Move analysis the structure of narrative essays by Thai undergraduate students: A genre-based approach

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Abstract: This study aimed to 1) analyze the moves/steps of the narrative essays written by the students of the English Program under the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Buriram Rajabhat University, and 2) identify the moves/steps that are obligatory or optional in the narrative essays written by the students of the English Program under the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Buriram Rajabhat University. Grounded in a genre-based approach, the study employed a mixed-method research design. A total of 34 narrative essays written by English major students at Buriram Rajabhat University were purposively selected and analyzed using Swales' genre analysis framework and Labov and Waletzky [1] Personal Experience Narrative (PEN) model. Quantitative analysis determined the frequency and classification of rhetorical moves, while qualitative interpretation explored the narrative functions of each move and step. The results identified eight obligatory steps that commonly occurred, including announcing the beginning of the story, introducing characters and settings, recapitulating events, resolving tension, and concluding with reflections. Other steps were found to be optional and varied across the corpus. The study concluded that Thai undergraduate students generally followed a culturally consistent rhetorical structure in their narrative essays. Educators should teach rhetorical moves and their narrative significance explicitly to students to improve their academic writing abilities. The study proposes additional research to examine how social culture affects narrative structure and to analyze differences in narrative writing preferences between cultures.

Keywords: Genre analysis, Moves, Narrative essays.

1. Introduction

As the foundation of novels, short stories, poetic and prose epic, film, folk tale, interviews, oral memoirs, chronicles, history, comic strips, graphic novels, and other visual media, [2] narratives play a crucial part in human culture. As a result, this discourse mode has been a central subject in a wide range of disciplines, including linguistics and cognitive science more recently [3, 4] history, anthropology; psychology; literary studies; sociology; and education.

Personal experience narrative (PEN) is a typical discourse format that people use to create, understand, and communicate their own experiences. The primary means by which humans organize their experiences into temporally meaningful episodes, according to Richardson [5] is storytelling. Narrative is both a mode of reasoning and a mode of representation, she continued. People are able to understand the world through narratives and convey that understanding through narratives [5].

According to Grabe and Kaplan [6] the western method of writing composition requires students to first state the topic of the tale, then describe the essential ideas in a body paragraph, and then provide conclusions. Thus, a western style of writing conforms to the introduction, body, and conclusion structure. The analysis of personal experience narratives through their formal structures and functions

received significant influence from the framework presented by Labov and Waletzky [1] which Labov [7] expanded. Labov started his pioneering study of personal experience narratives by studying various English dialects in New York City. The researcher used storytelling prompts about dangerous or embarrassing experiences to record natural speech patterns of participants. According to Labov [7] narrative serves as a method to recreate past occurrences through verbal clauses which match the original chronological order of those events.

PENs follow a consistent internal structure according to Labov [7] and Labov and Waletzky [1]. The model of Özyıldırım [8] uses formal structures to identify stable narrative patterns that link surface variations to social characteristics of narrators. A complete narrative follows this order of components: (1) abstract, (2) orientation, (3) complicating action, (4) evaluation, (5) resolution, and (6) coda. A short introduction called the abstract contains two brief clauses which summarize the story's core and answer the question "What is this narrative about?"

The orientation establishes the context through a description of time and location together with characters and their present actions. The section answers three fundamental questions about the narrative: Who takes part? What is currently occurring? Where and when do these events take place? Referential clauses frequently appear in this part to supply important background information leading up to the main storyline. The core events which form the basis of a narrative appear in the complicating action section. The section responds to the inquiry about what happened in sequence while presenting major story developments and peak moments.

The evaluation section explains why the narrative exists and what significance it holds. Through this section the narrator expresses their emotional connection to the events and explains why the story matters along with the main message they want to communicate through its telling. The result or resolution informs the audience about how the complicating action is resolved. It answers the question 'What finally happened? This section provides a closure to the events and a release of the accumulative tension.

Coda clauses, typically positioned at the conclusion of a narrative, serve to connect the past events described in the story to the present moment. They also offer the narrator an opportunity to reflect on and comment upon the narrative as a whole.

