EXPRESSIONS OF GRATITUDE IN POSTGRADUATES' THESIS ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABSTRACT
Insufficient knowledge in constructing acknowledgements may lead to improper expressions of gratitude (Hyland, 2004). As such, the primary objective of this study is to investigate the strategies for expressing gratitude in thesis acknowledgements within the context of Malaysian ESL postgraduate students. Correspondingly, this study adopted Haverkate's (1984) framework of thanking strategies to examine how Malaysian ESL postgraduates express gratitude in their thesis acknowledgements. Content analysis of the acknowledgements in 30 PhD theses written by Malaysian ESL postgraduates revealed that most of the postgraduate students thanked the addressees explicitly to express their gratitude. In essence, the findings of this study contribute to the limited number of studies on expressions of gratitude in thesis acknowledgements as well as helping future postgraduate students indicate the best choice of gratitude expressions to acknowledge those who have helped them over the course of their postgraduate studies.

Keywords: acknowledgement, expressions of gratitude, postgraduate students, thesis

INTRODUCTION

We often express gratitude in our daily conversations and the speech act of expressing gratitude is frequently used among language users when they receive something beneficial or helpful from someone. In essence, a person feels the positive emotion of gratitude when he or she receives something valuable by another person (McCullough, Kilpatrick, Emmons, and Larson, 2001; McCullough & Tsang, 2004). Gratitude not only expresses the feelings that a speaker feels, but also responds to the interlocutor's statements or actions (Quirk, 1993). Expressions of gratitude are viewed as a way to measure the politeness behaviour level; thus, if a person cannot express gratitude properly, a negative conception may occur and his or her social relationship with the interlocutor will be affected (Eisenstein & Bodman, 1986).

Expressions of gratitude are applied widely in our daily interactions as well as in the verbal and non-verbal contexts of different cultures. For example, in the Western culture, expressions of gratitude are prevalent regardless of whether it is formal, such as "thank you very much" and "I'm very grateful" or informal, e.g. "thanks" and "ta" (Quirk & Crystal, 1985; Leech, 2007). In other cultures, such as Thai and South African, verbal expressions of gratitude are less likely used and instead of expressing gratitude verbally, they would prefer to do something else to show their gratitude (Intachakra, 2004) or employ a hand gesture by raising their fingers where the points touch before the body (Díaz Pérez, 2004). In the Saudi Arabian culture, despite being governed by the religious rules of Islam, expressing gratitude to Allah in a written form such as email is less likely used; however, it is more evident in thesis and dissertation acknowledgements (Hariri, 2016). While several studies have examined the expressions of gratitude in different contexts of English speakers such as American, Taiwanese, and Hong Kong (Hyland & Tse, 2004; Cheng, 2012), there has, however, been a limited number of studies in the context of Malaysian ESL speakers.

The Speech Act of Thanking

According to Austin (1962), illocutionary acts refer to the function given to a locution and the speaker's purpose/intention involving its realisation, which contributes to the illocutionary act. In other words, it is the performance of an act that occurs when saying something. Generally, Austin's (1962) preliminary classification of illocutionary acts is based on the view that every performative sentence (an utterance that performs an action) is expressed by a corresponding verb, which results in the following classifications of illocutionary acts:

1. Verdictives, which constitute declarations of verdicts, e.g. appraising.
2. Expositives, which refer to expressions of views, e.g. arguing.
3. Exercitives, which comprise the exercising of authority, e.g. advising.
4. Behabitives, which include reactions to events, e.g. congratulating.
5. Commissives, which refer to the undertaking of actions, e.g. promising.

Austin (1962) classifies "thanks" as belonging to the group of "Behabitives"; however, connected with both stating and describing the feelings, while Searle (1969) regards thanking as an expressive communication in the speaker's psychological state.

Thanking is one of the most frequent acts in daily interactions, which refers to a significant politeness marker and speech in the literature (Hinkel, 1994; Wong, 2010). While thanking is polite as it inherently satisfies the needs of the hearer's positive face, it also threatens the negative face of the speaker. In politeness theory by Brown and Levinson

(1987), "positive face" is related to one's desire to be admired, liked, and ratified positively by others, while "negative face" is associated with one's freedom to be independent and free from the imposition. As such, by saying "thank you", one tends to be under the impression of being indebted to the other person (Leech, 1983; Brown & Levinson, 1987).

