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**Exploring acknowledgements in ELT/TESOL
Master's Theses: Comparing Native and Non-
native writers**

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of

Maestría en Enseñanza del Inglés

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**“Exploring acknowledgements in ELT/TESOL Master’s Theses:
Comparing Native and Non-native writers”**

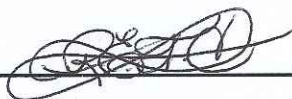
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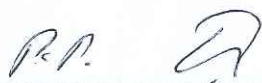
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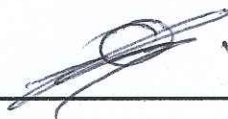
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Abstract

The aim of this study is to analyze native and non-native writers' expression of gratitude in the section of acknowledgements of their research project. Despite acknowledgements may seem as a separate section of the main project, it is considered highly valued since it is the only free-zone of structure and self-expression influenced by the writers' cognitive skills, linguistic choices and personality. This research intends to find out similarities and discrepancies between MA TESOL/ELT thesis acknowledgements written by native and non-native speakers of English. This study consists of a genre and statistical analysis of a corpus of 40 MA theses. A mixed method approach was used to analyze the data in order to identify the structure and frequency of strategies used for gratitude articulation by both native and non-native writers. The results from this study could contribute to better understand the writing processes in Masters' students in unconventional text genres. Consequently, it expects to guide EAP instructors and thesis supervisors to lead students even in the acknowledgements section, so they will be able to develop a competent academic identity while writing and using their own voice.

Key words: acknowledgements, genre, genre analysis, and gratitude.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Writing has been in the spotlight in applied linguistics for many years as a means of understanding its “complex multifaceted nature” in search for the most suitable instruction to prospective writers (Hyland, 2009). In Master's programs, students are expected to produce eminent writings that may be frustrating activities for students even at postgraduate programs (Crawford, 2010; Kemp, 2007). The main barrier for prospective writers is the limited literature on practical advice on academic writing (Kemp, 2007). Having this in mind, Crawford (2010) highlights the importance of conducting research in academic writing due to the positive impact it elicits to future writers or instructors.

One of the preeminent forms of academic writing in higher education is a thesis where students are expected to master appropriate academic writing conventions and language use by considering the specific conventions of their field genre and expected audience (Olmos, 2010). Thesis writing is considered a difficult and challenging task for both native and non-native speakers due to the apparent lack of training on its components, generic structure and appropriate academic discourse (Bitchener, Basturkmen & East, 2010; Crawford, 2010; Kemp, 2007; Olmos, 2010; Tapia, 2010). However, Crawford (2010) notes that a potential solution for prospective writers is awareness-rising in genre from their specific discipline to facilitate their meta-knowledge. This means that genre analysis allows writers to understand how a text is used within a specific social and professional

space by understanding the linguistic (internal) and sociolinguistic (external) elements of a given text (Bhatia, 2004; Bhatia, Flowerdew & Jones, 2008).

What is more, the thesis is a valuable object of study because it represents the conjunction of the students' cognitive skills, linguistic choices, and researching skills. The conjunction of these elements reflects the development of their voice and self-representation as future writers from a specific discourse community and field of knowledge (Olmos, 2010). At the same time, the thesis is composed by different genres that involve specific linguistic and textual features that are influenced by the author's personal and professional issues. For instance, acknowledgements in theses or dissertations are a clear example of the personal and professional elements that contribute the structure and content of a text (Hyland, 2003). Additionally, acknowledgements are an element that constitutes the preliminary pages of a thesis or dissertation which are prior to the introductory chapter (Oliver, 2004). These pages are also called front matter. Moreover, acknowledgements are described by Hyland (2003) as a space for students to express their gratitude to all the people (academic and moral) who contributed in the completion of their research process. In fact, this is the only section, from the entire thesis, where students feel free to add their voice while describing the reasons the addressees are present in this specific section. He continues by noting that through acknowledgements, students enhance a sensitive part to the whole project and show their humanistic identity regardless of their area of knowledge.

Despite acknowledgements are universal in thesis writing, there is a controversy in the worthiness of their analysis. While many people still consider

them as a separated section of the main text minimizing their textual value. There are others who claim that acknowledgements are a key tool for exploring systematic differences in individual cases and explore identity construction across disciplines (Hyland, 2004; Hyland & Tse, 2004). Hence, the relevance of thesis acknowledgements stems on the act of students' gratitude to specific people who contributed morally or academically to the completion of the project (Hyland, 2013). Hence, acknowledgements as academic genre, involve a specific type of knowledge, structure, values, vocabulary, linguistic choice and discourse that differentiate them from the rest of elements from the thesis or dissertation. Thus, writers should be aware of their components to meet the needs of their specific discourse community and, therefore, be considered as a competent member of that disciplinary area through genre awareness (Bhatia, 2002; Crawford, 2010).

1.2 Introduction to the problem

Even though many people consider acknowledgements as an independent component from the complete research paper, some of them identify their value due to the "rhetorical sophistication" and "academic preferences" they involve becoming, with this, a valuable and worthy material for analysis (Hyland, 2004). However, the fact that acknowledgements are written mainly by the students, independently of their supervisors' guidance, may convey positive and negative effects on the final text. On the one hand, students can manifest their gratitude for the received academic and moral support to specific people without risk of losing face "in front" of their supervisors so they can express themselves with freedom. On the other, it may include inaccurate language use and inappropriate text

structure from those of their discourse community, which can hinder their academic identity (Hyland & Tse, 2004).

Albeit acknowledgements are universally mandatory in thesis writing, there is still a shortage of research on acknowledgements in general (Hyland, 2003; 2004; 2009; 2012; Johns, Bawarshi, Coe, Hyland, Paltridge, Reiff, & Tardy, 2006). Giannoni (2002) was one of the first researchers in acknowledgements by comparing native and non-native writers. Additionally, being a crucial pioneer, Hyland's (2003) research and its subsequent Hyland (2004), as well as Hyland and Tse's (2004) work are based on analyzing 240 MA and PhD dissertations from non-native speakers concluding that this type of student may face disadvantages while writing their dissertations over native writers because of their language proficiency as well as a raising awareness of the structural and linguistic features proper from this genre. Subsequently, Al-Ali (2006) complements them by proposing a more culture-sensitive framework highlighting the local practices, moral characteristics and specific values from Arabic students. These works raised awareness of the linguistic and structural type of analysis that could be performed through this type of textual corpora conducted through time.

Hence, two directions of research on acknowledgements were found: structural and linguistic. On the one hand, the analysis focused on structural acknowledgements features are mainly comparisons of native and non-native writers of rhetorical structure: Lasaky (2011) compared Taiwanese and American writers acknowledgements structure; Golpur (2012) and Yang (2013) compared Chinese and English writers; Abdollahian and Hashemi (2013) made a comparison

of Persian and Iranian writers. While there are other who conducted research for only non-native writers, such as, Iranian writers (Kuhi & Rezaei, 2014), and Pakistani writers (Rofess & Mahmood, 2015).

On the other, there is some research devoted to linguistic features of acknowledgements. For this, Mingwei and Yajun (2010) made a genre and linguistic analysis of acknowledgements. In parallel, Afful and Mwinlaaru (2010) describe identity construction through linguistic features from acknowledgements. Additionally, a socio-pragmatic comparative analysis between Taiwanese and American writers was conducted by Cheng and Kuo (2011), Cheng (2012), and Chan (2015).

The different research conducted in the area has helped to identify how variable this genre is across cultures. However, there is a gap of research in a Latin American context; which may enrich our understanding of writing process and genre.

1.3 Origins of the research and problems experienced as a thesis writer

When studying the Bachelor's Degree, I was not an experienced writer and had no knowledge of the different benefits a genre analysis can bring to a researcher and writer as stated by Crawford (2010) and Bhatia (2004). There was a point when I felt lost while writing a thesis element which was precisely writing my acknowledgements because I had to do it independently, as in most cases (Hyland, 2003). Despite I felt proud and excited about writing this specific section I did not want to lose face and commit a mistake (Hyland, 2003). Therefore, I

unconsciously conducted a quasi-genre analysis that is the strategy proposed by Crawford (2010) and Bhatia (2004). It was quasi because I did not know what genre analysis was and that it was possible to conduct.

Consequently, I started reading some acknowledgements from the school library and I was exposed to some with an overwhelming amount of text or others with only a single paragraph and some others with syntax mistakes and so on. I felt in conflict and noticed that thesis writing precisely involves different skills such as, “content knowledge, academic writing, researching skills, and arguments of the writer to express his posture” (Olmos, 2010, p. 148). However, probably the most difficult part for me was to know if my discourse was appropriate to that specific section since apart from being a novice writer in terms of acknowledgements, I was a non-native speaker struggling to enter a new discourse community (Crawford, 2010; Olmos, 2010).

Then, I have experienced the obstacles of being a novice writer and non-native speaker of the English language. I could solve the situation by observing and following others’ structure and rhetorical strategies. However, I have seen that this is not a strategy used by other members of this discourse community since they think acknowledgements is something private but the correct completion of this section also demonstrates our knowledge as a member of that specific discourse community (Hyland, 2004). This study refers mainly to the importance awareness of genre analysis will allow others to have some guidance in the completion of the different elements in a thesis.

1.4 Purpose of the study

The aim of this study is to analyze the similarities and differences in 40 acknowledgements text written by 20 English native (USA) and 20 non-native students (Mexico) in a TESOL/ELT Master's program to better understand the writing process in native and non-native M.A. students within this specific genre and compare their thesis acknowledgements- genre awareness. It is important to mention and clarify that the native/ non-native status was defined based on the universities' location and students' personal names. However, the analyzed theses are clear examples from an English-medium university in the United States and from Mexico. Therefore, the genre analysis will be conducted by focusing on the specific moves and steps used by these group of students by using a model based on Hyland (2004) and Hyland and Tse's framework (2014) to obtain qualitative and quantitative data.

1.5 Research questions

This study strives to answer the following questions.

1. What are the differences in the structure of native and non-native writers' acknowledgements in MA theses?
2. Do native and non-native MA thesis authors show sociocultural preferences that are uniquely different from one another?

1.6 Significance of the study

This study is intended to identify the generic structure used in ELT/TESOL master's' thesis from native and non-native students as a means of proposing a model for native and non-native writers. As there is a shortage of research in this area, the results from this study may contribute to the area of text analysis of NES and NNES. Despite the small amount of texts analyzed and findings cannot be generalized, the results may allow students and instructors understand and become aware of the difficulties that non-native students may face while writing this section of their whole project. Parallel to this, this study may help language students (and from other areas of knowledge) to complete this section of their thesis or dissertation by making them aware of the values, structure, linguistic components and rhetorical strategies used in this type of genre with the aid of a proposal of model for acknowledgements articulation for both, native and non-native writers. In the same way, this research aims to provide useful information for EAP instructors and thesis supervisors to lead students writing while learning to develop their academic identity and use their own voice while still meeting the needs, values, linguistic and structural expectations of their discourse community. Finally, this paper seeks to fill in the gap in text analysis of this genre in central Mexico and comparing native and non-native speakers.

