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Pragmatic and Move Analysis in Thai EFL Learners' Business Correspondence Writing in Hospitality Services

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated pragmatic and move analysis in Thai university students' business correspondence writing in the field of hospitality services. The students joined a pre-experience excursion at a five-star hotel, Graceland Khaolak Beach Resort, as preparation to join internship programs in the field of hospitality. This visit provided them with experiential learning for data collection. The study used purposive sampling. The sample of the study was 112 Thai EFL learners who studied English for Business Correspondence (936-300) in semester 1/2026 at a university in the southern part of Thailand. The data collection consisted of students' email writing to inform their clients, sent in a given situational context. The instrument was a reply email to their clients asking for information about a hotel booking. The data analysis followed the conceptual framework, including Swales' move analysis in email writing, Colston's figurative language, and Grice's cooperative principle to observe the students' business correspondence writing. Descriptive statistics were used to support the data analysis. The results of the move analysis showed that the frequent errors in their email writing were found in move 2 and move 4, which were the establishing communication chain and closing moves. In terms of cooperative principles, some students violated the maxim of quality as they could not address specific names of room categories (i.e., deluxe room) to their clients. Most students used simile as a creative meaning device to end their concluding move for creating impression at 22.32 percent. Finally, pedagogical implications for writing emails with assertive speech acts were given. The results of the study would contribute something new to the field in terms of a meaning-making focus in writing business correspondence.

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1. Introduction

Enhancing the students' linguistic competence in writing business correspondence is important to prepare them for employability (Kawinvasin et al., 2021). Writing emails is mono-transactional. Sending emails back and forth can be problematic, as it can cause misunderstandings and confusion between senders and receivers. Clarity and conciseness of business email writing should receive attention over checking minor grammatical errors.

In the past, business email writing in English classrooms was form-focused, and error analysis focused on the grammaticality of English native speakers (Hernández, 2011; Shang, 2007). The pedagogical impact of language accuracy on grammar and syntactic constituents is likely to reduce students' writing fluency. As supported by Zhou et al. (2014), students were nervous when their grammar and syntactic structure were corrected, such as *articles*, *plurality,* and *adjective clauses*. While previous business correspondence studies focused on the students' error analysis of grammar (Memari, 2016; Tafazoli et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2019), the study filled in the gap by contributing something new to the field by shedding light on move and meaning-making analysis to enhance the students' ability to write business correspondence with the genre of hospitality services and analytical dimensions in pragmatic aspects.

With the significance of the study, Chaisarn (2021) addressed that GSA, front desk personnel, and marketers in five-star hotels in Thailand corresponded about a huge number of clients' questions and confirmations daily. They said that they wrote a lot of these emails each day, and fluent writing skills were crucial for them to complete this daily task. In addition, they also mentioned problems with delivering proper meaning and complimentary closes to match the right target group. Thus, customers' economic status and the meaning-making in business email writing are interrelated.

Unlike essay writing, business email writing has its own move to focus, known as *move analysis* (Swales, 1990). The definition of move analysis in business correspondence is the sequential order of writing that the writers need to follow from the start to the end. Technically, a business email is a two-way communication that has a move, subject, and target market. In other words, imagine when you finish taking a bath, and you are about to get dressed. Which item of clothing do you put on first? Wearing a hat first may seem bizarre. You might start by putting on underwear before putting on a T-shirt. Likewise, we need to follow the right move when we write a business email, starting from the sender to the end (closing salutation). In business English, the sender is the person who sends a message, whereas the email receiver is the target market. The emails are *formal,* written in a specific *format,* and include *information.* The stem *form* signals that writing business emails in English relies on a form that the writers need to follow. The information that is included requires a format, which can follow a template in email writing. The move to follow when writing emails are: receiver, sender, subject line, opening salutation, statement of purpose, supporting move, concluding move, closing statement, and closing salutation. Primarily, a focus of this study is move analysis in Thai EFL learners' business correspondence writing.