The majority of studies on the topic of Thai English essay writing at the university level concentrate on various approaches, including communicative approach, content-based instruction, blended learning model, or process-based approach [9-13]. A small number of studies Chaisiri [14]; Kongpetch [15]; Kongpetch [16] and Srinon [17] were conducted to support a genre-based approach. In this respect, Kongpetch [15]; Kongpetch [16] and Ngonkum [18] found that the genre-based approach assisted students in achieving their writing objectives for academic purposes. These studies, however, did not pay special attention to the general format of the students' essays or how they developed their ideas within them; instead, they concentrated exclusively on the method of approach. These studies imply that in order to assess the approach's benefits, it should be done in a larger context. Additionally, the students' essays follow clear patterns. When students write, teachers occasionally focus more on proofreading for grammatical faults than they do on ensuring that the work is complete. The rhetorical structures of students' written compositions, however, should also be taken into consideration [19].

The genre-based analytical framework serves as a widely used method in Thailand to study academic writing at both undergraduate and graduate levels through research articles and theses. The analysis of narrative essays written by undergraduate students remains underrepresented in existing research. The research investigated the rhetorical structure of "moves" in narrative essays written by Thai undergraduate students. The study aimed to determine which moves students in an English major program considered fundamental or supplementary. The research analysis uncovered particular moves

and steps which appeared throughout the gathered narrative texts. The research findings led to proposed teaching recommendations and potential future research paths.

2. Research Objectives

1. To analyze the moves/steps of the narrative essays written by the students of English Program under Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Buriram Rajabhat University.

2. To identify the move/steps that are obligatory or optional in the narrative essays written by the students of English Program under Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Buriram Rajabhat University.

3. Research Questions

1. What are the moves/steps of the narrative essays written by the students of English Program under Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Buriram Rajabhat University?

2. What moves/steps that are obligatory or optional in the narrative essays written by the students of English Program under Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Buriram Rajabhat University?

4. Literature Review

4.1. Genre

According to Swales [20] a genre is "a class of communicative events with identifiable communicative purposes." The expert members of the parent discourse community are aware of these goals, which serve as the genre's justification. Genres are not classified according to similarities in lexical or grammatical traits, targeted audiences, or distribution routes; rather, they are primarily thought of as means of communication for achieving goals.

The significance of a discourse community whose members intentionally agree on the accepted characteristics of a given genre is key to understanding Swales' concept [21]. Swales claims that various writing assignments represent various genres since they are prepared in accordance with certain sets of communicative intents, which alters their schematic structure. This paper discovered these distinctively discourse-specific communicative objectives, which ultimately became one of the characteristics that set their generation unique.

Move-step analysis in this study was conducted following the model proposed by Swales [20] and Kanestion and Singh [22]. Swales [23] examined the genre of research article abstracts to support his theoretical framework. For article introductions, he pioneered the "Move-Step" model, which was later known as the Create a Research Space (CARS) model. He came to the conclusion that most researchers (the discourse community in his study) adopted three "obligatory" moves in their research abstract, along with a number of "optional" ones. These rhetorical moves are: (Move 1) establishing a territory, (Move 2) establishing a niche, (Move 3) presenting the present work. Move 1 is "Establishing a territory" with optional steps such as: Step 1. Claiming centrality; Step 2. Making topic generalization(s); Step 3. Reviewing items of previous research. In addition, Move 2 is "Establishing a niche" which has optional steps such as: Step 1A. Counter-claiming; Step 1B. Indicating a gap; Step 1C. Question-raising; Step 1D. Continuing a tradition. Finally, Move 3 is "Occupying the niche" that accommodates the following steps: Step 1A. Outlining purposes; Step 1B announcing present research; Step 2. Announcing principal findings; and Step 3. Indicating research article structure.

Bhatia [24] a Swales' student, provided seven stages for a language researcher to follow when analyzing unknown genres. According to the analysis's goals, the genre's component that will be the emphasis, and the researcher's prior knowledge of the genre in question, some or all of the following seven steps should be taken into account: First, placing the supplied genre-text in a context; second,

surveying the body of literature; third, honing the situational/contextual analysis; fourth, choosing a corpus; fifth, examining the institutional setting; sixth, determining the degree of linguistic analysis; and seventh, obtaining expert knowledge in genre analysis.

