1	1.67
13.	M2.1-M2.2-M2.4-M3.3	1	1.67
14.	M2.2-M2.1-M2.4	1	1.67
15.	M2.2-M2.3-M2.4-M2.3	1	1.67
16.	M2.2-M2.3-M2.4-M3.3	1	1.67
17.	M2.2-M2.3-M2.4-M2.3-M2.4	1	1.67
18.	M2.2-M2.4	1	1.67
19.	M2.2-M2.4-M2.2-M1	1	1.67
20.	M2.2-M2.4-M2.3	1	1.67
21.	M2.2-M2.4-M2.3-M1	1	1.67
22.	M2.2-M2.4-M2.3-M2.2-M2.4	1	1.67
23.	M2.2-M2.4-M2.3-M2.4	1	1.67
24.	M3.2-M2.1-M2.3-M2.2-M2.3-M2.4	1	1.67

Among the 24 move patterns identified in the corpus, the linear four-move sequence M2.1-M2.2-M2.3-M2.4 was the most commonly used, accounting for 15 out of the 24 move patterns (25%). The second most frequent pattern was the linear sequence of M2.1-M2.2-M2.4, which occurred in 10 out of 24 move patterns (16.67%). The third most frequently used move sequence pattern was the sequence of M2.1-M2.2-M2.4-M2.3-M2.4, appearing six times (10%). Two move patterns, M2.1-M2.2-M2.3-M2.2-M2.4 and M2.2-M2.3-M2.4, occurred three times each, accounting for 5%. The remaining 15 patterns occurred only once, representing 1.67%.

Based on the data in Table 7, it is evident that the majority of the acknowledgements began with the thanking move (M2), which showed gratitude to people or institutions, while omitting the announcing move (M1) at the beginning. These findings partially correspond with a study

conducted by Yang (2012) and Jaroenkitboworn (2014), which similarly highlighted that the PhD candidates in their study commonly expressed their gratitude with the thanking move without framing the acknowledgements with the reflecting move at the beginning.

In addition, instead of using the announcing move (M3) as the closing move, it is noticeable that thanking for moral support (M2.4) was commonly positioned at the end of the acknowledgements, especially among the top five sequence patterns. However, this positioning does not imply that providing moral support is of lesser significance. This is evident from the inclusion of the phrases, *Last but not least* and *Most importantly* in sample statements 9 and 10, as illustrated in Table 7.

In summary, with regard to the components of acknowledgement writing, the findings align with Hyland's (2004) framework, as the three main moves were identified, despite some variations observed under the announcing move (M3). Notably, M3.1 was absent in this study, which partially supports the findings of Zare-ee and Hejazi (2019), who reported that accepting responsibility (M3.1) was the least frequently used move in their corpus.

Furthermore, some differences were found between Hyland's (2004) move structures in acknowledgements and the move structures employed by Thai EFL graduate students, particularly regarding two moves: reflecting (M1) and thanking for resources (M2.3). In Hyland's (2004) framework, the reflecting move (M1) predominantly appeared in the initial part of acknowledgements. However, the findings of this study do not align with Hyland's (2004) study, as less than 15% of the acknowledgements written by Thai EFL graduate students incorporated the reflecting move (M1).

Conclusion

When comparing the move structures of the dissertation acknowledgements proposed by Hyland (2004) to the structures observed in Thai EFL graduate students' dissertations, it becomes evident that the accepting responsibility move (M3.1) was entirely absent from the analysed corpus. However, a new move, "making recommendations to the readers (M3.3)", was identified in the Thai EFL graduate students' acknowledgements. Despite a limited number of occurrences found in the study, the presence of this move highlights a unique cultural characteristic of Thai students, who tend to exhibit generosity towards others. In contrast to some previous studies (Borlongan, 2017) where the thanking god move was identified, expressions of gratitude towards god or other religious deities such as Allah or the Buddha were not observed in the current study.

In summary, the majority of Thai EFL graduate students followed Hyland's (2004) framework when writing their acknowledgement sections. In line with previous studies (Hyland, 2004; Hyland and Tse, 2004; Yang, 2012), this study discovered that the thanking move (M2) was found in every text and is thus considered as obligatory. Specifically, expressing thanks for academic assistance (M2.2) and expressing thanks for resources (M2.3) were identified in all texts and are therefore considered as obligatory moves. However, the reflecting move (M1) and the announcing move (M3) displayed a relatively infrequent occurrence and were thus classified as optional.

Pedagogical Implications

The findings have some pedagogical implications for both EAP teachers and students. By utilising the categorised move patterns and structures from the corpus, EAP teachers can enhance their instructional approaches and provide valuable guidance to students on how to write the acknowledgement sections in their dissertations. Also, the data from the corpus can serve as a valuable resource in a postgraduate seminar aimed at enhancing students' understanding of writing the acknowledgements. By examining and discussing the patterns identified in the corpus, students can develop a deeper awareness of acknowledgements as a genre. Such awareness is considered

crucial as it fosters students to develop more refined and appropriate acknowledgements in their own research reports, thereby meeting the expectations of the research community.

Moreover, the findings highlight a cultural variation in expressing gratitude. While some cultures may consider the thanking god move necessary, the Thai expression of gratitude frequently involves listing the names of individuals who have made contributions to some extent. This cultural insight can broaden students' understanding of various approaches to acknowledge and express thanks, allowing them to adapt their writing to different socio-cultural contexts.

In terms of designing materials, the compiled data from the study can be incorporated into EAP courses. By including examples of move structures and patterns observed in the corpus, students can gain practical insights and guidance on how to write effective acknowledgement sections. The integration of authentic data into course materials will equip students with the essential skills and knowledge to effectively engage with the scientific community and adhere to the conventions of academic writing.

Overall, the pedagogical implications of the findings emphasise the importance of explicitly teaching and raising awareness of acknowledgements as a distinct genre, addressing cultural variations in expressing gratitude, and incorporating real-world data into EAP course materials to support students in their academic writing.

Limitations and Recommendations for Further Studies

The researchers acknowledge certain limitations that can guide the direction of future research. The primary limitation lies in the corpus size, which restricts the generalisability of the findings to larger populations. Increasing the corpus size in future studies is therefore recommended to enable a more thorough exploration of the moves and their occurrences. While this study focused on acknowledgements in the field of applied linguistics, it is essential for future research to expand the scope and explore acknowledgements from other disciplines in order that a more holistic view of the genre and disciplinary variations can be obtained. Additionally, conducting a comparative study between native Thai writers and native English writers would shed light on the cultural and linguistic influences on acknowledgement writing practices.

Linguistic features, tone, and writing styles in the acknowledgements were not investigated in this study. Consequently, incorporating them into the future analyses is recommended. Lastly, combining interview data with textual analysis would enhance the findings, providing insights into students' thought processes and the cultural influences that shape their writing patterns.

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