1.7 Methods

The design used for this textual analysis is a mixed method approach as the main source of information is qualitative data that consists of understanding each individual and, at the same time, groups of speakers of the English language (Cresswell, 2009). On the other hand, the complementary use of numeric analysis will permit a deeper understanding of the comparison of both native and non-native writers and better appreciate the strategies used by these groups of students. The data of analysis was collected from online thesis repositories from two institutions that could represent both groups of comparison. The non-native writers' theses were taken from the Benemerita Universidad Autonoma de Puebla in Mexico. At the same time, the native writers' theses were chosen from the University of San Francisco in California, USA. The selection of the theses was based on the universities' location and students' personal names that could be examples of native and non-native writers. Furthermore, the data will be analyzed through a genre analysis that is described by Bhatia (2002) as follows:

Analyzing genre means investigating instances of conventionalized or institutionalized textual artefacts in the context of specific institutional and disciplinary practices, procedures and cultures in order to understand how members of specific discourse communities construct, interpret, and use these genres to achieve their community goals and why they write them the way they do. (p.6)

As a result, data will be analyzed through an acknowledgements models based on the insights from Hyland (2004) as well as Hyland and Tse (2004) (See Table 1) to ease the identification of the structure of acknowledgements text used

by native and non-native writers. In sum, the process of analysis of the obtained data will be explained in more detail in Chapter Three.

Table 1. Hyland and Tse's Acknowledgements Model

Moves and Steps	Description
1. Reflecting Move	Introspective comment on the writer's' research experience
2. Thanking Move	Mapping credit to individuals and institutions
<i>a. Presenting participants</i>	Including those to be thanked
<i>b. Thanking for academic assistance</i>	Thanks for intellectual support, ideas, analyses and feedback, and so on
<i>c. Thanking for resources</i>	Thanks for data access and clerical, technical, and financial support
<i>d. Thanking for moral support</i>	Thanks for encouragement, friendship, sympathy, and so on
3. Announcing Move	Public statement of responsibility and inspiration
<i>a. Accepting responsibility</i>	An assertion of authorial responsibility for flaws and errors
<i>b. Dedicating the thesis</i>	A formal dedication of the thesis to one or more individuals

1.8 Research content and organization

This thesis is organized in five chapters. This part of the thesis- Chapter 1- presents the problem, origins of the research, purpose of the study, research questions, the significance of the study, and an overall introduction of the methods that will be used to obtain and analyze data. Chapter 2 presents the review of literature related to the main topics around the whole research providing a conceptual framework of the study. Chapter 3 is the overall explanation of the specific methodology used to analyze data. A deep description of the texts used in this study and the data collection methods will be described as well as the instruments and analysis. Furthermore, Chapter 4 is related to the collection, analysis and interpretation of the data. Finally, Chapter 5 consists of presenting the conclusions of the thesis and the implications of this study for students, instructors and researchers as well as the directions for further research.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

This section deals with the theoretical foundations of the various fields on which this study is based. Although the methodology to be used will be discourse analytical, it is necessary to draw upon other areas of knowledge that are relevant to the phenomenon under study. The chapter is divided into three main sections with different subsections each: 2.1 Entering a New Discourse Community: Written literacy instruction, English for academic purposes, Intercultural communicative competence, Identity construction in academic writing, Voice as self-representation, Native and non-native writers. 2.2 Thesis as discourse: Master's' thesis, Thesis as discourse from a genre-based view, Content and organization in thesis writing, Linguistic strategies in thesis writing. 2.3 Acknowledgements: More than a catalogue of gratitude: The importance of acknowledgements in thesis writing, Acknowledgements as an academic genre, The meta-discourse and textual realizations in thesis acknowledgements, The generic structure of thesis acknowledgements, acknowledgements in native and non-native writers.

2.0 Introduction

Writing has become a central topic in applied linguistics and other fields of knowledge (Hyland, 2009). In terms of writing, special attention has been paid to research devoted in effective teaching practices that can guide students for writing successfully (Hyland, 2009; 2002).

Hence, successful writing is seen from two different perspectives. A structural view focuses attention to disciplinary preferred patterns and structures

(Connor, 2002); style and form (Kemp, 2007). Whereas a social interpretation turns attention to self- representations shaped by the values and beliefs of a specific discourse community (Hyland, 2013); audience engagement (Hyland 2009); expectations and norms of discourse communities (Connor, 2004; Hyland, 2007); negotiations with colleagues (Hyland, 2007); writing expertise (Hyland, 2009); and finally, corpus and genre analysis (Hyland, 2007).

As a result, both interpretations help to understand the importance of being accurate while writing since it carries the author's professional profile as well as their personal experiences and social identities. They are relevant indicators of the author's ability to balance these variables under evaluation of the different members of a discourse community and allow the author's value and acceptance in it (Hyland, 2009; 2013). These insights allow understanding the complexity of writing defined by Crawford (2007) as a "cultural defined activity that is clearly linked to a wider social context within a given society" (p.5). He continues by noting that the reason of this social effect over writing is mainly caused by the role of language within society as a tool of communication, which is always interrelated to a specific culture. This social stance is shared by different scholars from this specific discipline (Basallo Gomez, 2016; Crawford, 2010, Connor, 2004, Hyland, 2007; 2009; 2013; Kemp, 2007).

Thesis writing, and all the components of this academic genre are a clear example of the complexity of writing while being influenced by specific features such as, discipline, genre and audience. Positioning thesis writing as a valuable device of understanding text and writers nature (Mugford, 2010; Olmos, 2010;

Tapia, 2010). A more in-depth analysis of these theoretical frameworks and views are described below.

2.1 Entering a new discourse community

For most students enrolled in a master's program, thesis writing is their first contact with research and authorship (Bigdeli & Kazemi, 2015; Ojeda & Encinas, 2013). Unfortunately, there are shortcomings in writing education due to the apparent lack of balance between instruction and evaluation processes where a lot of emphasis is given to language accuracy and appropriacy, but expectations are based on students' ability to self-express their ideas in order to interact and approach their audience (Crawford, 2010; Mugford, 2010; Olmos, 2010). In this process, students start struggling to master academic writing skills but also to enter a totally new discourse community (Crawford, 2010).

2.1.1 Written literacy Instruction

Literacy is defined as the ability to read and write (Kern, 2000; Moreno, Encinas Prudencio & Thomas-Ruzic, 2010). Hyland (2009) adds that literacy is a tool for understanding "how we actually use language in our everyday lives" (p. 48). This means that literacy is a strategy to understand how language rule our lives. But Kern (2000) goes beyond by stating that literacy "is the use of socially-, historically-, and culturally- situated practices of creating and interpreting meaning through texts (p. 16). Kern follows by noting that literacy is dynamic depending on variables like contexts, cultures and discourse communities.

Kern and Shultz (2005) also highlights the fact that in EFL and ELT, reading and writing are instructed as isolated language skills rather as a complementary dimension of communication within discourse communities. However, Hyland (2007) claims that the lack of literacy training is visible in non-native speakers but even more in native speakers due to the lack of support in this practice at higher levels of education where they are expected to have mastered this ability. Nonetheless, in the case of master's' students and any other prospective writer, apart from mastering researching skills, they also have to be knowledgeable in their field of knowledge and master the conventions of their target discourse community.

Most literacy instruction practices are ruled by traditional pedagogies where students are expected to adhere to formal writing standards and a high mastery of a disciplinary content knowledge. On the contrary, what students need to face the ever-changing variety of disciplines is explicit instruction on key features of texts and genres regarding the discourse community with less emphasis on the content knowledge (Crawford, 2007; 2010; Hyland, 2009).

2.1.2 English for academic purposes (EAP)

The written productions from the MA students analyzed in this research belong to a specific type of academic production. English for academic purposes (EAP) is believed to have emerged due to the increasing use of English language as a *lingua franca* from international students (Perez- Llantada & Swales, 2017). However, some scholars claim that this attained importance is due to its use as the

vehicle of research and scholarship (Ruiz-Garrido, Palmer-Silveira, Fortanet-Gómez, 2010).

What is more, English for academic purposes (EAP) can be defined as a “specific type of discourse used by professionals and specialists to communicate and transfer information and knowledge” (Ruiz-Garrido, et. al., 2010, p. 201). Perez- Llantada and Swales (2017) add that EAP “involves the teaching and learning of specialized linguistic knowledge, literacy skills and aims at university students and early-career researchers” (p.45). Hence, it can be said that the main purpose of EAP instruction is to help students face the academic needs of a specific academic community.

Finally, EAP pedagogy, according to Swales (1995) should focus on materials and methods that fit the students’ academic needs, expected audience, so students can successfully perform academic tasks and “make them successful communicators in English in academic and research settings” (Perez-Llantada & Swales, 2017, p. 42).

2.1.3 Intercultural communicative competence

As stated in the previous section, writing is linked to cultural issues as language choice is completely linked to the culture and community of practice from the language users (Crawford, Lengeling, Mora Pablo, & Heredia Ocampo, 2014). For this, culture is defined by Hofste (1994) as “the collective programming of the mind, which distinguishes the member of one group or category of people from another” (p. 5). With this, it can be understood that culture refers to the way of life,

norms, values and beliefs from a person or specific group of people. In the case of discourse, language is always situated within a specific culture where both terms are complementary from each other (Bhatia, 2002).

Hence, due to the obvious globalization of the English language, there is an urgent need to use language to communicate and interchange among diverse cultures (Chao, 2016). Therefore, language users should focus their attention on the development of their intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC). ICC is defined by Chunhong and Griffiths (2011) as “learning to deal with different cultures effectively” and all this involves “cultural awareness, communicative competence, personal attitudes like empathy and flexibility, self-awareness and understanding others’ values, norms and beliefs” (p. 113). Koujour (2016) summarizes ICC as “the ability to use language appropriately” (p.12). As a result, successful communication depends on the ability to cope with these features from the different cultures and shape their discourse to the expectancies from the target culture (Lázár, 2007).

In short, the importance of ICC roots from the fact that newcomers into a discourse community are expected to show awareness on “prevalent norms and values to achieve integration into the new language environment, and to enhance their ability to communicate and interact (Crawford et al., 2013, pp. 88-89).

2.1.4 Identity construction in academic writing

Academic writing implies a set of different lexico-grammatical skills (Afful & Mwinlaaru, 2010). However, one of the main elements, according to Olmos (2010),

is the author's identity that goes beyond the linguistic features by adding the cultural, personal and academic schemata of the text. The same author later refers the term identity which is conceived as "the expression of the self in interpersonal relations, as well as in the discourse type and in the society context" (p.150). By this, it can be understood that a text is a construction of field knowledge and the author's stance in a particular situation and with a specific audience in mind.

Identity is seen from a balanced individual and social view. "Social identity denotes the various ways in which people understand themselves in relation to others, and includes the ways in which they view their past and future lived experiences and how they want to be viewed." In parallel, "the shaped self employs language as a tool for making its presence felt" (Crawford, et al., 2014, p. 88). Identity does not stand still but is adaptable to the specific circumstances, audience and communicational purposes (Afful & Mwinlaaru, 2010; Crawford, Mora Pablo & Lengeling, 2016; Gee, 1999; Hyland, 2002.) Having this in mind, it can be said that the main tool for identity development in academic writing is language as such. In the same way, language choice is ruled by the author's identity. Concluding that a text is a portrait of the self-representation of an author towards a specific discourse community and can be scrutinized through textual analysis (Crawford et al., 2014; Crawford et al., 2016; Hyland, 2002; Olmos, 2010).

In fact, new members of a specific discourse communities are expected to construct an identity that can help them be distinguished from other members. In the same way, it represents the writers' desire to be perceived and accepted in such a community (Olmos, 2010). However, it is not an easy task because developing an identity is not an independent activity (Hyland, 2002; 2007)

composed just by personal features but also negotiating with their discourse community by using “prevalent norms and values in order to achieve some degree of integration into the new language environment and to enhance their ability to communicate and interact” (Crawford et al., 2014, p. 88).