4.2. Narrative Structure

In accordance with the article's goal, Thai undergraduate English majors who write narrative essays constitute the discourse community in this work. They are referred to as the genre under analysis. According to Labov and Waletzky [25] a "fully developed" narrative may have clauses or groups of phrases that serve the following purposes: 1) abstract – summarizes the story to come; 2) orientation – introduces characters, temporal setting, and situation; 3) complicating action – recapitulates series of events leading to the climax; 4) evaluation – states or underscores what is interesting in the story; 5) result or resolution – releases the tension and finally tells what happens; and 6) coda – announces that the story is finished.

4.3. Features of Labovian Narrative Analysis

The framework offered by Labov and Waletzky [1] is appropriate for analyzing natural, oral, and basic narratives, according to Tolliver [26]. Additionally, it emphasized the ideas of recounting historical occurrences and temporal context to help readers comprehend the significance of narrative evaluation. The rhetorical patterns that formed in the narrative essays were coded using Labov and Waletzky [1] six-part framework for narrative analysis, which includes an abstract, orientation, evaluation, complication, resolution, and coda. The students' writing processes were then coded according to the six-part analytical framework. The following descriptions serve as a guidance for researchers while coding, where M stands for motions and S for steps.

M1 - Abstract (Beginning of the Story)

An abstract presents an initial clause that reports the entire sequence of events in the narrative. The steps in M1-Abstract are as follows:

> *Step 1 Presenting the summary of the story*
> *Step 2 Announcing the beginning of the story*
> *Step 3a Claiming the right to tell the story*
> *Step 3b Suggesting the story is good*
> *Step 4 Stating the sequence in the story*

M2 –Orientation (Setting the Scene)

The orientation or orientation section is a structural element in narratives that functions to provide the audience with essential background information. It introduces the characters, setting, time frame, and the situational context of the events being recounted. Within narrative clauses, this function is often realized through specific phrases or lexical choices that establish these contextual details. The components included in Move 2 – Orientation are outlined as follows:

> *Step 1 introducing the characters*
> *Step 2 introducing temporal setting*
> *Step 3 introducing physical setting*
> *Step 4 introducing the situation*

M3 - Complication (Complicating Action)

A simple narrative is a result of a sequential clause that ends the complicating action. The step in M3 – complication was as follow:

> *Step 1 recapitulating series of the event*

M4 – Evaluation (Interesting or Unusual about the Story)

Evaluation section is significant to establish personal interest in a narrative event. This section is concern with the information for human needs and desires.

The steps in M4 – evaluation are as follows:

> *Step 1 reporting what is un/interesting in the story*
> *Step 2 stating additional details about the characters*
> *Step 3 suspending action*
> *Step 4 comparing the sequence of events*
> *Step 5 explaining what happened*

M5 - Result or Resolution (Final Action / Conclusion of the Story)

The result or resolution is a structure of complicating and resolving actions that are considered as the ending of narratives. The steps in M3 – resolution are as follows:

> *Step 1 releasing the tension of the events*
> *Step 2 finally telling what happens or will happen*

M6 – Coda (Announcing the story is finished or connect to the every-day life)

A coda is a structure of events in the narratives that describe the time of speaking with a functional device in examining verbal perspective for returning to the present moment. The steps in M6 – coda are as follows:

> *Step 1 announcing the ending of the story*
> *Step 2 providing summary of the story*
> *Step 3 stating the connections of the events*

4.4. Classifying the Moves/Steps

The frequency-based classification system proposed by Kanoksilapatham [27] serves scholars to validate and categorize the moves or steps found in research article introductions. The framework organizes moves into three categories through frequency analysis of a corpus: obligatory, conventional and optional. A move is obligatory when it appears in every text analyzed while optional moves occur in fewer than 60% of texts and conventional moves appear between 60% and 99%. The 60% threshold according to Kanoksilapatham [27] provides an effective way to differentiate between conventional and optional moves.

Move analysis, according to Connor, et al. [28] is a study of how texts' general structural patterns often dictate the sequence of moves that are made. Moves typically consist of at least one proposition and vary in length. As a result, move types that manifest more frequently than others are viewed as obligatory whereas move types that manifest less frequently are viewed as optional. The study makes reference to the constructional moves found in the narrative essays.

