EXPLORING THE GENRE OF UNDERGRADUATE TEACHER EDUCATION ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Anthony Porras
St. John Paul II College of Davao, Philippines
aaporras@up.edu.ph

Abstract
Genre-based studies in various disciplines have continuously flourished throughout the years. Despite this proliferation, local studies dealing with the acknowledgment section of the undergraduate theses tend to be premature most specifically in the field of Teacher Education (TE). The study aimed to analyze, through the presence of moves, the overall structure of the thirty (30) randomly sampled undergraduate acknowledgments from the field of TE using Hyland's model. The findings revealed that the undergraduate acknowledgment structure was comprised of Thanking Move which is the most pervasive move, followed by the Reflecting Move. Though the Announcing Move was not present, one unique move, which is Thanking God, appeared to be dominating in the corpus. It is suggested for future studies to increase the number of the corpus in order to yield more interesting results and explore the socio-cultural aspect of the investigated genre.
Keywords: Teacher education, genre, acknowledgments, Philippines.

INTRODUCTION

Genre-based studies in various disciplines have continuously flourished throughout the years. Tracing the history, the popularity of the undergraduate thesis to be the central corpus for genre has emerged due to the presence of various genres which include abstract, introduction, literature review, results and discussion, and conclusion. However, investigating the genre of acknowledgment part tends to be less regarded. Relative to this issue, most members of the academic community require acknowledgment part in undergraduate theses. Hence, there is a need to analyze the content of acknowledgment section as it provides an avenue for students to express their gratitude to the people who are part of their undergraduate thesis writing journey. It also serves as a personal account for them to recognize the authorities who provide contributions and assistance which are vital for the success of the thesis. Looking introspectively in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' (ASEAN) context, the manner of writing acknowledgments was not taught by thesis lecturers. Undergraduate students who are enrolled in a thesis writing course tend to be alienated and solely rely with their respective schemas. Unstructured written acknowledgments would reflect incompetence to the part of the students. Thus, this study contributes

as a basis in encouraging thesis lecturers to integrate the findings of the study in the course syllabus.

The acknowledgment structure of Hyland (2004) consists of a three-move tier. The first is the Reflecting Move wherein students state their experiences and realizations during the thesis writing journey. The second move is the Thanking Move which can be manifested through Step A Presenting Participants which serves as an introductory statement before specifying people to thank, Step B Thanking for Academic Assistance where academic authorities are emphasized due to the respective expertise, Step C Thanking for Resources where contributions of finance, technicalities, and other means are expressed, and Step D Thanking for Moral Support where care, love and support from particular persons, usually with deep significance are announced.

The study outlined several literatures aligned to discipline-based and culture-bound approaches in analyzing the genre of acknowledgment. The researcher believes that clustering studies across these themes signifies relevance to the current study.

Mingwei and Yajun (2010), for instance, explored the generic structures and lexicogrammatical features of 40 English acknowledgments written by Chinese English Language and Literature graduate students. Findings revealed that all acknowledgments conform to the moves and steps of Hyland (2004). In terms of gratifying expression, bare mention is pervasively employed. The acknowledgments in the field of Soft and Hard Science were also investigated by Alemi and Rezanejad (2016). Similar to the previous study, the Persian acknowledgments followed a three-move structure which includes Framing Move, Thanking Move, and Closing Move. Though the study had a huge corpus being analyzed, one distinct result is that,