According to Jautz (2008, 2013), expressions of gratitude are used when a speaker wants the hearer to know that he or she is grateful for what is said or done by the hearer; besides, a speaker does not only thank the big gifts or favours but the speaker also thanks the small ones, for example, when being handed something. In this sense, it was asserted by Bayat (2013) that thanking or expressing gratitude has reinforcing functions, by which the parties recognise the acts done, which reflects their corresponding activities.

Expressions of Gratitude in Thesis Acknowledgements

According to Ward (2001), acknowledgement refers to an utterance of a brief contribution instead of a more extensive presentation, which signals understanding but not necessarily an agreement. Hyland and Tse (2004) emphasised acknowledgements in theses and dissertations as a distinct genre with a clear purpose and physical location. Meanwhile, acknowledgements have become a prevalent practice in thesis writing and researchers have increasingly paid attention to how acknowledgements are written (Jaroenkitboworn, 2014).

From the pragmatics perspective, the speech act of thanking in a written form includes acknowledgements because the main communicative purpose of acknowledgements in theses and dissertations is for the students to show indebtedness and appreciation to the assistance and benefits they have received from others throughout their academic research (Cheng, 2012). Thesis and dissertation acknowledgements are also unique in the sense that they are different from thanking in usual conversation because the relationships between the students and the addressees may affect how they are thanked and written in the acknowledgements (Cheng, 2012).

Previous studies on expressions of gratitude

Over the years, many studies have been conducted on expressions of gratitude. For instance, Aijmer (1996) in her London-Lund corpus study showed that the most common strategy used in the corpus is thanking somebody explicitly (Explicit Emotional Strategy A) and that expressing gratitude (Explicit Emotional Strategy B) is the most direct strategy together with Strategy A. As for expressing appreciation of the addressee and the act (Implicit Non-Emotional Strategy C and Strategy D), they are referred to as the felicity conditions of thanking by which the person who receives the favour feels grateful and appreciative of the benefactor or the act done by the benefactor.

Furthermore, in terms of acknowledging a debt of gratitude (Explicit Non-Emotional Strategy E), Aijmer (1996) explained with an example such as "I owe a lasting debt of gratitude to my late teacher…" by which when the strategy is performed, the speaker recognises his/her indebtedness and repays by thanking. Stressing one's gratitude (Implicit Non-Emotional Strategy F) was mostly used in formal contexts and it includes a performative verb, for example, "I hereby thank you for…", and likewise with expressing emotions (Implicit Non-Emotional Strategy G). Lastly, the act of commenting on one's own role by suppressing one's own importance/self-denigration (Implicit Non-Emotional Strategy H) was only found in writing and often in combination with other strategies (Aijmer, 1996).

Using Haverkate's (1984) framework, a sociolinguistic study by Octovia (2001) on the strategies of thanking used by male and female Javanese and Chinese-Indonesian students revealed that both male and female respondents of the study mostly used Strategy A (thanking somebody explicitly), followed by Strategy B (expressing gratitude), and Strategy G (expressing emotions). The findings also revealed that female respondents used Strategy A more than male respondents and the Chinese-Indonesian students used Strategy A more than the Javanese students. Therefore, it was concluded that there are differences and similarities in using the strategies of gratitude expressions involving people of different genders and ethnicities.

Cheng (2012) in her contrastive study of 60 master's thesis acknowledgements written by Taiwanese and American students revealed that Taiwanese students used more thanking strategies than American students by employing more explicit thanking strategies (simple thanking and complex thanking) than implicit thanking strategies. They also used more complex thanking strategies (e.g. [thanking] + [addressees] + [reason (favour)] + [elaboration]) than simple thanking strategies (e.g. [thanking] + [addressees]) compared to the American students. The findings also revealed that the arrangement of addressees and the choice of strategies in expressing gratitude between the two groups are different as they showed different perceptions of culture; the arrangement of advisors and family members made by the American students was more flexible than the Taiwanese students who elaborated the specific assistance of their advisors in detail.

A study in the context of Malaysia was conducted by Liyana Ahmad Afip (2013) in which, she uses a genre analysis approach to examine the generic structure of acknowledgement and linguistic elements written by Malay and Chinese postgraduate students. The findings revealed that both groups mostly used "thanking" for academic assistance, for moral support through nominalisation (e.g. "Special thanks to…") and mere mention (e.g. "This thesis would not have been possible without the support of these people…").