The *move-meaning focus* of this study includes *semantic principles of compositionality* (Kearns, 2011), *figurative language*, the cooperative principle in *pragmatic knowledge,* and *move analysis*. *Semantic competence* of fixed collocations and colligation (Frankenberg-Garcia et al., 2019) has traditionally been provided to support students in writing their emails in their traditional classrooms, such as *I am writing this email to inform* and *I am looking forward to*

your reply. Even though this technique is practical and useful in business email writing today, business correspondence in the field of hospitality and tourism management differs in that a tone of happiness should be added via connotation and *semantic prosody* in vocabulary. As such, the email should not sound robotic or generated by *Artificial Intelligence* (AI). Stative verbs applied in email writing have their own prosody to connote positive energy (i.e., *love*, *joy*) (McEnery et al., 2006) and might affect the receiver's emotion while reading (Laubert & Parlamis, 2019). Enhancing the students' semantic knowledge of figurative language such as hyperbole, personification, simile, metaphor, and repetition (Lakoff & Johnson, 2008) would be impressive for the reader.

Pragmatic competence is also important in business email writing. *Pragmatic competence* in this study refers to Grice's (1975) *cooperative principle,* including the maxim of quality, maxim of quantity, maxim of relation, and maxim of manner. The knowledge of these maxims helps avoid communication breakdown in business email writing. For example, a GSA who violates the maxim of quantity to answer their customers' questions when they send an email may be asked again and again, leading to their customers' frustration. In addition, to avoid misunderstanding, a good statement of purpose should not violate the cooperative principle, which contains the maxims of quality, quantity, relation, and manner. The quality could be exemplified by giving good reasons for the readers to follow. The quantity could be exemplified by giving enough reasons for the readers to accept the conditions. The relation is that the speakers do not address something that is off-topic. The manner is the behavior of the discourse. The speakers should not give ambiguous information leading to two or three potentially different interpretations.

Email writers in English are required to have background knowledge of their target audience regarding whether the language used should be English as *Global English*, *World Englishes*, or *English as a Lingua Franca* (Bhatia, 2019). Global English focuses on the norm and pattern of language use, such as sending an email to ambassadors and lawyers. World Englishes are inner, outer, and expanding circles, such as Singaporean English and Philippine English. ELF may be used when the two speakers do not use English as their first language, so repetition and correcting the other's understanding several times are allowed. This study follows the ELF belief in developing a task of business email writing for students. As supported by Wajdi (2025), ELF in business correspondence enhances global business success. With this belief, grammaticality and correct form of grammar were not the focus in this study.

The application of *English as a Lingua Franca* in this study was done to decolonize the hierarchy of the English language and the *coloniality of power*. *Coloniality of power* is a concept in sociology that means one has power over the other (Quijano, 2007). In applied linguistics, following the native English and Anglophone norm would cause psychological tension, affecting the production of language, especially for EFL writers who have little experience in writing business correspondence in English. While the standard move in business correspondence is important knowledge, allowing students to relax while writing emails would support their *writing fluency* and would bring new results to the study.

In summary, business email writers in the field of hospitality require a variety of knowledge to complete an email writing task in their international workplaces. While previous studies focused on move-form analysis in the students' emails, error analysis "*I am looking forward to hear from you"* (Asztalos, 2014) and fixed collocation in business email writing (Frankenberg-

Garcia et al., 2019), this study fills the gap by focusing on the study of move-meaning analysis, shedding light on figurative language and cooperative principle. This leads to the objective of the study. The objective of the Study **is** to investigate pragmatic and move analysis in Thai university students' business correspondence writing in the field of hospitality services.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Business Correspondence and Error Analysis

According to Asztalos (2014), the objective of writing business emails is to get the job done. Business email writing is straightforward, short, and functional. It is a hybrid between spoken and written language. The researcher analyzed the genre of business email writing. It was common for business email writing, such as sales promotion, to have eight moves. In terms of cultural differences in business email writing, NS and NNS had different styles of writing. Iranian writers wrote informally and were more direct.

In terms of methodology, the study followed Zsubrinszky's email genre move framework (EGM), which was a form of communication to follow. EGM was developed from Swales' CARS Model and Bhatia's genre model. There were four moves in EGM, including establishing the communication chain as in move 1, giving information as in move 2, requesting information or a favor as in move 3, and closing the communication as in move 4. The results show that the students usually stated the purpose in move 1. The formulaic expressions used were *I am writing to confirm the booking* and *best regards,* while some spelling mistakes were found. The data collection consisted of 12 emails written by t he first-year marketing students at Budapest Business School. It contained a corpus of 2,104 words. They were asked to write an email to submit to a selected hotel as part of a course assignment. The participants in the study were B2 CEFL level of proficiency students enrolled in marketing at the business school. The data analysis focused on communicative purposes, move, linguistic features, and language mistakes, such as grammar and structures.