Furthermore, identity development is apparently more challenging for non-native speakers than for native speakers due to the differences in cultures, values and beliefs among their L1 and L2 (Hyland, 2002) and possible lack of linguistic, social, cultural and discursive knowledge (Crawford, Mora, Goodwin & Lengeling, 2013) but Hyland (2002) highly contradicts this belief by claiming that voice development is challenging for any new member of a discourse community as they are novice writers. Olmos (2010) states that this problem is accentuated due to the lack of practice inside the language classroom of written tasks involving the use of self-representation.

2.1.5 Voice expression

For this, identity is represented in a text using a self-expression or voice. According to Hashimoto (1987), a powerful writing is one with that “juice” that brings life to the words in it. The so called “juice” refers to the voice itself and accordingly, it carries that piece of humanity to the text. For this, voice and self-representation are words used synonymously which allows to have a concrete definition of the term as such. Furthermore, it is defined by Ivanič and Camps (2001) as the “expression of the writer’s own views, authoritativeness and authorial presence” (p.7). Empowering the writer into a discourse community or academic

genres through self-authorship (Hyland, 2002). What is more, voice also refers to the integration of the writer' personality, ideas, experiences, beliefs, attitudes, desires, emotions, interaction and cultural background (McLaren, 1994; Mugford, 2010; Olmos, 2010).

Additionally, voice is claimed to be “unique to the individuals;” nevertheless, writers possess a repertoire of voices that are developed through the interaction with different genres and discourses (Ivanič & Camps, 2001) as well as the writer's personal background, context, and social situation (Olmos, 2010). The selection of a voice for a specific situation will totally depend on the purpose or intention of communication and available linguistic and cultural resources (Correa, 2010; Gee, 1999; Ivanič & Camps, 2001; Hyland, 2002; Olmos; 2010). Finally, it is important to highlight that despite voice is somehow determined by social factors, some authors argue that this selection is also determined by the writers' decision since the author has the total power of choice to follow the “generic structures” or innovate. Which also involves their responsibility over the impact of their words (Ivanič & Camps, 2001).

Voice development is one of the main elements in literacy development, since it is a marker of the level of critical thinking a writer has developed into the knowledge area (Mugford; 2010; Olmos, 2010). But being able to integrate his identity in his written production also involves his understanding of the different insights received in relation to his social context and cultural background. Therefore, the voice instruction should be emphasized from early stages of written production so prospective writers can have enough opportunities of practice (Mugford, 2010). Thus, explicit instruction is required, where instructors should

emphasize the available voice-typology, the specific differences among interactional and academic voice and the variation of voice within different disciplines or genres (Correa, 2010).

Finally, Mugford (2010) emphasizes the fact that voice instruction (L1 and L2) should be in a more controlled approach through modelling what is expected from the prospective authors, so they have enough resources to develop and make their voice sound.

2.1.6 Native and non-native writers

The spread of English as “the international language of academic and research communication” (Perez-Llantada, 2015, p. 10) has provoked the emergence of a vast number of non-native writers-researchers that even outnumber the native writers of English in seek of disseminating their work. The dispute of being a native and non-native writer has gained importance in the field of genre analysis as hybridity of genres is found out. Therefore, it is claimed that native writers’ products are more accurate in lexico-grammatical terms as they have awareness in the English language culture, values and norms. On the contrary, it is claimed that non-native writers tend to have some obstacles to produce an “immaculate text.” This is because it has been claimed that their L1 has a direct impact on their L2 production (Englander, 2013; Medgyes, 1992, Mora Pablo, 2011; Perez-Llantada, 2015).

Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that there was a point where non-native writers were claimed to be less creative than native writers and that their production

is ruled by imitation and norm-dependence of the native writers (Medgyes, 1992). However, Hyland (2007) totally contradicts the dispute by claiming that most of the times native writers face more struggles while entering a discourse communicative than native writers since their literacy instruction (EAP) is not as formal as that from non-native writers who are provided with direct instruction of the academic writing conventions. In the case of native writers, Hyland also claims that when being prospective writers, they instructors assume their mastery on these conventions as if it were an innate ability.

Nevertheless, Mora Pablo (2011), despite claiming that native writers' productions are "better" than non-native writers', makes an important claim by stating that academic writing "requires conscious efforts and extensive practice at different levels" (p. 239). And despite writers face social and cognitive challenges, both native and non-native writers are equally able to enter a new discourse community successfully through practice and development of the different abilities and values an academic researcher-writer needs and their discourse community demands.

2.2 Thesis as discourse

Theses are described by Quick and Hall (2015) as "in-depth- critical examination of one topic, usually in an area that is specific to their discipline, role or specialty with aim of filling a gap in knowledge, changing practices or making recommendations" (p. 15). Afful (2008) notes that a thesis is "a report of findings of a higher research study and represents substantial subject knowledge gained as

well as the cultural, professional norms, and practices acquired during many years' socialization process in a discipline" (p. 196). In terms of external factors, Afful (ibid.) proposes that a successful thesis should also conceive a concrete methodology so it can be considered an accurate work, provoking positively impact on society and being an original work so it is valuable enough to be disseminated.

However, most thesis writers are not familiarized with the needed strategies nor the crucial writing-researching skills in order to fulfill the task successfully (Dong, 1998). For this reason, a thesis can be considered as an academic genre since it has its own rhetorical structure, specific linguistic realizations, cultural and discursive norms and impact (Bitchener, 2009; Dong, 1998; Oliver, 2004). What is more, the lack of training of students in these different aspects provoke uncertainty of some crucial facts about thesis writing, in most cases, as listed by Bitchener (2009, p. 1).

- 1) What content should or should not be presented.
- 2) How content can be most effectively organized so that maximum rhetorical effect is achieved.
- 3) Which linguistic features typically characterize how claims and appropriate interpretations are made.
- 4) Disciplinary-specific presentations conventions.

Having this in mind, writing a thesis conceives students' understanding the functions of each section (named by Bitchener as sub-genres) and the relationship among content and overall structure. Therefore, it may be considered a challenging

task for native or non-native students due to the different demands on language level, textual knowledge, analytical skills, academic writing skill, genre knowledge linguistic conventions rhetorical skills and social knowledge (Afful, 2008; Turner & Bitchener, 2008; Olmos, 2010; Paltridge, 2002). Therefore, this type of genre has gained importance for researchers as a valuable resource for discourse analysis due to the different academic, researching, writing, structural and rhetorical skills.

2.2.1 Master's' thesis

Master's' thesis is defined as the most important step in the culmination of master's' programs, which commonly have a length of two years. That is the period of time in which students have a deep engagement with the research topic. In this way, students develop self-directed learning and empowerment of their development as prospective writers (Bigdeli and Kazemi, 2015; Samraj, 2008).

For most students, thesis writing is their first contact with authorship and research; hence, effective tailored instructions on this practice are crucial for developing a sense of engagement and success (ibid). This means that thesis supervisors play a large role in thesis writing through effective feedback and guidance. The main role of thesis supervisors is the one of an “expert” who guides students to identify the structural, discursive, linguistic and social characteristics of M.A. theses that are expected and required in their specific discipline and discourse community.

What is more, M.A. thesis writing is considered by Bigdeli and Kazemi (2015) as a “stage that can open up possible avenues for further academic

progress and achievement” (p.28). In short, masters’ thesis as any thesis from any other degree is an opportunity for students to enhance autonomy and an important factor in professional development.

2.2.2 Thesis as discourse from a genre-based view

Hyland (2009) notes that “genres are the ways we engage in, and make sense of, our social worlds and our competence to use them does not lie in our ability to identify monolithic uses of language, but to modify our choices according to the contexts in which we write” (p. 69). This engagement is clearly seen in thesis writing where writers show their engagement with specific discourse community through smart linguistic and structural choices throughout the whole text and in elements that compose a thesis.

In addition, genres are believed to be shaped by different elements such as, content, form, intended audience, medium, channel and above all the communicative purpose (Bhatia, 1993) as well as by the patterns, of words, deeds, values, beliefs, symbols, tools, objects, time and places of its specific discourse community (Bhatia, et al., 2008; Garzone, 2014; Gee, 1999). This also happens in thesis writing where “each part-genre (section or chapter) of the whole genre (thesis) will be recognizable by its particular function, content and organization” (Bitchener, 2009, p. 2). Therefore, apart from knowing how to structure the whole genre, students also need to be aware of the different demands within each sub-genre (ibid.).

In short, the awareness of function, content and organization within the genre and subgenres will be crucial for student's acceptance as "worthy members" of a specific discourse community (Chanock, 2007). Finally, some of the prevalent features that enhance successful thesis writing are the rhetorical and linguistic features of a text that will be discussed in the following sections.

2.2.3 Content and organization in thesis writing

Some of the most relevant difficulties for native and non-native thesis writers in terms of structure are proposed to be 1) Selection of content; 2) Organization of the content; and 3) Language and Presentation, as described by Bitchener (2010). In response to these concerns, some authors have proposed generic structures for each component of this genre and its sub-genres. Therefore, the most commonly expected thesis structure is ruled by the IMRD model (Introduction, Method, Result, Discussion) as proposed by Cooley and Lewkowicz (1997), Paltridge (2002) and Samraj (2008).

Furthermore, Bitchener (2010), Oliver (2004) and Paltridge and Starfield (2007) propose a more detailed structure composed by the 1) Front-matter which includes a) title page, b) abstract, c) contents, and d) acknowledgements. In addition, it is already known that these pages are the preliminary section that introduces and presents the whole research by functioning as a gatekeeper for readers to continue reading the 2) introductory chapter, 3) literature review, 4) methodology, 5) data analysis and 6) conclusion. Finally, the 7) list of references and 8) appendix and figures are available. It is important to mention that despite

offering a detailed structure of each sub-genre, Bitchener (2009) does not contemplate acknowledgements in his framework. While the other three do.

Thesis or dissertation is a valued genre due to its overall structure and linguistic strategies. As a result, this genre has been analyzed in general terms by Bigdeli and Kazemi (2014), Geçikli (2013) and Tapia (2010). What is more, abstracts have been studied by Al-Shujari, Ya'u and Buba (2016), Ghasemi and Alavi (2014), Jalilifar and Vahid Dastjerdi (2010), Krajňáková (2015), and Ren & Li (2011). In the same way, introductions have been studied by Choe and Hwang (2014). Additionally, literature review has been explored by Bitchener and Banda (2007). Discussions have been researched by Bitchener and Basturkmen (2006) as well as Nodoushan and Khabakbaz (2011). Last of all, conclusions have been explored by Olmos (2010). All of them with the purpose of understanding the nature of the different sub-genres and contextual factors that constitute them.

Each of these elements constrain a specific set of moves and sub-moves that these authors propose but highlight that are not compulsory since the choice has to be in accordance from the writer and thesis supervisor, who is considered the expert from that specific discourse community.

2.2.4 Linguistic strategies in thesis writing

Thesis writing is also considered to be the most demanding task, linguistically speaking, for Native and Non-native students (Cooley & Lewkowicz, 1997). Additionally, the acceptance of thesis writers in a new discourse community is based on the needs, anxieties and expectations of the expected audience. Therefore, the complexity of thesis writing goes beyond the different moves and

sub-moves it conveys. As a general term, rhetorical issues refer to “how language and the conventions of thesis writing are used to persuade the reader of the validity of the writer’s arguments” (Paltridge & Starfield, 2007, p.43). Among the most common linguistic issues students face are: linguistic skills, verb tenses, voice, pronouns, hedging, and meta-discourse (ibid.).