4.5. Related Studies

Guinto [29] applied the narrative framework developed by Labov and Waletzky [1] to examine the writing patterns of 29 young Filipino contributors featured in the Youngblood column of the Philippine Daily Inquirer. His analysis identified a common structural sequence among these writers, which included the introduction of temporal context, presentation of the situation, a chronological recounting of events, a release of narrative tension, reflective commentary, and a linkage between the narrative and the present day. Guinto concluded that the narrative style exhibited by these writers aligns closely with conventional Western narrative structures.

Similarly, Devanadera [19] utilized both Swales' Genre Analysis model and Labov and Waletzky [1] Personal Experience Narrative (PEN) framework to investigate the narrative writing patterns of Vietnamese EFL learners. The findings indicated that students generally followed a three-part structure: character introduction, contextual setup, and event narration. The present study adopts the same Labov and Waletzky [1] framework to analyze the rhetorical structures found in narrative essays composed by Thai undergraduate students.

4.6. Research Methodology

This study employed a mixed-method design (quantitative and qualitative research) utilizing a genre-based approach. It was considered quantitative research as it dealt with the quantity in move/step analysis using the personal experience narrative framework. It was also considered qualitative research as it described and discussed the characteristics of moves/steps found in the students' writings.

The 34 English major students who enrolled in the Essay Writing course in the first semester of the 2024 academic year at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Buriram Rajabhat University were assigned to write a narrative essay based on a personal experience related to an event from which they had learned something or experienced a change in perspective. With regard to the writing topic, it was essential that the topic be familiar, realistic, and achievable [19]. All 34 essays were purposively selected as samples for the move analysis of narrative essays in this study.

The research employed the analytical model developed by Labov and Waletzky [1] to create a coding system for analyzing the rhetorical structures in personal narrative essays written by 34 students. The framework defined narrative as a method of recounting past events through ordered temporal clauses, referred to as temporal junctures. According to this approach, the primary purpose of narrative was to present a purposeful sequence of events. The model illustrated how the ordering of clauses established relationships that determined the complicating action forming the central part of the narrative structure. It was particularly useful in tracing the path of narrative construction, which, according to Labov and Waletzky [1] constituted a fully formed narrative if it followed a six-part structure: abstract, orientation, evaluation, complication, resolution, and coda. Labov and Waletzky [1] viewed complex narratives as the result of the combination and evolution of simpler elements. Although Tolliver [26] analysis primarily focused on narratives produced by a large group of non-specialist speakers, he argued that the framework remained applicable for analyzing more complex, literary forms of narrative.

Considering the aforementioned theoretical foundations and institutional/situational standards, the recurring rhetorical moves were identified using simple statistical techniques such as frequency, percentage, and statistical mode. Obligatory and optional moves and steps were determined. Individual moves and specific steps that appeared more frequently than others were regarded as the obligatory rhetorical patterns of the discourse community under study. Three experts were invited to verify the coding employed in this study. Move analysis involved examining the overall structural organization of texts to identify a sequence of rhetorical moves. Each move typically conveyed at least one proposition and varied in length. Moves that occurred consistently across texts were classified as obligatory, while those appearing less frequently were considered optional [28]. In the context of this study, the term specifically referred to the rhetorical moves found within the analyzed narrative essays.

Table 1.
Labovian narrative analysis of the rhetorical structure for the personal narrative essays.

Move-Step	f	%	QD
Move 1: Abstract (Beginning the Story)			
Step 1 Presenting the summary of the story	6	17.65	Optional
Step 2 Announcing the beginning of the story	28	82.35	Obligatory
Step 3a Claiming the right to tell the story	3	8.82	Optional
Step 3b Suggesting the story is good	3	8.82	Optional
Step 4 Stating the sequence in the story	13	38.24	Optional
Move 2: Orientation (Setting the Scene)			
Step 1 introducing the characters	34	100.00	Obligatory
Step 2 introducing temporal setting	29	85.29	Obligatory
Step 3 introducing physical setting	14	41.18	Optional
Step 4 introducing the situation	30	88.24	Obligatory
Move 3: Complication (Complicating Action)			
Step 1 recapitulating series of events	29	85.29	Obligatory
Move 4: Evaluation (Interesting or Unusual about the Story)			
Step 1 reporting what is un/interesting in the story	7	20.59	Optional
Step 2 stating additional details about the characters	10	29.41	Optional
Step 3 suspending action	0	0.00	
Step 4 comparing the sequence of events	1	2.94	Optional
Step 5 explaining what happened	13	38.24	Optional
Move 5: Result or Resolution (final action/conclusion of the story)			
Step 1 releasing the tension of the events	25	73.53	Obligatory
Step 2 finally telling what happens or will happen	15	44.12	Optional
Move 6: Coda (Announcing the story is finished or connect to the every-day life)			
Step 1 announcing the ending of the story	0	0.00	
Step 2 providing summary of the story	18	52.94	Obligatory
Step 3 stating the connections of the events	18	52.94	Obligatory