The results highlighted the move analysis and error analysis of email writing. With the move structure, most students could use move 1 and move 2 correctly, while move 3 and move 4 were infrequently used. Some students used bullet points instead of complete sentences. The students used complex sentences at approximately 60 percent, which was higher than simple sentence use. The average number of sentences in each email was approximately 150 words. The variety of simple, compound and complex were 81, 43, and 82 sentences, respectively. Move 1 is greeting and purpose. Move 2 is updating and providing information. The linguistic features of move 4 appeared to be rather informal. The students employed a lot of formulaic patterns in their email writing. For example, it was frequent for the students to use the closing salutations of *best regards* and *best wishes,* while *yours faithfully* was infrequently found. Most students showed frequent ungrammaticality in relative pronouns, uncountable nouns, and articles, such as *the, a*, and *an*. The results of the study bring pedagogical implications for teaching business emails for business English students.

2.2 Business Correspondence and Intercultural Communication

Park (2021) studied the move analysis in American and Korean writers' email writing in workplaces. Emails in workplaces were commonly used to make requests, so they investigated the important parts of writing emails to make requests. The framework of the study was ELF and move analysis. The researcher used DCT to write an email to a colleague.

The data collection included 60 emails: 30 American and 30 Korean participants. All participants were asked to complete the DCT in their email writing according to a given contextual situation: asking a colleague to have a meeting. Move analysis was assessed in the request genre from a cross-cultural perspective. Position and social distance were inclusion criteria to make the data collection more realistic. The two groups of participants had three or more years of work experience. The situation was that the manager asked another junior manager to complete the task instead. The data was analysed by Nvivo to analyze frequency of move. The data analysis included the introductory part, the request, the supporting move, and lexical complexity and syntactic complexity. The Koreans wrote a lot in the introduction. The Americans wrote supportive move more often to give compliments and appreciation. In contrast, the Koreans usually wrote shorter supportive move and repeated the request twice, which made the situation become more stressful. The Americans used more small talk and supportive move with polite language to support business relationship building. The Americans made their request softer and more polite, while the Koreans' move was more direct.

2.3 Business Correspondence and Artificial Intelligence (AI)

According to Lingaiah et al. (2026), professional email writing is important in the healthcare industry. Emails in healthcare are basically used to communicate between different departments and patients. Doctors skip some parts in their email writing. Sometimes, incomplete email writing leads to miscommunication between departments. Writing emails in a healthcare setting needs high clarity, respect, and privacy compliance. However, due to the business of medical personnel, email writing was shown to lack professional structures, such as omitting greetings and actionable closings. It was thought that using AI would fix this error. The study used AI to fix missing parts. The clearer structure and move was easier for the readers to read. The study was qualitative research employing purposive sampling. The data collection consisted of 10 emails written by medical doctors. The data analysis used Swales' genre framework, including greeting in move 1, purpose in move 2, detail in move 3, and closing in move 4. The researchers applied Swales' move structure together with the intervention of AI to examine how AI improved medical doctors' healthcare email writing concerning move and discourse. The emails were written by medical professionals in a private Malaysian hospital. The research used purposive sampling to identify 15 emails to examine the four moves. Move 1 is greeting. Move 2 is stating the purpose. Move 3 is providing details. Move 4 is closing. ChatGPT was used to identify Swale's move as written by medical personnel. There were the stages of Pre and post-AI comparison. The results showed that AI improved the organization of email writing. It made the purpose of the emails clearer. Before the AI intervention, the emails had informal greetings and incomplete closings. AI enhanced the quality of linguistic performance in email writing. AI helped to adjust opening salutations and closing salutations in healthcare email writing to make them more professional. The results of the study contributed to the field in terms of standard templates and clear move structures. Although AI can enhance the professionalism of business email writing, it may not understand the writer's emotions and cultural differences.