Thesis writers are expected to manage certain linguistic writing skills such as summarizing and synthesizing, reporting, evaluating, critiquing and presenting a stance. With these skills, writers can show the objective and hard work behind the selection of relevant content for the final product (Bitchener, 2010). What is more, in terms of verb tenses, the most commonly used are those in perfect tenses, simple tenses depending on the purpose of the sub-genre (Bitchener, 2010; Paltridge & Starfield, 2007). Two of these elements that will be discussed by the writer and the supervisor is the voice and use of pronouns. Mostly, there is a balance between active and passive voice while constructing a thesis. But it will totally depend on the communicative goal of the text. This is the very same case of the voice where there is always a debate about whether to use or not the first-person pronouns (I/ We). Again, the decision should be discussed as a means of fulfilling the needs of the discourse community.

Hedging is a strategy that is highly recommended to avoid overgeneralizations; that is the very same case of modal verbs (commonly used in results) that are used to provide advice on further research and the emphasis of this advice is seen in the chosen modal verb (should / could). Finally, one of the most relevant elements to show compromise with the audience is the use of meta-

discourse that is the strategic use of language to show the structure of the text with the purpose of guiding the readers about what is the content of the text and how it is ordered (Bitchener, 2010).

As abovementioned, despite the different components proposed in thesis writing. The writer is the one who is responsible to follow or decline on these prescriptive structures. In sum, the prospective writer will select from this insight what fits best to their text based on his communicative approach and text type. However, Bitchener (2010) highlights that it does not matter which sub-moves are not included if at the end of the day the text contains an introduction, body and conclusion, since these are the expected and key components of this academic genre. Finally, the complexity of learning all these requirements would only be met by students by direct instruction and stated by Bitchener (2010), Crawford, (2010); Cooley and Lewkowicz (1997) and Paltridge and Starfield (2007).

2.3 Acknowledgements: More than a catalogue of gratitude

Writing a thesis, according to Abdollahian and Hashemi (2013), comprises valuable time and support given by important people that are addressed in different ways in the acknowledgements section that is a sub-genre from the thesis' front-matter. Despite being a short text, it is commonly written once the whole thesis is complete (Paltridge & Starfield, 2007). Acknowledgements are a window for readers to have a first impression from the whole thesis. Therefore, a clear, accurate and coherent acknowledgements text would cause a positive impression

within readers and thus cause a positive entrance to the new discourse community (ibid.).

Acknowledgements are claimed to carry socio-cultural (pragmatic) values from the writer. Therefore, as a type of genre, Cheng (2012) describes that its main purpose is to perform a communicative event that is thanking and showing gratitude received by intellectual guidance, personal assistance and encouragement and moral support received through the process of thesis writing. This scholar continues by highlighting that this gratitude expression is totally different to the thanking act in every-day communication and conversations were this act is addressed to a single person. On the contrary, acknowledgements involve multiple people where smart linguistic and arrangement choices should be made to best portray how the writer wishes to be perceived by the discourse community. For this, Giannoni (2002) claims that most of the times, when the first addressees of the gratitude list are scholars, what the writers expects to produce is prestige and credibility as a writer and researcher. In the same way, if the writer list is more prominent of moral people, he expects to show individual and social features that provides an idea of the nature of the research (Hyland, 2004).

Finally, according to Hyland (2004), the importance of acknowledgements stems from the unique opportunity they provide for readers to understand the influential encouragements and encouragers that played a valuable role though the work. At the same time, it comprises the careful and objective selection of what the writers desire to publicly share to the expected audience. A more detailed description is provided in the following part.

2.3.1 The importance of acknowledgements in thesis writing

Al- Ali (2006) notes that “the importance of acknowledgements stems from their high frequency of occurrence in scholarly texts in general and in MA and PhD dissertations” (p. 36). Hence, even though it was commonly neglected by researchers, it has gained importance for students, discourse analysts, and teachers (Hyland, 2004).

Even though Hyland (2003) and Hyland & Tse (2004) describe acknowledgements as a free zone of gratitude expression, Al- Ali (2006) notes that this genre is not as free as stated by these authors. This is since thesis writers are “expected to demonstrate awareness not only of reciprocal gift giving rules that they should apply in areas of civilized life but of central values and rules as well as the community oriented ethos that should apply in this regulated activity of academic practice” (p.36). Hence, prospective writers should show awareness of these organizational varieties, so they can be considered worthy members of their discourse community due to the credibility and prestige enhanced through the correct use of discourse (Giannoni, 2002).

Finally, one of the most relevant aspect about acknowledgements is the development of a social and professional identity as described by Giannoni (2002). On the one hand, it contains specific family members and friends considered the “decisive influences” that showed sympathy in the process of construction of the whole thesis. This type of acknowledgements provides the writer’s social person and the “public face.” What is more valuable about this social stance is the way

writers share their commitment as well as generosity and gratitude values that are valuable in any discourse community. On the other hand, the professional identity is shared through the list of “influential forces shaping the text” that involve specific supervisors, mentors, teachers, participants and provides. This type of acknowledgements allows the writers to represent themselves as autonomous researchers and writers exploiting the academic resources received such as norms and practices from their discourse community. Finally, the relationship with these people (moral and academic) is revealed through the thanking strategies and hierarchical order within the text (Cheng, 2012).

2.3.2 Acknowledgements as an academic genre

As before mentioned, thesis is a type of academic genre. Swales (1990) as a pioneer of genre analysis, provides a textual status of academic genres. According to this scholar, there are three types of academic genres. 1. Primary: developed by peer communication; 2. Secondary: those serving a didactic purpose; and 3. Occluded: essential to share material, advice and information among researchers, publishers and academics. Table 2 illustrates this categorization shown by Giannoni (2002, p. 3) based on Swales (1990) work.

Table 2. Categorization of Academic Genres

Primary Genres	Secondary Genres	Occluded Genres
Research article	Lecture	Grant proposal
Journal abstract	Textbook	Recommendation letter
Conference abstract	Introductory text	Request letter for material / advice
Oral presentation	Post- introductory text	Application letter
Thesis	Tutorial	Submission letter
Dissertation	Course description	Cover letter
Book		Research proposal
Monograph		Evaluation letter for tenure / promotion
Chapter		Referee's review of book /article
Case Report		Referee's grant proposal review
Review		Memo to dissertation committee
Review article		Editorial correspondence

Based on this categorization, Hyland (2003; 2004) and Hyland and Tse (2004) note that acknowledgements genre is composed of a balance of personal and academic features. Therefore, they consider them as a “Cinderella” genre; which would be very similar to an occluded genre. Al- Ali (2006) notes that this genre will never present homogeneity as the rest of the academic genres presented above due to its nature of multiple addressees. Nevertheless, Al- Ali (2010) notes that it carries a marked structure with clear patterns that writers are expected to follow. Nonetheless, sometimes the lack of direct instruction on these patterns cause students use of imitation from texts from the very same discourse community as a means of achieving this specific communicative purpose.

2.3.3 The meta-discourse and textual realizations in thesis acknowledgements

Thesis acknowledgements are one of the most peculiar genres inside a thesis. They gather the social and scholarly self of the writer through a specific structure and linguistic choices that allow to “look inwards to the text and author and outwards to the factors which help them construct them, and it is this which distinguishes acknowledgements as genre” (Hyland, 2004).

Hence, there are specific structural and linguistic patterns that, as any other genre, are proper from thesis acknowledgements. In this case, the structural patterns will be described in depth in the section below. However, when talking about textual patterns, there are two ways of analyzing thesis acknowledgements: metadiscourse and gratitude expressions. First of all, metadiscourse is conceived by Hyland (2015) and Hyland and Tse (2004) as interpersonal and linguistic

devices the author uses to “explicitly organize their text, engage readers and signal their attitudes to both their material and their audience” (p.156). This serves as a guide for the reader through the text to establish and accomplish a successful communicative event. Hence, these authors claim that metadiscourse facilitates cohesion and helps the production of a reader-friendly text. In this sense, it can be claimed that “acknowledgements often play a meta discursal role in being physically set apart from the main social and textual product yet functioning to both facilitate the construction of this product and to comment on it” (Hyland, 2003 p.244). Then, it can be inferred that the main purpose of this particular genre is highly guided by the metadiscourse used by its writers.

Therefore, it can be stated that metadiscourse is highly linked to the gratitude expressions used to construct the whole text. For this, Hyland and Tse (2004) claim that gratitude expressions in acknowledgements tend to follow a pattern despite the degree of writers or if they were native or non-native writers of the English language. These scholars propose five different patterns of gratitude expressions used by thesis writers. These were mainly categorized by 1) Nominalization (where the author is the noun of the phrase); 2) Performative Verb 3) Adjective; 4) Passive; and 5) Barely mention (expressing gratitude to a specific person without any explicit reason) All of them are observed in Table 3 for a better understanding.

Table 3. Categorization of Gratitude Expressions
1. Nominalization “My sincere thanks to...” “The author’s gratitude goes to...”
2. Performative Verb “I thank...” “The author appreciates..”
3. Adjective “ I am grateful to...” “The author is thankful for...”
4. Passive “Y is thanked for...” “Appreciation is given to...”
5. Bare mention “I cannot go without mentioning...” “X has been helpful in...”

In a deeper analysis, Cheng (2012) identified two broad categories of gratitude expressions: Explicit and Implicit. On the one hand, the Explicit sentences are the ones which have overt thanking words like, thank, appreciate, gratitude, indebted and grateful and just names the addressee's. On the other, the Implicit phrase are the ones that do not carry an overt thanking word. What is more, according to this scholar, the gratitude expressions are composed by four main semantic components and proposes a formula for structuring them that is proposed below; where *thanking* involves “the use of words that express gratitude, such as

thank, appreciate, gratitude, indebted, and grateful.” What is more, *addresses* are the recipient of the thanking act as such. *Reason* stands for favors (academic) and positive feelings (personal) that can be identified into the following categories: 1) Academic that involves “insightful comments efforts and academic guidance.” In the same way, 2) Personal are caused by “positive feelings, such as, love, support, and encouragement.” Finally, *elaboration* is an extension that is presented after expressing thanks as such. All this is presented below.

[thanking] + [addressees] + [reason (favor)] + [elaboration]

Thank, appreciate gratitude, indebted, and grateful.	Reasons for favors received (insightful comments, efforts and academic guidance)
--	---

A clear example can be observed in the following entry:

Above all, I would like to thank my husband, Andrey, for his emotional, personal and financial support. He has helped me to stay focused in achieving my goals.

(NS 2)

In this entrance the categories can be divided as below:

- a) *Thanking*: I would like to thank
- b) *Addressee*: to my husband
- c) *Reason*: for his emotional, personal and financial support
- d) *Elaboration*: He has helped me to stay focused in achieving my goals

Other elements can be: reasons due to positive feelings, such as love, support, and encouragement; reasons due to a mixture of favor and positive feelings; and indispensability, using double negation structure, such as without... not... and were it not... not...

As a conclusion, it can be claimed that those patterns are a signal to distinguish thesis acknowledgements from other elements. Therefore, there is a need of awareness raising for students from different degrees and levels to produce a reliable, cohesive and appropriate text according to the expectations of the discourse community. Finally, it is important to mention that this task should be done by native and non-native writers as there are few opportunities for direct instruction (Hyland, 2003).