Note: f – frequency; % - percentage; QD – qualitative description

a – Frequency or number of instances the move/ step was observed in the corpus.

b – Only includes the number of instances the move has been employed per essay. Two steps may be present in one essay but the move was counted as one.

5. Results and Discussion

The data on Table 1 illustrated the rhetorical patterns that happened in the 34 narrative essays written in English by Thai students majoring in English. As shown in Table 1, there were eight steps from five moves which emerged to be obligatory move/step in the analysis as follows: step 1, 2, 3 from move 2; step 2 from move 1; step 1 from move 3; step 1 from move 5 and; step 2, 3 from move 6. However, the other ten steps were emerged to be the optional steps in writing narrative essays: step 1, 3a, 3b, 4 from move 1; step3 from move2, step 1-5 from move 4; step 2 from move 5, while step 1 from move 6 were not found in the essays.

In reference to the steps in *Move 1 Abstract (Beginning the Story)*, only one step was found to be obligatory, i.e. *Step 2 Announcing the beginning of the story* as it received a frequency of 28 or 82.35%.

According to the steps in *Move 2 Orientation (Setting the Scene)*, three steps were found to be obligatory *Step 1 introducing the characters, Step 2 introducing temporal setting, and Step 4 introducing the situation* as they received frequency of 34 or 100.00%, 29 or 85.29% and 30 or 88.24%, respectively. However, only one step emerged to be optional, i.e. *Step 3 introducing physical setting* as it received frequency of 14 or 41.18%.

For the meantime, in *Move 3 Complication (Complicating Action)*, *Step 1 recapitulating series of events* was found to be obligatory as it received frequency of 29 or 85.29%.

As revealed in *Move 5 Result or Resolution (final action/ conclusion of the story)*, *Step 1 releasing the tension of the events* was found to be obligatory as it received frequency of 25 or 73.53%.

Lastly, in *Move 6 Coda (Announcing the story is finished or connect to the every-day life)*, two steps were found to be obligatory, i.e. *Step 2 providing summary of the story* and *Step 3 stating the connections of the events* as both received frequency of 18 or 52.94% equally.

At this point, to reveal the rhetorical structure of the texts, the moves and steps were ranked depending on their order of occurrence in the texts. The table that follows identifies the statistical mode and the rank of the moves/ steps which were found to be obligatory. The findings are as follows:

Table 2.
Obligatory Rhetorical Structure in Narrative Essays of Thai Undergraduate Students

Move-Step	f	%	Order
M1S2 Announcing the beginning of the story	28	82.35	4
M2S1 Introducing the characters	34	100.00	1
M2S2 Introducing temporal setting	29	85.29	3
M2S4 Introducing the situation	30	88.24	2
M3S1 Recapitulating series of events	29	85.29	3
M5S1 Releasing the tension of the events	25	73.53	5
M6S2 Providing summary of the story	18	52.94	6
M6S3 Stating the connections of the events	18	52.94	6

It can be perceived from Table 2 that the given discourse community collectively prefer to construct their personal narrative essays in the following structure:

1. Announcing the beginning of the story
2. Introducing the characters
3. Introducing temporal setting
4. Introducing the situation
5. Recapitulating series of events
6. Releasing the tension of the events
7. Providing summary of the story
8. Stating the connections of the events

In reference to six moves and 20 steps from the framework, eight steps were found to be obligatory or preferred by the students when they write their narrative essays while the other ten steps were found to be the optional. The instances of the obligatory steps in narrative essays were as follows:

1. Announcing the beginning of the story appears in 28 essays or 82.35% and rank in the fourth place of all obligatory steps. In reference to the results, *M1S2 Announcing the beginning of the story* is in *Move 1 Abstract (Beginning the Story)*, is only one step emerged to be obligatory out of four steps in move 1. According to Johnstone [4] move 1 abstract consists of one or two clauses at the beginning of a narrative summarizing the story to come. Additionally, the abstract serves to signal the narrator's intention to share a story and asserts their entitlement to do so. This assertion is reinforced by an implicit promise that the narrative will be engaging and deserving of the audience's attention, thereby justifying the temporary control over the conversational floor granted by listeners. The following excerpts reveal Thai undergraduate students' preferred move/step:

> Essay (1)　　　M1S2- Announcing the beginning of the story
> *I had an unexpected accident when I was 8 years old. In the weekend morning in summer, I started my day by going out to play with my friends.*

Essay (19):   M1S2- Announcing the beginning of the story
                It happened when I was in elementary school, and I started learning to drive a motorcycle.

2. Introducing the characters appears in 34 essays or 100.00% and ranks in the first place of all obligatory steps. Introducing the characters in one step in *Move 2 Orientation* or orientation section which, according to According to Labov and Waletzky [1] this structural element functions to situate the audience by providing information about the people involved, the location and timing of the events, as well as the identities and actions of the participants within the narrative context. The following excerpts reveal Thai undergraduate students' preferred move/step:

Essay (12):   M2S1-Introducing the characters
                I am the youngest daughter, and I have one sister. We have only female siblings. They take care of me. I don't have to do much things by myself. Then my grandmother was sick and had to see the doctor.
Essay (22):   M2S1-Introducing the characters
                Since I was born, I moved to live with my grandparents. I am very happy to live in the countryside with my grandparents. However, I never met my parent. When I was seven years old. Grandmother told me that my mother was pregnant.

3. Introducing temporal setting appears in 29 essays or 85.29% and ranks in the third place of all obligatory steps. Introducing temporal setting is in *Move 2 Orientation (Setting the Scene)* which according to Johnstone [4] states that narratives start by introducing characters and the time and place of the events and the situation. Orientation is usually presented at the beginning of the narrative but it can also appear later in the narrative when additional context is required. In English, the past progressive tense is commonly used to convey this orienting information. The following excerpts reveal Thai undergraduate students' preferred move/step:

Essay (13):   M2S2-Introducing temporal setting
                The incident took place in the evening around 7.00 p.m. I remember that day as it was my birthday.
Essay (15):   M2S2-Introducing temporal setting
                During my summer break, my aunt would come to pick me up to go on vacation.

4. Introducing the situation appears in 30 essays or 88.24% and ranks in the second place of all obligatory steps. Like Introducing temporal setting and characters, the introducing the situation is in *Move 2 Orientation (Setting the Scene)* which in a narrative introduces characters, temporal and physical setting, and situation, according to Johnstone [4]. The following excerpts reveal Thai undergraduate students' preferred move/step:

Essay (3):   M2S4-Introducing the situation
                My friend and I have to practice Muay Thai (Thai Boxing) for the performance. This practice gave me a good experience. I feel really happy to join this.
Essay (29):   M2S4- Introducing the situation
                I had a serious accident when I was 12 years old. It was the day I went on a field trip with my friends.

5. The step of recapitulating a series of events was found in 29 essays, accounting for 85.29%, making it the third most frequently occurring obligatory step. This step corresponds to Move 3: Complication (Complicating Action), where students narrate a sequence of events that build toward the narrative's climax—the moment of greatest suspense. According to Johnstone [4] these clauses reference occurrences within the story's world and simultaneously generate tension in the act of

narration, thereby sustaining the audience's engagement. The following excerpts reveal Thai undergraduate students' preferred move/step:

Essay (30): M3S1-Recapitulating series of events
My sister and I went to watch the musical folk drama at the village hall which is not far from my house. I ran very quickly. It was late at night that I could not see the dog sleeping at the entrance of my house. I ran and stepped on the dog's tail. Then the dog bit my leg. I found out that I was bitten by the dog. I rushed to wash the wound with soap and went to the hospital.