2.4 Related Previous Studies

Hiranburanon (2017) addressed that communication via email was the major communication in Thai business workplaces at approximately 95 percent. The move analysis shows that

common moves in Thai employees' email writing were opening salutations, introducing the purpose of writing, establishing correspondence (what was included to answer), supporting details, requesting actions (persuading, inviting, and requesting), justification, closing move, and closing salutation. With an array of ideas, the problem was that the information provided was unclear. In terms of error analysis, the most frequent errors in emails written by Thai employees were articles, punctuation, and plurality. In addition, Patarapongsanti et al. (2022) studied error analysis in Thai EFL learners' business writing. The study employed a qualitative analysis to classify the students' errors in their written business paragraphs. The writers were at the B2 CEFR level. The assigned topic was 'the benefits of purchasing our products'. The results of the study showed that frequent errors were found at morphological, syntactic, and mechanical levels. The common errors were plurality, determiners, and punctuation. Previous research agreed that punctuation in business writing was Thai EFL learners' weakness.

Zhang et al. (2019) studied the pragmatic competence of Thai students in a business context by applying a stratified sample in his study. The study divided the students by their study years, including first-year and third-year students. The instrument, called the Written Discourse Completion Task (WDCT) was applied in the study. There were 16 items with four choices for them to choose. The topic tested in business correspondence was advising. The results showed that the mean score of pragmatic competence of first-year and third-year students advising their customers in a business context was 28.18 and 34.59, respectively. The third-year students had a higher level of pragmatic competence to provide advice to their customers more effectively. The results in the study demonstrated why the third-year students were selected as participants in the study.

Wajdi et al. (2025) studied 100 authentic samples of English business correspondence in an international business context that were written by non-native English writers. The study focused on three main properties which were organization, intercultural communication and language. Not only was the business email writing related to relationship-building and persuasion, but also the style of writing required clarity and directness through rhetorical structure. The study examined various types of emails, such as responses, requests, and complaints, to analyze these properties. The results showed that professional business writing required clarity and conciseness. It required the writer to follow appropriate move, such as a subject line, salutation, and closing remark. When carrying out the analysis of language use, it was found that the non-native English speakers faced difficulties with articles, punctuation, and countability in their business correspondence writing. It was also found that some mismatches in cultural aspects, such as politeness, brought misunderstanding between the two parties.

Suraprajit (2021) studied grammatical error analysis in Thai second-year students' writing. The results of the study showed that article omission was the major grammatical problem, followed by incorrect use of prepositions. Previous studies relating to Thai students' writing paid attention to micro properties in grammar errors in students' writing in English. It is true that error analysis helps English teachers know about the challenge that the students have in their writing. However, there are other pivotal language properties to support the students' success in their writing.

To sum up, the aspects of error analysis, intercultural communication, and artificial intelligence are currently integrated to be studied in business email writing. Business email writers should take intercultural communication into consideration. It seems that businesspeople in different cultures have their own unique *linguistic relativity* when they write emails. For example, French people tend to write in a more direct manner. Writing business emails in the past required writers to have knowledge of error analysis to detect ungrammaticality, move, and incorrect structures. On the other hand, this situation can now be supported by AI. AI can help enhance the grammaticality and completeness of business email writing, but it is limited in its support of intercultural communication in business email writing.

3. Research Methodology

This study was qualitative research. The study was purposive. According to the philosophy of interpretivism, the purposive sampling method was suitable for this study because the research sought to understand a specific and new phenomenon for knowledge contribution (Müller et al., 2025). The ethics number of this study is COA NO. RSUERB2025-195.

3.1 Research Participants

With purposive sampling method, the participants in this study were 112 undergraduate students in the field of English for Business Communication (EBC) at a university in southern Thailand. They were enrolled to study *English for Business Correspondence* in Semester 1/2026. The exclusion criteria was that the participant was non-EBC major and they did not enroll to study the subject of *English for Business Correspondence* before. The data collection was in an exam room. The participants in this study were asked to participate in the study by a trained research assistant. Once he addressed the objective of the study and the benefits that the participants gained, the participants voluntarily signed the informed consent. Then, the participants completed the task immediately. The students were asked to complete the task within 60 minutes. The participants were asked to complete the task at the same time. Electronic devices and dictionaries were not permitted while completing the task. There were two proctors available. The students were given an empty A4 sheet of paper and a pen to complete the task manually. Accordingly, the final number of manuscripts in the study was 112 email scripts.

3.2 Research Instruments

The research instrument was a business email with a given *contextual situation* for the students to respond to. The other instrument was a semi-structured interview about the conceptual framework of *move-meaning* and their *writing fluency*.