2.3.4 The generic structure of acknowledgements

Acknowledgements are believed to be shaped by the different and meaningful intellectual and academic experiences lived by the writers. At the same time, they involve smart “strategic choices” from the writers to achieve a grateful act (Giannoni, 2002). In the same way, as a genre, acknowledgements are ruled by different norms, conventions and rhetorical strategies.

Among the different research conducted in the area. There are three key models for acknowledgements genre analysis. First of all, Giannoni’s (2002, p. 10) model is one of the pioneers of this type of analysis, which consists of a two-tier structure composed by an Introductory move (Framing what is next) and a Main

move (giving credit to academic support and positioning himself as an author). It is shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Giannoni's Acknowledgements Framework
Introductory move (Framing)
Step 1.1 (Citing parent texts or events)
and/ or
Step 1.2 (Acknowledging those involved)
Step 1.3 Asserting commonality (authorship)
Main Move (Credit Mapping)
Step 2.1 (Acknowledging institutional support)
and/ or
Step 2.2 (Acknowledging individual contribution)
and/ or
Step 3 Accepting Responsibility

Second, Hyland (2004) is also one of the most recognized, inspiring and cited models for this type of analysis. It comprises a three-tier framework composed by three main moves: Reflecting move, thanking move and announcing move. This author proposes that the Thanking move is commonly composed by 4 sub-moves. At the same time, he notes that the Announcing move conceives two

sub-moves. It also provides a description of all the components of this framework. It is shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Hyland's (2004) Framework

Moves & Steps	Description
1. Reflecting Move	Introspective comment on the writer's' research experience
2. Thanking Move	Mapping credit to individuals and institutions
a. Presenting participants	Including those to be thanked
b. Thanking for academic assistance.	Thanks for intellectual support, ideas, analyses and feedback, etc.
c. Thanking for resources	Thanks for data access, clerical, technical and financial support
d. Thanking for moral support	Thanks for encouragement, friendship, sympathy, etc.
3. Announcing move	Public statement of responsibility and inspiration
a. Accepting responsibility	An assertion of authorial responsibility for flaws and errors
b. Dedicating the thesis	A formal dedication of the thesis to one or more individuals.

Finally, Al- Ali's (2006) model is a crucial framework for researchers as it includes the different values from different discourse communities and how they are shaped by social and cultural elements. It is important to mention that Al-Ali (2006; 2010) took the insights from Hyland and Tse's model (2004). This specific model emphasizes culture as a relevant component of thesis acknowledgements when categorizing thanking their God as a step in the model. Derived from this, researchers began to pay more attention to socio-cultural elements that totally modify the structure of texts. This model is shown on Table 6.

Table 6. Al-Ali's (2006) Framework

I. Reflecting Move
II. Thanking Move
1. Thanking Allah (God)
2. Presenting participants
3. Thanking supervisor(s) and other academics
4. Thanking for data access, clerical and technical support
5. Thanking for financial support
6. Thanking for moral support
III. Announcing Move
1. Accepting responsibility
2. Dedicating the thesis.

What is important from this group of frameworks is the evident pattern and order in acknowledgements in thesis despite the text under analysis belonging to very different groups of students (Giannoni, 2002). First, Giannoni focuses on comparing English and Italian students. Second, Hyland focused on comparing Chinese students from which the most popular framework for analyzing acknowledgements was derived. Finally, Al- Ali based on Hyland's work focused on Arabic students. Hence this genre crosses the different boundaries states. For a better understanding of these frameworks' evolution, Table 7 presents a summary of the evolution of Acknowledgements.

Table 7. Acknowledgements' Frameworks evolution		
Giannoni (2002)	Hyland (2004)	Al-Ali (2006)
Introductory Move (Framing)	1. Reflecting Move	Reflecting Move
1.1 Citing parents texts or events		
1.2 Acknowledging those involved		
1.3 Asserting commonality (authorship)		
Main move (Credit Mapping)	2. Thanking Move	Thanking move

	2.1 Presenting participants	Thanking Allah (God)
		Presenting participants
2.1 Acknowledging institutional support	2.2 Thanking for academic assistance	Thanking supervisor(s) and other academics
	2.3 Thanking for resources	Thanking for data access, clerical and technical support
		Thanking for financial support
2.2 Acknowledging individual contribution	2.4 Thanking for moral support	Thanking for moral support
Accepting Responsibility	3. Announcing Move	Announcing Move
	3.1 Accepting responsibility	Accepting responsibility
	3.2 Dedicating the thesis	Dedicating the thesis

In this case, the evolutionary changes seen in these tables guide us to understand that little by little thesis acknowledgements have become a more detailed section presenting more recipients of gratitude. It is notable how acknowledgements evolve over time as the discourse communities where they are produce. Time and culture are key factors for genres (Bhatia, 2002; Hyland, 2004; Perez-Llantada, 2015). However, despite the differences in sources of information

and discourse communities, acknowledgements seem to preserve special elements that do not change. Last of all, the most important aspects that contribute to the apparent variations and modifications are related to values, culture and even religion. Therefore, the voice of thesis writers seen in this genre is a valuable tool for analyzing how academic and social identity is constructed, how aware the writers are about the elements and special features ruled in it and how appropriate it is depending of the discourse community (Bathia, 2002; Cheng, 2012; Hyland & Tse, 2004).

2.3.5 Acknowledgements in native and non-native writers

The collection of studies concerning acknowledgements are mostly a comparison of native and non-native writers in a Master's or PhD programs. The results from all the existing studies are based on slight differences that do not generate meaningful conclusions. Nevertheless, the findings and conclusions from this research can generate a positive impact to different groups of people to identify potential pitfalls and similarities among native and non-native writers (Connor & Traversa, 2013).

Contrastive studies from native and non-native writers have emerged over the last years. The use of intercultural rhetoric has been useful to compare both groups of students as its main purpose is to analyze the use of a specific type of discourse while comparing writers from different backgrounds (Connor & Traversa, 2013). The use of English language from global users has expanded the importance of these so called comparative studies, where it has been found that

their production of text is highly affected by their first language as their first language's patterns and structures are believed to be transferred to the second language (Connor, 2004).

Therefore, the identified differences from the author's' choice on structure, lexico-grammatical expressions, organizational components, and content from thesis acknowledgements are mainly ruled by socio-cultural factors, such as identity, family relations, costumes, religious beliefs (Abdollian & Hashemi, 2013; Al-Ali, 2010; 2006; Lazaki, 2011; Mingwei & Yajun, 2010; Mohamadi & Tabari, 2013; Rofess & Mahmood, 2015). All this, can be understood by the social role of language and written discourse. Unfortunately, not all EAP instructors use this type of resources to guide students in their written tasks. However, imitation has been identified as a common practice among non-native writers because of the limited instruction on the genre and lack of knowledge of academic conventions or even by international- like instructional writing practices (Golpur, 2012; Hyland 2003; Lasaky, 2011; Rofess & Mahmood, 2015).

Finally, the importance of intercultural rhetoric is not to understand the meaning of the text but to understand how a text is formed and in this way, obtain patterns and generic structures. In this sense, in thesis acknowledgements genre a common structure has been found. It is crystal clear that native and non-native writers follow the so-called three-tier model paying special attention to the thanking move. Some scholars even claim that the opening move and the closing move are optional and not as vital as the thanking move (Al-Ali, 2006; Kuhl & Razaei, 2014). Nevertheless, there is an evident evolution of acknowledgements frameworks,

which supports that genres are dynamic elements that may vary due to institutional practices and contextual norms (Bhatia, 2004) but “maintain their identity across culture and context” (Rofess & Mahmood, 2015, p. 142).

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3.0 Introduction and overview

This chapter describes the methodology used in this study. The research design describes in detail the nature of this mixed-method research. What is more, the corpus construction describes the two corpora, native and non-native writers' general information and educational background. Finally, the data analysis describes in detail the textual analysis and interpretation in two different ways: Moves analysis and statistical analysis from native and nonnative writers' acknowledgement texts. In the last part, a conclusion of the chapter is stated.

3.1 Research design

This section describes the methodology used in this research. This study reflects a mixed method approach, which according to Cresswell (2009) is "an approach to inquiry that combines or associates both qualitative and quantitative forms" (p.4). This approach is necessary to triangulate qualitative and quantitative data to enrich and deepen the genre analysis.

Thus, to understand the nature of the mixed method approach it is necessary to describe the binary distinction. On the one hand, the qualitative data is mainly used to "explor[e] and understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Cresswell, 2009, p.4). Additionally, Nunan (1992), synthesizes this research approach by stating that it is a "soft" type of inquiry. This scholar notes that qualitative research highlights the importance of

subjective elements and variables that should be bared in mind while conducting research.

On the other hand, quantitative data is described by Cresswell (2009) as “a means for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables” (p.43). This study was conducted into two phases. First there was a need to analyze qualitative data by using genre analysis. The main reason for selecting this method was due to the benefits it carries while identifying organizational patterns and detecting rhetorical strategies within a text depending on its communicational purpose (Hyland, 2009). Hence, for this research it was necessary to adapt the models proposed by Hyland (2004 and 2003) and Hyland and Tse (2004). In the same way, a statistical analysis was derived from the qualitative data to identify patterns, similarities and differences among native and nonnative writers’ acknowledgements. These methods will be described in detail in 3.4.

3.2 Corpus construction

This section describes the research corpus from this study specifically the acknowledgements’ writers and their background. This analysis is based on 40 MA thesis acknowledgement sections written in English by native and non-native writers of English, apparently namely North American and Mexican students. Both groups of students received instruction in English language in a Master’s program where writing a thesis is a requirement to obtain the grade.

What is more, to avoid variations across disciplines and due to the researcher's area of interest, the sample was restricted to writers completing an English language teaching Master's program (ELT/TESOL). Each of the two corpora is composed of 20 acknowledgements sections of MA theses published in the years 2015-2016 to minimize changes due to long periods of time and as a means of presenting recent texts samples of this area of knowledge from both groups of writers.

Both native and non-native data were gathered from online thesis repositories from the University of San Francisco, California (USA) and the Benemerita Universidad Autonoma de Puebla (Mexico), accordingly. Some strategies to avoid unbalanced corpus were considered; for instance, the native group of students were selected by paying attention to the writers' name (e.g. Andrew, Keller, Weston, Parks, etc.). However, the native status is not 100% for certain. Finally, the acknowledgements sections were identified and printed to be analyzed under genre analysis procedures. The writers and people-involved names in the completion of these corpora were not mentioned to protect their identity; therefore, they are coded as NW (Native writer) and NNW (Non-native writer).

3.3 Data analysis

This section describes the methods used in this research. It presents a description of the instruments used to answer the research questions:

1. What are the differences in the structure of native and non-native writers' acknowledgements in MA theses?
2. Do native and non-native MA thesis authors show sociocultural preferences that are uniquely different from one another?

In the present study, 40 MA thesis acknowledgements were explored for the investigation of genre moves commonly used by native and non-native writers to articulate their acknowledgements section. Therefore, to identify the genre components, Hyland (2003 and 2004) and Hyland and Tse's (2004) a priori models were used to analyze and process the data and to have a point of analysis for the data obtained.

