The Generic Structure of Chinese MA Students' Theses Acknowledgments: A Comparative Study across Contexts

Abstract

Since 2002, the generic structures of acknowledgments in theses and dissertations have been studied in various contexts (Giannoni, 2002; Hyland, 2004; Al-Ali, 2010; Yang, 2012; Jalilifar & Mohammad, 2014), and it has been revealed that the genre of acknowledgments has been shaped under the influence of disciplinary, social, cultural and contextual variations. However, there is relatively scarce literature on the cross-context analysis. On the basis of Hyland' (2004) move model, the present study conducts a genre-based comparative analysis of 20 MA theses acknowledgments written by Chinese students, 10 of whom obtain their degree in Chinese universities and another 10 in American universities. Focusing on the generic structures and linguistic features of theses acknowledgments, this study shows that the Chinese students in the two contexts dominatly applied the obligatory thanking move and optional reflecting move, without the announcing move. However, the slight divergences occurring in the construction of moves/step, choices of acknowledgees and expressions of gratitudes could possibly be explained by contextual factors including academic conventions and contextual values.

Key words: theses acknowledgment, genre analysis, cross-context analysis