acknowledging resources is not present. It was clearly emphasized that the significance of the acknowledgment genre is vital in constructing a coherent, comprehensive, and conventional academic work. Similarly, the study of Yang (2013) scrutinized 120 graduate acknowledgments from six disciplines using Hyland's (2004) framework. In the point of view of Business and Management, there is a small percentage of occurrences of Move 1 Reflecting Move among the graduate students. The Move 2 Thanking Move still remained consistent as an obligatory move and Move 3 Announcing Move was not utilized. In general, the author claimed that there is a remarkable variation across the six disciplines in terms of linguistic structure and word choice, and that a lot of factors can contribute to these nuances. Socio-cultural aspects on acknowledgment section have also attracted attention to genre researchers. Al-ali (2010) studied 100 Arabic acknowledgments of doctorate students. It was found out that the corpus manifests distinctive signals which can be interpreted as culture bound. One move was observed which is the Thanking Allah Move. This move reflects religious beliefs among the writers, acknowledging the importance of Allah as the Supreme Being in their dissertation experience. Nkemleke (2006), on the other hand, investigated 222 Cameroon doctorate students' acknowledgments through a sociolinguistic approach. The results of the study revealed that the corpus reflected the way of living among Africans in the past. Values and traditions are also depicted in terms of recognizing the elders and other important people who contributed to the success of the author. In addition, Borlongan (2017) analyzed 40 dissertation acknowledgments written by Filipinos. It was found out that the presence of Christianity among Filipinos turned to be

evident in the corpus. Moreover, Reflecting Move was not utilized by Filipino authors.

In Davao City, Philippines, the field of genre analysis is still premature. The researcher has not come across with studies dealing with thesis acknowledgments as corpus of the study specifically in the field of TE. This paved the way for the researcher to establish the genre of undergraduate acknowledgment. Furthermore, the purpose of this study is to determine the overall structure in terms of moves and steps present in the acknowledgment sections of undergraduate theses based on Hyland's (2004) model.

METHOD

This is a descriptive-qualitative study which employed genre analysis of thesis acknowledgments crafted by the Filipino undergraduate students from the College of TE at St. John Paul II College of Davao, Davao City, Philippines, in the academic year 2017-2018. Thirty (30) randomly sampled undergraduate acknowledgements served as the corpora of the study which were collected from the institution's Assistant Vice President for Academics and Research. The moves, steps, and structure of undergraduate acknowledgments were analyzed using Hyland's (2004) model. The researcher consulted experts in the field of Applied Linguistics for validation purposes due to the nature of subjectivity present in the analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The moves and steps which are found across the TE acknowledgments are presented below with corresponding excerpts:

The researchers of this paper needed to assure the excellent outcomes of the research ... they had to ask help from the excerpts. [Corpus 4]

The excerpt above exemplifies Move 1 Reflecting Move. The authors of the excerpt recognized the difficulties they encountered in the thesis writing journey. It also implies the pressure on their part to produce a high caliber of academic work. Hence, they humbly opted to ask advice "from the experts." The Move 1 Reflecting Move garnered a relatively low occurrence (7%) by the Filipino undergraduate writers. These writers seldom reminisce their experiences in writing thesis. This result is similar to the study of Hyland and Tse (2004) where only 3% of Hong Kong students employed this move.

Move 2 Thanking Move was also observed from the corpus. With its perfect percentage (100%), the Move 2 is present all throughout the acknowledgments, making this move as an obligatory one. In the study of Al-Ali (2010), Move 2 is also present which indicates that this move is the backbone of every acknowledgement. This move was manifested through Presenting Participants, Thanking for Academic Assistance, Thanking for Resources and Thanking for Moral Support. The excerpts below served as the examples.

The researchers would like to express their deepest gratitude to the following persons who had been their mentor for the fulfilment of this study: [Corpus 11]

The excerpt above is an example of Step A Presenting Participants where the authors presented the people that are needed to be thanked for, using the word "following" which indicates that the preceded word is followed by names of the people to be acknowledged. This shows that the Step A acts as a header or introductory sentence in the thesis acknowledgements. Moreover, Step B is also present in the corpus. The sample excerpt can be seen below.

To her thesis adviser Mr. X, MAT and to her professor in Thesis 200, Ms. B, MAED, who guided, helped her, and gave her some advice during her research. [Corpus 7]

It can be observed that the thirty (30) authors or 100% of the participants never failed to acknowledge the thesis adviser for the advice, guidance, and suggestions and the criticism of the panel members for the study. The author mentioned the name of thesis adviser and panel members that help the author in making the thesis possible. In writing an acknowledgement, the author commonly gives credits to the thesis adviser and panel members for the knowledge that they shared. The extension of educational attainment from academic authorities is also evident, manifesting how Filipinos value education with a high regard.