Moves and Steps	Description
1. Reflecting Move	Introspective comment on the writers' research experience
2. Thanking Move	Mapping credit to individuals and institutions
<i>a. Presenting participants</i>	Including those to be thanked
<i>b. Thanking for academic assistance</i>	Thanks for intellectual support, ideas, analyses and feedback, and so on
<i>c. Thanking for resources</i>	Thanks for data access and clerical, technical, and financial support
<i>d. Thanking for moral support</i>	Thanks for encouragement, friendship, sympathy, and so on

3. Announcing Move	Public statement of responsibility and inspiration
<i>a. Accepting responsibility</i>	An assertion of authorial responsibility for flaws and errors
<i>b. Dedicating the thesis</i>	A formal dedication of the thesis to one or more individuals

As stated in the previous chapters, Hyland's model proposes the three typical moves by which acknowledgements sections are articulated. For this, Paltridge & Satrfield (2007) neatly synthesize the model. First of all, the reflecting move "which makes some introspective comment on the writer's research experience" (p. 160). Secondly, the writer in the thanking move "gives credit to individuals and institutions" (p. 160). This section commonly conceives a wide variety of sub-moves depending on the people and institutions to which the writer wants to show their debts of gratitude. Last of all, the reflecting move is a space where the writer "accepts responsibility for any flaws or errors and dedicates their thesis to an individual or individuals" (p. 160).

Therefore, the 40 acknowledgements pages were printed and renamed to protect the writer's' identity. They were categorized as native and non-native, according to the evaluation criteria established for this study. Afterwards, they were analyzed independently to identify the moves and sub-moves or steps used in both corpora and to create a model based on the abovementioned models. Finally, based on that individual analysis, the frequency of use of each move and sub-

move was calculated and cultural issues were identified to answer the research questions.

3.3.1 Genre theory and genre analysis

The textual analysis from this study was conducted through a genre analysis. Genre analysis is described by Bhatia (2004) as “the study of situated linguistic behavior in institutionalized academic or professional settings” (p.22). Genre has evolved over time and has been defined through three different schools: English for Specific Purposes (ESP), New Genre Studies (NGS) and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Johns, et al., 2006). Each of these schools represent the evolution of analysis of written discourse. Hence, for the ESP school, genre is focused on lexico-grammatical features of a text. In the same way, the rhetoric realization of the text is observed through Systemic Functional Linguistics. Finally, NR theorists analyze the duality of text-situation.

What is more, Bhatia proposed four different ways to analyze textual information from a discourse view: 1) Discourse as text (formal-functional aspects); 2) Discourse as genre (text-context: construction and interpretation); 3) Discourse as professional development (Professional knowledge and experience of professional practice); 4) Discourse as social practice (social context: social and pragmatic knowledge).

This work analyzes textual information as genre in the sense of understanding the construction of thesis acknowledgements to interpret the content of this particular text. This is because “students are content or subject-matter

experts able to recognize features of the writing genres in their respective fields (Hyland, 2007, p. 154).

3.3.2 Analysis of frequency of moves

The analysis of this research was conducted in two stages. First, the acknowledgement texts were collected from online repositories from both universities (BUAP-University of San Francisco). The corpus includes 20 MA thesis acknowledgements from NW and 20 from NNW. The acknowledgements were printed for conducting the corpus coding and for identifying individual move-steps manually. Afterwards, the tendency of moves was conducted by following Tapia's (2010) relevance ratio to identify the tendency of moves from the corpus from this study. The tendency of moves will be shown in each moves analysis in tables. For this, the tables consist of two main categories: Native and Non-native writers. For each group of writers, the answers are presented with a number of use per group of writers and the location of the move's use: first place or any other location. Finally, a general frequency of moves is shown by considering the mean, mode and standard deviation within the members of each group of writers.

3.4 Conclusion

This research methodology describes the research design, corpus construction and data analysis. The research methodology section presented the different strategies used to conduct this mixed-method research. The moves analysis and statistical analysis from this specific data were triangulated to enrich the research

as well as validate the results from the research questions. In the next chapter, the research processes and results are provided.

Chapter Four: Results

4.0 Introduction

This chapter displays the results derived from this research. The data provides important qualitative and quantitative information that is described through the sections of this chapter to identify structural and socio-cultural similarities and differences among both groups of English writers. The results obtained are presented in tables to have visual support for a better understanding. Finally, a brief discussion of the chapter is presented.

4.1 Research questions

The research questions that guided this research are:

1. What are the differences in the structure of native and nonnative writers' acknowledgements in MA theses?
2. Are there sociocultural preferences of MA native and non-native theses writers uniquely different from one another?

4.2 Results from moves analysis

This section presents the results and analysis from the data to answer the abovementioned research questions. This study is an analysis and comparison of the acknowledgements from native and non-native writers enrolled in two MA programs: one located at a Mexican university and another one at a North American institution.

4.2.1 Structure of thesis acknowledgements in native and non-native English writers

The purpose of thesis acknowledgements is to provide writers with a space to repay the moral and academic support received while conducting and writing a research project (Hyland & Tse, 2004). The main aim of this research is to find similarities and differences between native and non-native writers' expression of gratitude in the acknowledgement sections of MA theses. Even though the study aims to analyze the discourse produced by two groups of students representing different cultures, universities and M.A. programs, the writers present similar moves and sub-moves or steps while showing moral and academic gratitude. This might be due to the imitation used as a strategy by non-native writers and even the exposure to texts from other universities or even countries (Golpur, 2012; Hyland 2003; Lasaky, 2011; Rofess & Mahmood, 2015).

All the findings of the study are analyzed using a framework designed for this study taking the insights of Hyland (2004), Hyland and Tse (2004). It consists of three moves: 1. Opening Move; 2. Thanking Move and 3. Closing Move subdivided into a specific number of steps. The framework is presented in Table 8. It is important to mention that this framework does not represent the order used by all the native and non-native writers analyzed in this study. It represents a conjunction of all the moves and sub-moves or steps used in the acknowledgements section of the MA theses analyzed. The overall framework is presented on the Table 8.

Table 8. Acknowledgements from Native and Non-native writers.

1. Opening	2. Thanking Move	3. Closing
1.1 Reflecting about research experience	2.1 Acknowledging God	3.1 Overall thanks
1.2 Reflecting on M.A. as professional development	2.2 Presenting Participants	3.2 Dedications
1.3 Showing debt to a group of people	2.3 Thanking for resources	3.3 Accepting responsibility
1.4 Using biblical phrases	2.4 Thanking the thesis supervisor	
	2.5 Thanking the thesis committee	
	2.6 Thanking other academics' assistance	
	2.7 Thanking the Institution / principal	
	2.8 Thanking the MA coordinator / program	
	2.9 Thanking classmates	
	2.10 Thanking co-workers	
	2.11 Thanking for moral support	

As seen, this framework keeps the original three tier structure proposed by Hyland (2004) and Hyland and Tse (2004). As above mentioned, this framework only represents a summary or conjunction of all the data analyzed. At the same time, there are certain variations and new moves unique to both corpora. The use of color will serve as a guide for a better understanding of each move and its specific sub-move or step: orange represents the Opening move, blue represents the Thanking move and green represents the Closing move. This framework and code will help as a guide to present the following analysis. Hence, the main findings are shown in the sections below.

4.2.2 Differences and similarities in NW and NNW acknowledgements

Genre analysis consists of identifying the patterns and characteristics of specific text types (Ariza- Pinzon & Aguilar-Gonzalez, 2016). The data reveals similarities and differences in both groups of English writers. First, different organizational styles and steps choice were found. Additionally, a salient difference among both group of texts was found in the corpora from the non-native writers, who tend the use a special space for the Dedication sub-move. Table 9 shows the general comparison among these group of native and non-native writers.

Table 9: Comparative overview of structural characteristics (NS/NNS)	
NS writers at USF	NNS writers at BUAP
Comparatively shorter in overall length	Comparatively longer in overall length
Comparatively smaller variety of moves and sub-moves	Comparatively wider variety of moves and sub-moves
Dedication move not consistently included	Dedication move consistently included
Do not differentiate between formal and informal voice	Differentiate between formal and informal voice

Additionally, Table 10 displays the data obtained regarding the structural similarities and differences between native and non-native writers. The data obtained regarding the structural similarities and differences between native and non-native writers. The data is presented in order of importance: First the writers who used more steps and then the ones who got less. In the case of the non-native writers, the first line represents the acknowledgements section, whereas the second represents the dedications. The use of different colors (same code from Table 8) was needed to better understand the nature of the texts and have a visual comparison from each group of English writers. Finally, the data ID was chosen randomly, and the data is organized in a descending way, according to the number of steps used by each writer.

Table 10. Acknowledgements' structure			
Data ID	Structure of acknowledgement section	Data ID	Structure of acknowledgement sections and dedications
NW3	3.3-2.8-2.9-2.3-2.11-2.4	NNW8	1.3-2.4-2.6-2.5-2.2-2.6-2.9 3.2-1.3-2.11-2.6-2.11-2.6-2.2
NW4	1.2-2.11-2.8-2.9-3.3-3.1	NNW10	1.2-2.7-2.8-2.4 3.2-1.3-2.1-2.11-2.4-2.7
NW12	2.9-2.6-2.5-2.11-3.2	NNW12	1.2-2.7-2.8-2.4-3.1 1.2-2.1-2.11-3.1
NW13	2.11-2.3-2.4-2.9-2.1	NNW1	2.1-2.4-2.5-2.6-2.2-2.11-3.1-3.2
NW1	2.1-2.11-2.4-2.6	NNW6	2.1-2.4-2.6 3.2-2.11-2.1-2.2-3.1
NW8	2.4-2.11-2.6-2.11*	NNW18	2.4-2.6-3.1 3.2-1.4-2.11-3.1
NW9	1.1-2.1-2.11-2.6	NNW5	1.3-2.4-2.5-2.2-2.6-3.1 2.1-2.11

NW11	2.3- 2.4- 2.6- 2.11	NNW7	2.2- 2.4- 2.6- 3.1 3.2- 2.1- 2.11
NW14	2.11- 2.6- 2.10- 2.6	NNW9	2.1- 2.8- 2.4- 2.5 3.2- 2.11-3.1
NW16	2.2- 2.4- 2.9- 2.11	NNW11	2.1- 3.2- 2.4- 2.6- 1.1- 2.3- 2.6*
NW17	2.4- 2.5- 2.2- 2.11	NNW13	2.4- 2.6- 2.5- 2.9 3.2- 2.11- 2.6
NW20	2.4- 2.3- 2.6- 3.1	NNW14	1.3- 2.4- 2.6- 2.5- 3.1 3.2- 2.11
NW2	2.11- 2.4- 2.11	NNW20	2.3- 2.6- 2.4- 2.5- 2.3 2.11
NW6	2.6- 2.10- 2.11	NNW16	2.4- 2.6- 2.2 3.2- 1.3- 2.11
NW15	1.4- 2.11- 3.1	NNW17	1.1- 2.11- 2.6- 2.4- 2.5- 2.2
NW19	2.6- 2.4- 2.11	NNW19	2.11- 2.4- 2.5- 2.6 3.2- 2.11
NW10	2.6- 2.11	NNW2	2.4- 2.3- 2.11 3.2- 2.11
NW18	2.4- 2.11	NNW3	2.6- 2.4- 2.7 3.2 2.11
NW5	2.4	NNW4	2.11- 2.4- 2.5. 2.6- 2.9
NW7	2.11	NNW15	1.2- 2.6- 2.5 3.2- 2.11

The first finding is that non-native English writers present more complex texts for their acknowledgements. This means that non-native writers use a wider variety of sub-moves. In this sense, it can be inferred that in this specific section the non-native writers tend to present a more confidential attitude while showing their feelings with less restrictions than native writers (Mikhchi, 2011).