According to the Ministry of Tourism, Thailand (https://surat.nso.go.th/), the highest number of tourists who visited Thailand, especially in the southern part of Thailand, in 2025-2026 were Malaysian people. This would be due to the adjacent border and the Malaysian Ringgit currency being stronger than the Thai currency (approximately 8.12 Thai Baht for 1 Ringgit; August 14th, 2026). Thus, convenience and economic status were their reasons for travelling to Thailand. The context of the business email in this study was related to Malaysian clients considering travelling to Phuket province.

In terms of language, although Malaysian people are *multilingual,* including Malay dialects, Cantonese, Hokkien, and Hakka, English is used for communication in terms of their education, business commerce, and everyday life (Pillai & Ong, 2018). In the context of the email for the participants of the study, a Malaysian family will visit Phang Nga for three nights and four days for their vacation for the first time. They asked about a room type that will be suitable for their family, including 4 members: 2 adults and 2 children. They also want to know what facilities are included in this room type, what the price of the room is per night, and whether this price includes breakfast or not. The participants were asked to write an email to respond to the customers' questions about their three-night and four-day vacation (September 4th-7th, 2026) at Graceland Khaolak Beach Resort. The customer's email stated: I would like to get information about the room category, its price rate, and breakfast.

Graceland Khaolak Beach Resort was selected because the third-year business students in this study were given a pre-experience at this hotel while they studied the subject. They stayed at this hotel for two days and one night. They were given a tour called *Authentic Learning* with an explanation about room types, facilities in the hotel, and breakfast. As such, they could use experiential learning to respond to this email.

The research instruments were sent to be validated by three experts from different universities in Thailand. The instruments were amended according to the experts' advice before the tests were distributed.

Additionally, the students were interviewed concerning the conceptual framework of *move-meaning* and their *writing fluency*. They were asked the following two questions.

1. *Did the framework of move-meaning help enhance writing fluency in your business correspondence writing? Give reasons to support your answers.*
2. *Did the decolonization of business correspondence writing via English as a lingua franca enhance your effective business communication?*
3. *Give reasons to support your answers.*

The data analysis of the interview information followed the criteria of data saturation (Saunders et al., 2017). The researchers kept asking the participants via the snowball technique until no emergence of new information. Finally, thematic analyses were applied to develop the patterns of answers systematically (Clarke & Braun, 2017).

3.3 Data Analysis Techniques

English as a Lingua Franca was applied when analyzing the students' written emails. The conceptual framework of analysis in this study is move-meaning analysis. The move-meaning analysis in this study follows Zsubrinszky's Email Genre Model (2009) (EGM), Colston's (2015) figurative language, and Grice's (1975) cooperative principle.

A move is a part of the text that has communicative purposes. The move analysis of this study was adapted from Zsubrinszky*'s Email Genre Model (EGM)* because it complies with the objective of the study, as the students were asked to write to clarify information for their customers.

Move 1 *Opening*

Move 2 *Establishing the Communicative Chain*

Move 3 *Providing Information*, *Clarifying Information*

Move 4 *Ending the Communication*

In terms of meaning analysis of figurative language, the meaning analysis of figurative language in this study follows Colston (2015). There are *simile, metaphor, hyperbole*, *personification,* and *repetition*. Simile is defined as a comparison of one entity with another entity by connecting them with language devices such as *like*, *as,* and *as if*. For example, *Cheow Lan Dan is swirling like a ballet.* Metaphoric expressions are the comparison of one entity with another, as in *Muangtuad Waterfall is like a crying baby.* Hyperbolic expression is exaggeration. Personification is the creation of an inanimate subject to become animate via action verbs, as in *Khao Sok protects the forest.* Repetition is sound devices to link consonants and vowels together between words as in *More mountains, more memory.*

Aside from that, pragmatic analysis of the cooperative principle follows Grice (1975), containing four maxims. *The maxim of quantity* refers to enough information being provided when asked; not too much and not too little. For example, when customers write a business email to ask about the types of available rooms and their prices, answering only about the room categories violates the maxim of quantity. *The maxim of quality* refers to giving information that the interlocutors expect to hear in an informative way. It also means that the speakers provide believable and truthful information. Sometimes, supporting evidence helps in this aspect. *The maxim of relation* is to give only relevant information when asked. For example, answering *I had my dinner* when asked *where did you go* violates the maxim of relation. *The maxim of manner* is where the speaker provides information sequentially and unambiguously. For example, when a customer writes an email asking about room types and prices, they should respond with descending prices to avoid the reader's confusion. These linguistic properties have become the analytical framework in this study, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Move-Meaning Analytical Framework