Meanwhile, Jaroenkitboworn (2014) in her genre analysis study on English acknowledgements written by EFL Thai learners revealed that "thanking" is most frequently used by Thai learners with a variety of gratitude expressions used to respond to different forms of assistance including the aspects of politeness, social distance, and family institution in the Thai culture. Similarly, Rofess and Mahmood (2015) who examined Pakistani doctoral thesis acknowledgements from the genre analysis perspective have also revealed that acknowledgement writing is influenced by socio-cultural norms, academic traditions, and institutional practices in Pakistan.

To examine the generic features of thesis acknowledgements, Estaji and Nosrati (2017) investigated how Iranian MA students write their acknowledgement relative to generic structures, linguistics choice, preferred authorial subject, and acknowledgement. Based on their findings, it was found that students emphasised thanking God and His Prophet in their acknowledgement, with their advisors being the most acknowledged individuals.

In a recent study by Nguyen (2018), the generic structures and linguistics features of TESOL Master's thesis acknowledgements written by Vietnamese postgraduates were examined to identify whether or not culture influences the composition of acknowledgements. It was found that Vietnamese postgraduate students are more frank and less reserved in their gratitude expressions, which is influenced by socio-cultural expectations, personal dispositions, and individual writing styles. Meanwhile, in the context of gender, Fazilatfar et

al. (2018) analysed Master's and Doctoral thesis acknowledgement across genders and found no significant difference between how male and female students wrote their acknowledgements.

METHODOLOGY

The studies presented in the previous section have used the approach of genre analysis to identify the expressions of gratitude, linguistic features, and move structures in thesis or dissertation acknowledgements, the present study, however, uses a content analysis approach to qualitatively identify the strategies for expressing gratitude in thesis acknowledgements. The following sections describe the methodology employed in this study.

Data Collection and Procedures

The collection of the selected PhD thesis acknowledgements was based on the area of the PhD theses; namely, languages and linguistics and only two PhD theses to be selected per year. These theses were written from 2000 until 2016; however, due to limited availability, the researchers could obtain only one thesis written in 2001, 2009, 2012, and 2016.

The data comprised 30 PhD theses of postgraduate students from a public university in Malaysia in the area of languages and linguistics from the year 2000 until 2016 (see Table 1). Additionally, it is imperative that only the acknowledgement pages of these theses were extracted in this study.

Table 1. PhD theses of postgraduate students

Year	Quantity	Year	Quantity
2000	2	2008	2
2001	1	2009	1
2002	2	2010	2
2003	2	2011	2
2004	2	2012	1
2005	2	2013	2
2006	2	2014	2
2007	2	2015	2
-		2016	1

The permission to access the acknowledgement pages of the selected PhD theses was obtained by the researcher upon explaining the research objectives to the librarian. Approval was granted on the basis that the data would be kept confidential and used strictly for research purposes. Pseudonyms were also used to ensure the anonymity of the thesis authors.

Data Analysis

The data were analysed through a content analysis approach and the data analysis was based on Haverkate's (1984) framework of classification of thanking strategies as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Haverkate's (1984) framework of thanking strategies

Strategy	Category	Example
Explicit Emotional	A: Thanking somebody explicitly	"Thank you." / "Thanks."
	B: Expressing gratitude	"I am grateful." / "I am thankful."
Explicit Non-Emotional	E: Acknowledging a debt of gratitude	"I owe a debt of gratitude."
Implicit Emotional	C: Expressing appreciation of the addressee	"That is kind of you."
	D: Expressing appreciation of the act	"That is lovely." / "It is appreciated."
	F: Stressing one's gratitude	"I must thank you."
	G: Expressing emotion	"Oh, thank you."
Implicit Non-Emotional	H: Commenting on one's own role by suppressing one's own importance/self-denigration	"I am so careless."

The strategies for expressions of gratitude used by the Malaysian ESL postgraduate students in their thesis acknowledgements were coded according to Haverkate's (1984) framework of thanking strategies by which each strategy was further categorised into abbreviations (see Table 3).