Essay (33): M3S1-Recapitulating series of events
The story was caused by my brother and I were invited to swim in the swimming pool that the hospital has made for children. When we reached the pool, we swam in the pool happily. Then my brother and I want to have a break and drink water. As my brother left the pool, I was on the other side, and I would swim to the side of the pool. At that moment, I felt like I don't have strength to swim as I feel exhausted all over my body and could not breath normally. However, I had to swim. I was so tired that I knew that I was about to drown. The waster in the pool is very deep and that made me tired. At that time, I thought that I was going to die.

6. Releasing the tension of the events appears in 25 essay or 73.53% and ranks in the fifth place of all obligatory steps. Releasing the tension of the events is in *Move 5: Result or Resolution (final action/ conclusion of the story).* The students prefer to narrate the results of the event that help release the tension after the complicating event in the story. As stated by Labov and Waletzky [25] the result or resolution is a structure of complicating and resolving actions that are considered as the ending of narratives. Nadeem [30] explains that the result or resolution informs the audience about how the complicating action is resolved. It answers the question 'What finally happened? This section provides a closure to the events and a release of the accumulative tension. The following excerpts reveal Thai undergraduate students' preferred move/step:

Essay (33): M5S1-Releasing the tension of the events
I was going to die. My brother saved me in time. He helped me get out of the pool.

Essay (26): M5S1-Releasing the tension of the events
I study and read hard. My grade kept getting better. As time passed, my dream has changed. I like learning language. I improved my study and have a good grade.

7. Providing summary of the story appears in 18 essay or 52.94% and ranks in the sixth place of all obligatory steps. Providing summary of the story is in *Move 6: Coda (Announcing the story is finished or connect to the every-day life).* According to Labov and Waletzky [25] the structural element of narrative discourse known as coda indicates when the narrative returns to the present time of speaking. The transitional function of coda enables the narrative to move from past events back to the present moment. According to Nadeem [30] coda clauses located at the end of a narrative establish a connection between the story's timeline and present time while allowing the narrator to make comments about the complete narrative. The following excerpts reveal Thai undergraduate students' preferred move/step:

Essay 5: M6S1-Providing summary of the story
My parents was there, and they can save me immediately. I learned the lesson from the experience that my mother worried about my safety. I should be obey her because what she always told me is true.

Essay 7: M6S1-Providing summary of the story
The teacher made me start to like learning English and he made me realize that learning a language is not difficult, but it requires determination, and we can enjoy with it.

8. Similar to the previous step, stating the connections of the events appears in 18 essay or 52.94% and ranks in the sixth place of all obligatory steps. It is in *Move 6: Coda (Announcing the story is finished or connect to the every-day life).* The students preferred to write the ideas that connect to the rest of their lives, and to prepare something they have learned and to apply those lessons in their routine. As mentioned by Labov and Waletzky [25] a coda is a narrative element that marks the transition back to the present moment of speaking, serving as a functional tool for shifting the verbal perspective from past events to the current context. The following excerpts reveal Thai undergraduate students' preferred move/step:

Essay (28): M6S3-Stating the connections of the events
In the end, my sister is finally safe. I learned something important that day. Until today, I promised to myself that I will try to take care and protect my sister as a good older sister.

Essay (29): M6S3-Stating the connections of the events
On this field trip, I was not happy with myself because I had an accident which caused by my carelessness. It was my fault and clumsiness. Nowadays, I am very careful when I do anything.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

As the purpose of this study, to identify the move/steps that are obligatory or optional in the narrative essays written by the students, Thai undergraduate students prefer to write narrative essays in a following obligatory move steps in chronological order: 1) Announcing the beginning of the story; 2) Introducing the characters; 3) Introducing temporal setting; 4) Introducing the situation; 5) Recapitulating series of events; 6) Releasing the tension of the events; 7) Providing summary of the story; and 8) Stating the connections of the events.

In light of the findings and recommendations, it is hereby advised that Thai teachers present the findings of this study to their students in order to provide them with useful knowledge about the six-part narrative analysis framework as well as the characteristics of personal narrative essays written by Thai undergraduate students.

Researchers interested in the same topic may explore embedded rhetorical structure in the obligatory move steps to give more profound explanation of those move steps. In addition, in order to better locate the observed rhetorical structure within the Thai cultural environment, future scholars may start by justifying the socio-cultural implications of the structure. Finally, the comparison of narrative structures in Thailand and oversea could be conducted to find the differences and similarities in student's writings.

Transparency:

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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