Move Analysis	Figurative Language	Cooperative Principle
1 Opening (Receiver, Sender and Opening Salutation	Simile	Maxim of Quality
2. Establishing Communicative Chain (i.e., Topic, SOP and background)	Metaphor	Maxim of Quantity
3. Providing Information (i.e., Supporting Move)	Hyperbole	Maxim of Relation
4 Ending the Communication (i.e., closing move, closing salutation and contact)	Personification	Maxim of Manner
	Repetition	

To avoid subjectivity in the data analysis as proposed in Table 1, *inter-rater reliability* via a checklist (Cole, 2024) was used to score the students' business emails. This means that two English teachers individually marked the students' written tests based on the rubrics given above. The results were then compared. The written papers that had points of disagreement were discussed to achieve a final agreement. An example of the checklist is given below.

Table 2: Inter-rater Reliability's Checklists

Checklists	*Agree*	*Disagree*	*Reasons*
Move 1 Opening (Receiver, Sender and Opening Salutation	✓		
Move 2 Establishing Communicative Chain (i.e., Topic, Statement of Purpose)	✓		
Move 3 Providing Information in Supporting Move)	✓		
Move 4 Ending the Communication (i.e., closing move, closing salutation and contact)	✓		
Creative Meaning Devices (i.e., simile, metaphor, hyperbole, personification, repetition)	✓		
Maxim of Quality	✓		
Maxim of Quantity	✓		
Maxim of Relation	✓		
Maxin of Manner	✓		

The conceptual analysis in this study focused on move-meaning, viewed as an important aspect when ELF is applied to writing business emails to correspond with their customers. People who are worried about the grammar in their email writing can ask AI programs to detect their grammatical errors and spelling later on. This research methodology leads to the results of the study.

4. Results

This section presents the results of the study. The first part is move analysis in hospitality email writing. The second part is figurative language in hospitality email writing. The third part is the cooperative principle in students' hospitality email writing. Both qualitative and quantitative data will be presented in the same section.

4.1 Move Analysis in Undergraduate Students' Hospitality Email Writing

According to Zsubrinszky's Email Genre Model (2009) (EGM), the frequency and percentage of the students' move as applied in their hospitality email writing are reported in Table 3.

Table 3: Undergraduate Students' Move Analysis in their Email Writing

Move Analysis		Frequency		Percentage	
Move 1	**(N)**	**Follow**	**Violate**	**Follow**	**Violate**
1.Recipient	112	112	0	100	0
2.Sender	112	112	0	100	0
3.Subject Line	112	112	0	100	0
4.Opening Salutation	112	112	0	100	0
Move 2					
5.Statement of Purpose	112	112	0	100	0
6.Background Information	112	96	16	85.71	14.29
Move 3					
7.Supporting Move	112	112	0	100	0
Move 4					
8.Closing Move	112	110	2	98.22	1.88
9.Closing Salutation	112	111	1	99.11	0.99
10.Contact	112	112	0	100	0

Table 3 reveals the frequency and percentage of the students' hospitality email writing move analysis to reply to customers. The students were able to completely accomplish the goal of delivering the message in move 1 and move 3, which are the opening move and supporting move. Some students did not accommodate the receivers by providing background information about what was asked, as they jumped quickly to provide supporting details. Only a few students forgot some details in move 4, such as the closing move and closing salutation. Accordingly, for the next teaching move, the teachers should pay attention to the importance of recalling background information, the closing move, and the closing salutation. The results in this section show that *accommodation theory* should be added to teaching in this subject. Customers should not be expected to go back to read their own previous email to know what the response is referring to. Some students wrote move 2 incompletely, and they did not give enough background information, exemplified as follows:

I am writing this email to inform you about room categories. (Participant 17)

I am writing this email to inform you about price rate. (Participant 80)

As exemplified, the background information was not completely provided. It is important for the senders to recap what was asked by customers to link them with the supporting move part.