Table 3. Coding categories

Explicit				Implicit			
Emotional		Non-Emotional		Emotional		Non-Emotional	
Strategy	Code	Strategy	Code	Strategy	Code	Strategy	Code
A	EEA	E	ENE	C	IEC	H	INH
B	EEB	-	-	D	IED	-	-
-	-	-	-	F	IEF	-	-
-	-	-	-	G	IEG	-	-

Prior to the data analysis, intercoder reliability analysis was conducted to "overcome subjectivity with the findings" (How & Jariah Mohd Jan, 2017) where independent coders reach the same conclusion upon evaluating a characteristic of content. The intercoder reliability test was done with two coders who were linguistics and had an academic background. The two coders were first briefed about the study and the coding categories that would be used to analyse 30 PhD theses. At the end of the analysis, they indicated a 90% level of agreement with the coding categories, which proves to be reliable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on the overall findings of this study, the strategies for expressions of gratitude employed by Malaysian ESL postgraduate students in the acknowledgement page of their PhD theses are Explicit Emotional A as the most frequently used strategy, followed by Explicit Emotional B, Implicit Non-Emotional H, and finally, Implicit Emotional F as the least strategy used. This section discusses the realisations of all these strategies in detail.

Explicit Emotional A

This strategy involves thanking somebody explicitly and the total number of realisations used in this strategy is 117 as can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4. Explicit emotional strategy A

Expression	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Thank	74	59
Thank you	17	13
Thanks	12	10
Dedication	5	4
Acknowledgement	3	2
Special Mention	3	2
Praise	3	2
TOTAL	**117**	**100**

Based on Table 4, the most frequently used expression is "Thank", which includes the expressions of "I would like to thank" and "I thank" with 74 occurrences (59%), whereas the least expression used was "praise", which occurred twice (2%). Similarities were found in the choice of expression used by the postgraduate students in this strategy, such as the modal phrases of "I would like/wish to", e.g. "I would like/wish to thank/dedicate/acknowledge/give a special mention and also the performative verb beginning with "I", e.g. "I thank/dedicate/acknowledge/praise". This shows a variation in the expressions used by the postgraduate students to explicitly thank the addressees in thesis acknowledgements, with "thank" as most frequently used strategy by the postgraduate students. These results are also similar with the findings by Aijmer (1996) and Octovia (2001) who reported Explicit Emotional Strategy A as the most frequently used strategies for expressing gratitude.

Explicit Emotional B

This strategy includes expressing gratitude to the addressees and the total number of realisations used in this strategy is 68.

Table 5. Explicit emotional strategy B

Expression	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
My gratitude	30	44
I am grateful	27	40
I am thankful	5	7
Gratitude	3	4
Others (e.g. grateful)	2	3
My thankfulness	1	2
TOTAL	**68**	**100**

Table 5 shows that the expression "My gratitude" was used the most by the postgraduate students with 30 (44%), whereas the least expression used in this strategy was "My thankfulness", which occurred only once (2%). For example, *"My thankfulness goes to colleagues and friends in the same faculty who never stopped urging me to finish what I had started".* The postgraduate students also used the word "grateful" as illustrated in Extract 1.

Extract 1:
TA 2: Grateful acknowledgement is made to…for granting me one year of
study leave to enable me to concentrate on my thesis.

Explicit Non-Emotional E
This strategy denotes the acknowledgement of a debt of gratitude to the addressees and only two expressions were used by the postgraduate students with a total number of 20 realisations.

Table 6. Explicit non-emotional strategy E

Expression	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
I am…indebted	15	75
I…owe	5	25
TOTAL	**20**	**100**

Table 6 shows that the expression "I am indebted" was used the most with 15 (75%) occurrences whereas the least one was "I also owe" with 5 (25%) occurrences. Based on the data, both expressions of "I am indebted" and "I also owe" were mostly used to express gratitude to individuals rather than institutions or organisations as illustrated in Extract 2.

Extract 2:
TA 5: A research is a collaboration of several people; for mine, **I am** especially
indebted to the following persons.
TA 8: **I** also **owe** debts of gratitude to the former and present Heads of the…
as well as the former and current Deans of the…

Implicit Emotional C
This strategy involves expressing appreciation to the addressees and it is similar to Strategy E. The postgraduate students used only two expressions and with a total number of 6 realisations.