The second finding is the relevant use of the Thanking move in both groups of writers. Hyland (2004) claims that this move and its steps are the core of

acknowledgements, because they carry the main message about the gratitude expression. According to the data, one can conclude that most of these students are using their acknowledgements appropriately. However, there are some others that are still in process.

4.2.3 Relevance of moves

Choe and Hwan (2014), claim that writers select a specific organization and strategy in their moves and steps or sub-moves according to the purpose in their message. As abovementioned, the Thanking move is the most used within both groups of writers; however, a deeper analysis is needed. Therefore, in these sections the frequency of sub-moves or steps is discussed followed by a more in-depth analysis of each move by using the relevance ratio to calculate and infer the relevance of each move for both corpora.

4.2.3.1 Opening move

Table 11 represents the relevance ratio of the opening move and its sub-moves. This section as well as the following moves is presented in similar tables. It is composed by two main categories (Native and Non-native writers) with three sub-categories each. 1) Total number: refers the number of writers that used the specific sub-move; 2) 1st place: refers the number of times the sub-move appears in the texts from each group of writers; 3) Not in first time: refers the times the sub-move appears in each group of writers. For example, the ratio from 1.2 in NW could be: 2:2-0 and 4:4-0 in the NNW.

Opening Move	Native writers			Non-native writers		
	Sub-move	Total number	1st place	Not in 1st place	Total number	1st place
1.1	0:	0	0	2:	1	1
1.2	2:	2	0	4:	4	0
1.3	0:	0	0	6:	3	3
1.4	1:	1	0	1:	0	1

According to the data, the opening move is commonly used as an introductory paragraph. This move is not a recurrent move for both groups of learners. It is still present in some acknowledgements from the data. The opening move is particularly more frequent in non-native writers' acknowledgements than in native ones (Hyland, 2004; Hyland & Tse, 2004). The opening move is sub-divided into four steps:

4.2.3.1.1 Reflecting about research experience

As the data shows, the reflecting move is not present in native writers' acknowledgements. However, for some non-native writers in this research the opening move is a space for reflection about the research experience and how it helps them grow professionally and personally.

NNW 17: It has been a long path since this project got started, and in the meantime my life has changed in many ways; both my mother and father passed away; my beloved sons left home to follow their own footpaths and my husband is about to retire after a whole life of committed work. These

facts, plus maturity and experience make me value more than ever before the opportunity that I have had to fulfill this work.

As noted from the examples provided, this step is a space for introspection and self-assessment in the student's' research activity. Hence, students use this space for sharing personal feelings and individual forces behind the construction of their texts. In this sense, the use of this sub-move has the main purpose of providing the reader with some information about the forces behind the construction of the text with the purpose of understanding their effort (Mikhchi, 2011).

4.2.3.1.2 Reflecting on M.A. as professional development

According to the data, it can be claimed that some writers from this study used their introductory or opening move to talk and reflect about the positive effects they received from their M.A. program. Again, non-native writers used with more frequency this step than native writers of English.

NW9: The journey of getting my master's degree was long and challenging for me. However, through this long journey, I have learned many lessons about my life.

NNW10: The master's program has been one of the most rewarding experiences in my life. Being part of a program of such quality as the MEI has made me feel privileges and blessed. I cannot thank enough to all the people involved in the program.

Once again, the NW's text is notably shorter than NNW's texts. In the case of NNW's texts, a more descriptive and emotional text is observed. Mexican culture is known by being very emotive and sentimental. In addition, this attribute shapes the way in which the writers shape their transfer of information (Hyland, 2008).

4.2.3.1.3 Showing debt to a group of people

As the data shows, some of the non-native English writers from this study use this step as their introductory paragraph. None of the native writers used this step. In Mexican culture, gratitude is very common and overused as a means of showing respect to others. The corpora of non-native writers used this step in first place and in other sections of the text by repaying the moral or academic support received.

NNW5: Now that I am at the end of this project, I realize how important each person has been for this thesis because all of them made me great contributions in the study.

NNW14: This work would have not been completed without the invaluable academic, technical, educational and human support provided.

This step is used to show the gratitude recipients their major role in the construction of the whole research project. This is a common strategy for introducing the list of gratitude recipients. In this case, the native writers do not include this sub-move because they list directly the addressees in each sub-move. Hence, there is no need for these writers to thank them in this setting.

4.2.3.1.4 Using biblical phrases

As the data shows, though the most irregular step for both groups of students, its presence reveals the role of acknowledgements as a means of showing both poles; the social and scholarly character as described by Hyland

(2004). In this case, writers from this study felt freedom to show their religious beliefs to introduce their acknowledgements sections.

NW15: "Honor your father and mother"-which is the first commandment with a promise-"that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."- Ephesians 6:3-4.
NNW14: "I can do everything through him who gives me strength." (Philippians 4:13).

This specific step is also a strong marker of the writers' beliefs and personality (Al-Ali, 2006). This step can also be seen in the dedication section from NNW's. This means that for most students, religious beliefs are not a public topic and prefer to use other spaces as the dedications in the case of NNW's. This supports Hyland's (2004) claim about the fact that some students prefer just to show their academic personality and hide their social one as part of their personality.

4.2.3.2 Thanking move

The thanking move is a mandatory fragment from acknowledgements because it is the nucleus of writers' gratitude expression (Hyland, 2004). According to this data, the thanking move was the most used move from the writers under analysis. As writers show gratitude to different people and institutions there are eleven sub-moves in this important move. Table 12 describes the relevance of this move.

Thanking Move		Native writers		Non-native writers		
		1st place	Not in 1st place	Total number	1st place	Not in first place
Sub-move	Total number					

2.1	3:	1	2	9:	5	4
2.2	2:	1	1	8:	1	7
2.3	4:	1	3	4:	1	3
2.4	13:	5	8	20:	4	16
2.5	1:	0	1	11:	0	11
2.6	11:	3	8	21:	1	20
2.7	0:	0	0	4:	0	4
2.8	2:	0	2	3:	0	3
2.9	5:	1	4	3:	0	3
2.10	2:	0	2	0:	0	0
2.11	20:	4	16	22:	3	19

4.2.3.2.1 Acknowledging God

Acknowledging God is not present regularly in native writers from this study but is present in almost half of the non-native writers' texts, especially in the dedications section. Showing that this step is considered as a more personal fact for thesis writers.

NW1: I would like to thank God, for without him this would not have been possible.

NNW1: As I see my life, I thank God, the opportunity of living this special moment, thanks for the strength to be the person what I am now.

Religion plays an important role in Mexican culture; hence, it is an important element of their text. However, most of the religious beliefs in Mexican writers can be found in the Dedication genre; in this sense, it can be concluded that acknowledgements are used by NNW for more formal purposes and need a more personal space, constructing their own personal genre- dedications. In the case of native writers, it can be inferred that for native writers it can be difficult to speak openly about religion (Al- Ali, 2006).

4.2.3.2.2 Presenting participants

According to the data, showing gratitude to participants is, again, more frequent in non-native writers' acknowledgements than native writers' texts. This space is used to show gratitude for participants' contributions and spent time.

NW16: I would first and foremost to thank the participants of this study who so generously gave their time, shared their experiences and thoughtfully guided this project to completion.

NNW7: The basis of this research was the written reflections that four colleagues kindly shared with me which without them this project would not have been possible. I deeply thank them for that.

The participants are acknowledged in a formal sense in native and non-native writers text. Professional language is used to express the gratitude of these addressees, which means that the writers try to fit the situation from the thanking act and addressee since commonly, the recipients from this type are academics or students (Hyland, 2004; 2008).

4.2.3.2.3 Thanking for resources

Economic and academic resources are shown in this space that is used in a parallel way by native and non-native English writers. In this case, writers show gratitude to scholarships and financial support from their institution.

NW11: In the fall of 2013, Mr. Slattery was kind enough to share his classroom with me as the practicum site during the culmination of my professional TESL certificate.

NNW2: Thanks for the Benemerita Universidad Autonoma de Puebla for awarding me a Dissertation Completion Fellowship, providing me with the financial means to complete this project.

For both group of writers, the financial and academic support is acknowledged in a special space in this specific step. At least in the Mexican setting, the financial support is a motivation for students' culmination of their research project since they receive a financial support while being students in the ELT MA program from this specific university. Hence, students use also this space for thanking this act as a means of looking for acceptability from the readers in case the sponsorship institution reads the project (Mikhchi, 2011).

4.2.3.2.4 Thanking the thesis supervisor

As observed from the results, the thesis supervisor represents a key contributor to the development of a thesis project. It can be observed that there is slightly more frequency of gratitude for thesis supervisors in non-native writers' texts, However, there is considerably important presence in native writers' texts. What is more, most of the entrances of this step is not in the first place of the acknowledgements under analysis.

NW12: Dr. Popal, your lectures have helped me to be a professional teacher in the TESOL field. I learned a lot about TESOL theories and methods from you. During the summer class in 2015, you gave me a lot of thoughts and advice for me to finish my project. I really appreciate your effort and support.

NNW20: My thesis supervisor, Dr. Rebeca E. Tapia Carlin for enlightening the first glance of research, her encouragement, supervision, words of wisdom and trust to conduct this research.

The importance of this step is found in the way in which it also reveals the type of relationship established between supervisor-student (Giannoni, 2002). In the case of the examples provided, a closer relationship is observable from non-native writer and a more formal language is used by the NW.

4.2.3.2.5 Thanking the thesis committee

As seen from the data, thesis committee or readers are also important for guidance of the research paper. In this study, native writers hardly express their gratitude for thesis readers. In contrast, it is a common step in non-native writers. For this, they list the readers or contributors for the completion of the project.

NW17: I would like to also express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Schwarte for being a member in my committee and helping me with contacting the students in the IEOP.

NNW8: My special thanks and gratitude to my readers: Dr. Michael Witten, Dra. Nancy Keranen and Mtra. Tania Angoa for their valuable feedback, advice and time.

Thesis committee members are commonly acknowledged in NNW text on a single paragraph altogether. Which is commonly very different for NW, who deliver a special space for each committee member. This is also a cultural and local practice unique to each group of students. This is also a marker of the proximity develop in students' relationship with this group of people (Giannoni, 2002).

4.2.3.2.6 Thanking other academics' assistance

According to the data provided, academics and M.A. teachers are also listed in the corpora of this research. Native and non-native writers tend to list the names of scholars who contributed directly and indirectly for the thesis writing process and professional development. It is important to mention that this step is more frequent even than thanking their supervisors.

NW9: I would like to express the deepest gratitude to my professors, Dr. Onllwyn Dixon, Dr. Brad Washington, and Dr. Sedique Popal who always supported me to finish this field project and to get the M.A. degree.

NNW5: Last but not least, I will express my gratitude to all the teachers of the Master degree program because they shared their knowledge and

experience which has helped me to improve my work as an English teacher.

Again, the relationships established with the knowledgeable people from the area of knowledge are key factors for the structure and language used in this step. Here, the purpose of writers is clearly to transfer the information that there are more people involved in the process and can make the project more reliable as more people intervened for its culmination.

4.2.3.2.7 Thanking the institution / principal

A reduced number of non-native writers who express gratitude to the institution where they studied their M.A. program. However, this does not seem to be a common practice in native writers' institution.

NNW3: To the Facultad de Lenguas BUAP, source of generosity and home of this effort.