To her cousin...for lending her computer... and to Printing Shop A, for offering cheaper prices and discounts to their printing services. [Corpus 28]

There are also Filipino authors who utilized Step C in their acknowledgments. The excerpt above is an example. It is noteworthy to emphasize that an acknowledgment does not only serve as a freedom wall, but it also highly depicts social issues such as inadequate resources or poverty in a huge extent specifically a third world country like Philippines, the locale of the study. The author does not even own a computer and a printer; thus, lending "from a cousin" and "visiting a printing shop" are necessary to accomplish the requirement.

To my love of my life... and... for the love, care, and inspiration that motivated the researcher to continue and pursue this study...[Corpus 1]

In addition, there are Filipino writers who subscribed to Step D. The excerpt above shows that the writer mentioned the people who gave "love, care and inspiration" to him during the making of the study. According to Afip et al. (2013), the Thanking for Moral Support step is an obligatory step in which the authors thank the special someone and family members for their patience, understanding, and care. It also offers gratitude to friends for encouragement and friendship along the research.

Lastly, there is a distinct move which is not present in Hyland's (2004) framework. This move is the Thanking God Move where it was pervasively employed by Filipino authors. Its remarkable prevalence accumulated 93%. The sample is presented below.

And to the Almighty God, for the gift of life and all the blessings He has poured... [Corpus 30]

In the excerpt above, the religious affiliation of Filipinos to Christianity appeared to reflect in the majority of the corpus. It is already an attribute of most Filipinos to acknowledge God as the divine being that is the source of everything. According to Al-Ali (2010), Thanking God is employed by students who reflected attitudes towards their religious beliefs. The study supported that Thanking God is an important step in writing an acknowledgement.

CONCLUSION
The undergraduate acknowledgment structure was comprised of Thanking Move which is the most pervasive move, realized through Step A Presenting Participants, Step B Thanking for Academic Assistance, Step C Thanking for Resources, and Step D Thanking for Moral Support. It is followed by the Reflecting Move. Though the Announcing Move was not present, one unique move, which is Thanking God,

appeared to be dominating in the corpus. The knowledge that can be grasped from this study serves as an orientation for students in their thesis writing journey who will craft their own acknowledgments. In this manner, undergraduate students writing their thesis can be guided on how an acknowledgment is structured and what rhetorical functions can be effectively utilized. Moreover, the study offers some important insights in relation to the accepted convention of a particular discourse community, which in this case, is the field of TE. For future researchers, this study can be included in their respective repositories for further exploration of more essential genre aspects of undergraduate acknowledgments.

REFERENCES

Afip, L. B., Ustati, M. K. B., & Dahan, H. M. (2013). The differences between Malay and Chinese postgraduates' gratitude: The generic structure of dissertation acknowledgement. *Researchers World Journal of Arts, Science &*

Nkemleke, D. (2006). Nativisation of dissertation acknowledgements and private letters in Cameroon. *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, *15*(2), 166-184.

Yang, W. (2013). Genre analysis of dissertation acknowledgements: A comparative study across contexts. *3L: The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies*, *19*(2), 27-40.

Commerce, *4*(1), 1-10.

Alemi , M., & Rezanejad, A. (2016) . The generic structure of acknowledgement in Persian dissertations. *The Journal of Teaching Language Skills*, *7*(4), 1-28.

Al-Ali, M. N. (2010). Generic Patterns and Socio-Cultural Resources in Acknowledgements Accompanying Arabic Ph.D. Dissertations. Pragmatics, *20*(1),1-26.

Borlongan, A. M. (2017). Dissertation acknowledgements in Philippine English. *Komaba Journal of English Education*, *8*, 15-35.

Hyland, K. (2004). *Genre and second language writing*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Hyland, K. & Tse, P. (2004). Acknowledgements in graduate dissertations. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *14*(2), 259-275.

Mingwei, Z. & Yajun, J. (2010). Dissertation Acknowledgements: Generic Structure and Linguistic Features. *Chinese Journal of Applied Linguistics, 33*(1), 94–109.