Table 7. Implicit emotional strategy C

Expression	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Others	5	83
My appreciation (of the addressee)	1	17
TOTAL	**6**	**100**

As can be seen in Table 7, "Others" was used the most with 5 (83%) occurrences, which includes expressing appreciation to the addressees by using other words such as "valued" and "precious", e.g. *"There are just too many to name but all are so **precious** and greatly valued"*, which indicates the preciousness of the addressees to the student.

Based on Extract 3, appreciation to God is implicitly implied with the belief that God is Almighty. In this instance, "Others" was also used to express appreciation to God as evident in Extract 3.

Extract 3:

TA 15:   But above all, in this eight-year journey, **God** has walked with me, held my hand, and shown me that I am not alone in all this"

TA 24:   Amidst these challenging years of thesis writing, **God** has also blessed me with a son who has become my constant source of strength.

Lastly, the least used expression is "My appreciation (of the addressees)", which occurred only once (17%), e.g. *To my little nephews and nieces, I would like to express **my appreciation** for their wonder, myth, simplicity of heart and faith.*

Implicit Emotional D

This strategy involves expressing appreciation of the act provided by the addressees and the total number of realisations used in this strategy is 27.

Table 8. Implicit emotional strategy D

Expression	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
My appreciation to…(of the act)	16	59
Others	8	30
(the act) is/are appreciated	2	7
I appreciate…(of the act)	1	4
TOTAL	**27**	**100**

Based on Table 8, "My appreciation to… (of the act)" was the most common expression used by the postgraduate students with 16 (59%) occurrences, which denotes the acts done by the addressees such as their support, assistance, and help given to the students. Meanwhile, the expression "I appreciate… (of the act)" was used the least with only one occurrence (4%), for example, a student wrote, "I have learnt so much and I appreciate it all". In "Others", the expression of appreciation to the addressees' act was not direct; however, the respondents expressed their appreciation by emphasizing the act of the addressees and how the act benefited them throughout the journey (see Extract 4).

Extract 4:

TA 24:   To my sister and brother, your **warm concern** always kept me company.

TA 15:   When I felt overburdened with juggling work, family life, and writing this thesis, the **prayers** of my parents lifted those burdens.

Implicit Emotional F

This strategy refers to stressing one's gratitude. Based on the data, only two expressions were discovered with a total number of 4 realisations.

Table 9. Implicit emotional strategy F

Expression	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Others	3	75
I must thank	1	25
TOTAL	**4**	**100**

Table 9 shows that the most common strategy used by the postgraduate students was "Others" with 3 (75%) occurrences, which includes expressions using the word "should" as illustrated in Extract 5. The word "should" was used to stress the postgraduate students' gratitude to the addressees by modifying the verb that follows.

Extract 5:
TA 6:   Special thanks **should** also be extended to the…for granting me the permission to refer to a large number of theses and related references at their libraries.

TA 29:   Finally, I **should** not forget to mention the enormous amount of emotional support I received from each member of my large family.

Meanwhile, the least used strategy was "I must thank", which occurred only once (25%). For example, the student wrote, ***I must also thank*** *my wife for her support and encouragement during those trying times in the course of finishing this study".*

Implicit Emotional G
This strategy involves the act of expressing emotion when expressing gratitude to the addressee. A total of 26 realisations were found in this strategy.

Table 10. Implicit emotional strategy G

Expression	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Indication of feelings (e.g. pleasure, joy, blessed, honoured, humble, glad, love)	17	65
I cannot/can never thank (the addressee) enough	4	15
I salute	2	8
Others	2	8
I treasure	1	4
TOTAL	**26**	**100**

Based on Table 10, the results showed that "Indication of feelings" was the expression that the postgraduate students used the most with 17 (65%) occurrences, while the least was "I treasure" with only 1 (4%) occurrence. "Indication of feelings" to group the expressions of gratitude involves emotions such as feeling a sense of pleasure, joy, blessed, honoured, humbled, glad, and love. This is because, unlike the expressions found in other strategies, the tendency of the students to express their gratitude with emotions might be diverse as they might have their own way to express their emotions (see Extract 6).

Extract 6:
TA 6:   It gives me great **pleasure** to thank the university and some individuals for their contributions in the process of completing the present study.

TA 6:   I have a great **joy** thanking the gracious Almighty God for giving me wisdom, strength, and determination to complete this study in which I am intensely interested.