For non-native writers, the institution plays one of the major roles in the completion of this text. The presence of this step is an indicator of the students' sense of belonging, playing a major role in the student's' personality (moral and academic). In this setting, the BUAP commonly struggles for students to foster that sense of belonging to the institution as a means of developing proud and love for the institution as their alma mater.

4.2.3.2.8 Thanking the M.A. coordinator / program

As seen from the data, the gratitude expressed for the M.A. coordinator or M.A. program is present in almost the same frequency for both group of writers.

NW9: The USF IME/TESOL program has given me great post-graduate experience and it would have not been for the great quality of professors and instructors that I had for my growth as a human and educator. I thank you.

NNW 5: To the MEI community, for accepting me in their Master's' program and also to all the teachers who belong to it for their professionalism, dedication, support and patience they showed during the entire program.

For most students, being part of the MA program becomes one of the most important stages in their professional lives. Hence, they thank their program as a means of acknowledging the professional development it provides them with. It is important to mention, that in both cases, students struggle to enter the MA program. Hence, the culmination of this stage is a paramount goal. Therefore, this sub-move is the best space for showing gratitude.

4.2.3.2.9 Thanking classmates

According to the data, gratitude shown for classmates is slightly more frequent in native than in non-native writers. They thank the companionship through the M.A. program in this step (Hyland & Tse, 2004).

NW: Thanks also goes to my fellow cohorts who helped deepen my connection and understanding of TESOL and its global application as well as for providing me with the laughter and emotional support needed to complete this program.

NNW4: Last but not least, to all my colleagues and classmates who accompanied me in this adventure; it was great to coincide with every single one in this journey.

Another way to understand the students' sense of belonging is the way in which they express their gratitude to their classmates. Despite the fact it is not a common step in the corpus of this research, some MA writers designate a special space for thanking their cohorts. In the case of NW, they acknowledge the

learnings they acquired from them. On the contrary, the NNWs, acknowledge only the camaraderie.

4.2.3.2.10 Thanking co-workers

Gratitude shown for co-workers is shown in native writers' texts. However, these people are present in a sentence that involves different types of addresses at the same time.

NW14: Thank you to the educators in my world, friends, colleagues and professors whose dedication and resilience and courage has been as a north star mu exploration of what it means to be a truly good teacher.

As can be seen, thanking co-workers is not a common step in NNW's texts. However, in NW's texts, the types of phrases used are very superficial, in which no reason nor elaboration is expressed. As a conclusion, one can understand that the purpose of the writer is more a sense of debt than thanking (Hyland, 2004).

4.2.3.2.11 Thanking for moral support

According to the data, family and friends are part of the people who compose the moral support received by both group of writers. It is the most recurrent step from the listed above. Hence this step is always constituted by more than 1 paragraph.

NW7: I express deep gratitude to my husband, Rogelio, for providing me with continuous encouragement and the ability to maintain perspective throughout the process of researching and writing this field project. You are always there for me. Thank you, Snooty.

*NNW4: I would like to thank my wife Alma for her love, support and positivity in everything. My inspiration!
My sons Olly and Leo- you gentlemen are my numero uno's!*

The moral support is one of the core forces in the process and culmination for the specific research process. As observed in the examples, the moral support step is always full of feelings, beliefs and sentimental words for thanking the support for specific people (Hyland & Tse, 2004). It can be observed that the type of language used in this step is informal and it is notable that writers use specific phrases or word used by the writers and readers (addressees) in camaraderie.

4.2.3.3 Closing Move

As there is a minority of people who respect the three-tier model, few writers present the closing move, similarly to the opening move. Table 13 describes the frequency of use of the closing move.

For this, in the section from non-native writers, an additional section can be found. The Dedication step is placed in an independent section transforming it into a new genre. Hence, this study also pursues to guide students to find patterns in this specific space. As most of the non-native English writers present this special section, it can be concluded that is a common practice unique to Mexican writers in this university. It is commonly used as a more personal space for moral gratitude.

Table 13. Relevance Ratio: Closing Move

Closing Move	Native writers			Non-native writers		
	Total number	1 st place	Not in 1 st place	Total number	1 st place	Not in first place

3.1	3:	2	1	6:	0	6
3.2	1:	0	1	15:	13	2
3.3	2:	1	1	0:	0	0

4.2.3.3.1 Overall thanks

According to the data, non-native writers use overall thanks as their acknowledgements closure with more frequency than native writers. In this, they claim gratitude to the different addresses in a general sense with simple phrases.

NW4: All my loving I send to you.

NNW18: Thank you for the support.

This step is conducted through the use of a simple phrase that helps to close all the text. The closing in acknowledgements is not a common step and are similar for native and non-native writers.

4.2.3.3.2 Dedications

According to the data, despite this is perhaps one of the least present step in the native writers' theses, non-native writers devote a special space for this move. Thirteen non-native writers present an extra page with the dedications' step. Instead of being part of the conclusion of the text, it becomes the first step used.

NW12: I would like to dedicate this project to my family.

NNW5: Firstly, this thesis is dedicated to all the people who always believe in me, my family, but specially to my parents Felipe and Adelaida, and sister Elda, my real inspiration and model.

The creation of the new genre is also found in Golpur's (2012) paper. In this sense, it can be mentioned that this is a common practice for Mexican universities and not for NW. This practice has been transferred from student to student within the BUAP university becoming a common practice and a regular part of the theses front matter from the thesis repository from this university and culture.

4.2.3.3.3 Accepting responsibility

As the data shows, this step is only present in native writers' thesis. In this, students accept their responsibility as writers and researchers.

NW1: Through this project bears my name and authorship alone, its creation, as well as my progress through USF's M.A in TESOL program has been a collaboration in every sense.

As notable, for the majority of students, the MA program is their first encounter with scholarship (Olmos, 2010). Hence, they tend to use this space to celebrate their achievement with the purpose of being accepted as a new member of the discourse community as a thesis culmination is a way to show that their preparation is complete.

4.3 Tendency of moves

Table 14 displays the similarities and differences in the number of steps used by both groups of English writers. This table presents the central tendency by which it is possible to analyze the complexity of both corpora. There is an evident difference in both groups of learners.

	Mean	Mode	Median	Standard Deviation
Native Writers	3.6	4	4	1.39
Non-native Writers	7.2	7	7	2.09

Results support Hyland and Tse's (2004) stance about the use of longer texts by non-native writers. The central tendency measures show that the native writers use half of the moves used by non-native writers approximately. This is also shown with the mode and median where the number of moves used by non-native writers overpass those used by the native ones.

Furthermore, most non-native writers' acknowledgements extend even more their length while using a separate section (a new page) for dedicating their culmination of the degree. This is an interesting cultural and local practice that show that this type of writers do not hide the important people who guided them morally or academically while writing their research project while studying their M.A.

4.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter presented the results and discussion of the obtained data which served to answer the research questions. For this, the use of qualitative and quantitative data was crucial to better understand the nature of acknowledgements texts as well as the similarities and differences from native and non-native English writers.

By this analysis, it can be mentioned that each corpus from both groups of learners share some similarities but there are also differences that prove how dynamic a genre can be according to a specific culture, individual differences and discourse community (Bathia, 2002). The dynamic characteristic of genres is also observable when these writers go beyond the original structure proposed by Hyland (2004). Hence, the original framework for acknowledgements is only a base and its variations depend heavily on local and transferred practices.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

5.0 Introduction

This last chapter of the research aims to provide the conclusions of the study conducted while presenting the limitations of the study and the directions for further research of the study. In first place, general conclusions will be provided. Followed in second place by the limitations of the study and finally the limitations for further research will be posed.

5.1 General conclusions

The general conclusions illuminated in this section are derived from the results posed in Chapter 4. The main purpose of the research was to find out structural and cultural similarities and differences between native and non-native writers' M.A. thesis acknowledgements. These similarities and differences were identified and explained. I consider that the answers of this research were answered through the discussion of findings. However, the general conclusions of this study are presented into two sections to identify the main ideas regarding the research questions.

First of all, some differences between native and non-native students' structural terms are present but are not very large. While there are extended texts from non-native writers, the native writers of English focus on the main purpose of the section and devote their acknowledgements section to expressing and paying gratitude acts for people and institutions who supported morally, academically and financially the completion of the research. The most evident difference among both

group of writers is the special space provided for the dedications move. This could indicate the development of a new genre as it is a common practice for Mexican writers but not for native writers of English. Hence, this also provides an idea of how culture is an important feature in the production of texts and how this genre has evolved and adapted in this specific country to become a common element from thesis or dissertations of non-native writers.

Second, on the one hand, there are some similarities and differences between native and non-native writers that are ruled by their local practices. The main difference ruled by cultural issues is focused on the dedication move, where non-native writers create a new space to reiterate their gratitude for the support of moral and academic support. It is also a space that students use to use a more informal language and feel free to express their religious beliefs and use different and non-formal fonts and structure whereas the acknowledgements section has a more formal structure, language and format. Hence, it can be said that acknowledgements sections and dedications are two different spaces for non-native writers with a different purpose. On the other, one of the main similarities is the evident tendency of gratitude for moral support from native and non-native M.A. students that help understand that both groups of writers make choices regarding their personal identity and place their professional identity in second space.

As a conclusion, without a doubt, the production of a text goes beyond the structural level and it is important to pay attention to linguistic and cultural components around the complete text. However, sometimes it is difficult to have a point of comparison when referring to those elements. The difficulty is caused by

the constant evolution of genres and areas of knowledge (discourse communities), which cause a change in the expectancies for the prospective writers to enter a discourse community (Paltridge, 2002). Hence, there is an evident need of awareness raising and instruction from thesis supervisors of thesis structure and rhetorical elements so they can make the best choices to meet the needs, values and expectations from this specific genre (Ariza-Pinzon & Aguilar-Gonzalez, 2016; Bhatia 2004; Hyland, 2003; 2004; and Paltridge, 2002).

5.3 Limitations of the study

The limitations found in this research are clarified in this section. First of all, the data access was one of the main barriers to expand the data amount of the analysis. The initial plan was to have a comparative analysis of theses from the USA, Canada, Mexico and Colombia to have four different corpora and two samples of native and non-native students to enrich the study. However, the access to obtain the corpora from Canada and Colombia was not open. Second, an interesting fact also regarding data access was that not all the obtained theses included the acknowledgements sections. This was apparently because this section is considered as a private section and sometimes students do not want to lose face. In the same way, it was found that some thesis from the same supervisor did not include the thesis acknowledgements; which leads to understand that acknowledgements might also be influenced by the supervisors' beliefs. Third, the data amount regarding writers' ethnographic, personal, cultural and linguistic information was missing in this research and this type of information

could have helped have a better understanding of the nature of the texts. Future study with larger amounts of data can confirm or disconfirm the present findings.

5.4 Directions for further research

There is an evident need of more research in Latin - American context regarding thesis writing that could enrich and have positive impact on prospective writers. What is more, other countries could be compared to enrich the work of genre analysis and thesis acknowledgements writing. In addition, other types of students from different educational levels (B.A., M.A. and PhD.) could be explored to compare the construction of texts among these types of students and observe the strategies used by each type of students. Furthermore, a future research could involve the use of complementary data collection methods such as surveys, questionnaires or interviews to obtain personal information and more in-depth analysis from the students' writing process. This research was focused on structural elements from M.A. thesis acknowledgements; however, the data from the conducted study could be also analyzed from the structural point of view as there is an apparent shortage of research in this specific area. Finally, due to the nature of the texts, other systems from discourse analysis could be used to explore this type of data: Appraisal system, nominalization and transitivity.

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