In "Others", a student wrote, *To M, my parents' nurse, **a big hug** and **thank you** for the support and care for my mom (while she was alive) and my dad* by which the term "a big hug" was realised with the explicit expression of "thank you" to emphasise the emotion felt by the student to the addressee.

Implicit Non-Emotional H

This strategy involves commenting on one's own role by suppressing one's own importance/self-denigration and the total number of realisations used in this strategy is 35.

Table 11. Implicit non-emotional strategy H

Expression	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Without the act of addressee - Impossibility of benefits of author / vice-versa	28	80
Suppression of self-denigration	5	14
Others	2	6
TOTAL	**35**	**100**

Based on Table 11, it was found that the postgraduate students used the expression "Without the act of addressees - Impossibility of benefits of author / vice-versa" the most with 28 (80%) occurrences. As can be seen in Extract 7, the students used different ways to comment on the act of the addressees and with an emphasis on how the benefits would be impossible without the act of the addressees.

Extract 7:
TA 24: The **willingness** of the teachers and students from…is commendable because this study **would have been impossible without their kindness**.
TA 7: This work, however, **could not have been completed without the dedication and word processing skills** of Puan T together with the **unfailing humour** of Mrs. K.

The least expression used by the students was "Others", which occurred twice (6%). For example, one of the students wrote, *You have all constantly set the standard high for me but always with unwavering support **because of your faith that I could meet those standards**.* In this instance, it was implied that the act performed by the addressees was the reason a benefit was gained; hence, if it were not for the act, the benefit would not have been possible.

In general, the results revealed that Malaysian ESL postgraduates used various strategies for expressions of gratitude in their thesis acknowledgements. The overall results revealed that Explicit Emotional A (EEA) is the most common strategy used by the postgraduate students with a total of 126 (45%) occurrences, whereas the least used strategy is Implicit Emotional F (IEF), which occurred 3 times (1%).

Strategy A (thanking somebody explicitly) and Strategy B (expressing gratitude) were the most frequently used strategies and this is in line with Aijmer (1996) and Octovia (2001). Further, these strategies can be regarded as expressive politeness markers because according to Searle (1976), "thank you" and "thanks" can be analysed from the functional perspective

as either politeness markers or/and discourse markers with an expressive function where the attitude of the speaker's gratitude or appreciation of a person or a state of affairs is expressed.

On the other hand, Strategy C (expressing appreciation of the addressee) and Strategy D (expressing appreciation of the act) were not used to express gratitude directly but they were used to indirectly express gratitude to the addressees or the act done by the addressees.

According to Aijmer (1996), Strategy E (acknowledging a debt of gratitude) is limited to writing and situations where expressing gratitude to a teacher or family members in the preface of academic work is involved, which further corroborates the findings of this study. In addition, Strategy F (stressing one's gratitude) is formal and can be reinforced by stressing the obligation of the speaker to express gratitude. This strategy, however, was less likely to be used by the postgraduate students in the present study. While Strategy G (expressing emotion) is associated with a high degree of emotionality, Strategy H, although a typical written discourse, was likely to be combined with other strategies.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the strategies for expressing gratitude in postgraduates' thesis acknowledgements. The findings revealed that Malaysian ESL postgraduates used a variety of strategies to explicitly and implicitly express their gratitude to the addressees in their thesis acknowledgements. This includes thanking the addressees explicitly (Explicit Emotional A) as the most frequently used strategy through expressions such as "I would like to thank" and "I thank", followed by explicitly expressing their gratitude (Explicit Emotional B) using expressions such as "My gratitude" and "My thankfulness". Implicitly, the postgraduates would also comment on the act of the addressees by highlighting the impossibility of the benefits without the act of the addressees (Implicit Non-Emotional H); however, they were unlikely to stress their gratitude implicitly (Implicit Emotional F), hence making this the least strategy to be used.

The results from this study will assist postgraduate students in writing their thesis acknowledgements as they can efficiently utilise the strategies that best express their gratitude. Further, instructors of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) may obtain some useful information when teaching thesis or dissertation writing to university students by instructing them to write acknowledgements. It is recommended that future research may expand the pool of thesis acknowledgements not only from several universities but also across fields of studies and even gender to allow for comparisons in the strategies used for expressions of gratitude.

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