4.2 Cooperative Principle in Students' Hospitality Email Writing

Following Grice's (1975) cooperative principle, the frequency and percentage of the students' cooperative principle as applied in their hospitality email writing are reported in Table 4.

Table 4: Undergraduate Students' Cooperative Principle in their Hospitality Email Writing

Cooperative Principles		**Frequency**		**Percentage**	
1. Maxim of Quantity	**(N)**	**Follow**	**Violate**	**Follow**	**Violate**
Completion of three answers	112	112	0	100	0
2. Maxim of Quality	**(N)**	**Follow**	**Violate**	**Follow**	**Violate**
Be truthful	112	112	5	95.54	4.46
3. Maxim of Relation	(N)	**Follow**	**Violate**	**Follow**	**Violate**
Be relevant (not provide something which was not asked)	112	112	0	100	0
4. Maxim of Manner	**(N)**	**Follow**	**Violate**	**Follow**	**Violate**
Questions were answered in sequential order.	112	107	5	95.54	4.46

Table 4 reveals the frequency and percentage of the students' hospitality email writing cooperative principles in replying to customers' questions. All students answered the three questions asked by customers. However, some violated the maxim of quality by incompletely answering the three questions asked by customers. Those who violated the maxim of quality did not articulate a room category, which could make it difficult for the customer to make their booking. An excerpt showing the violation of the maxim of quality is presented below.

"*The first type is suitable for two adults and 2 kids. The facility in the room includes TV, king bed, sofa, bathtub, balcony and totties*. (Participant 78)

Despite providing enough information about the room, the participants did not specify the proper name of the room, such as *Premium Suite* and *Deluxe*. Without the name, this email did not achieve appropriate communication for the customer to book the room.

In terms of the maxim of manner, the questions that were asked by customers were about room type, price, and breakfast. It was expected that GSA trainees would answer the questions sequentially. However, approximately 4.46 percent violated this maxim. An example of a violation is given below.

> "*We recommend a suite room for your family. This room includes breakfast. The room rate is 3,500 baht per night".* (Participant 96)

4.3 Figurative Language in University Students' Hospitality Email Writing

Following Colston's (2015) figurative language, the students were taught five techniques of figurative language as creative meaning devices to use in business email writing. The frequency of figurative language is reported in Table 5.

Table 5: Figurative Language in Undergraduate Students' Business Email Writing

Figurative Language	Frequency	Percentage
1.Simile	25	22.32
2.Metaphor	3	2.68
3.Hyperbole	3	2.68
4.Personification	4	3.57
5.Repetition	2	1.79
6.Not found	75	66.67
Total	112	100

Table 5 reveals the frequency and percentage of figurative language in the students' business email writing to reply to customers. The majority of participants could not apply any creative meaning devices in their business email writing, at 66.67 percent. Some students could use metaphoric expressions in their business emails at 22.32 percent. The use of metaphoric expression, hyperbolic expression, and personification was found at 2.68 percent, 2.68 percent, and 3.57 percent, respectively. The qualitative data of creative meaning devices are presented as follows:

> *Come experience Graceland Khaolak Beach as Heaven on earth*. (Simile)
>
> *Visit Paradise, Visit Graceland Khaolak*. (Repetition)
>
> *Graceland Khaolak Beach Resort is warmly welcoming you.* (Personification)
>
> *Our service is the heart of your journey. (*Metaphor)

To recapitulate this part on pragmatic and move analysis in the students' email writing to respond to customers, the results of the study show that the participants could perform exceptionally well in applying move in their email writing, especially the opening move and supporting move. The students partially showed their pragmatic competence concerning their cooperative principles. They could handle all questions asked by customers, although some did not answer questions sequentially. With cognitive linguistics in general and specific knowledge, some students lacked specific knowledge regarding the names of room categories in hotels. This made their answers sound too broad. They could apply move to form literal meaning to respond to their customers. However, most students lacked persuasive writing skills to convey ideas. The empirical evidence was shown in figurative meaning, which is an aspect that they are required to develop urgently. From the error analysis of this study, it was concluded that the students' major problems in their email

writing were persuasive-technique knowledge and specific knowledge of hotel room names. If they can overcome these challenges, the students will be scaffolded to become professional email writers in hospitality workplaces.

5. Discussion

The first part of the discussion is theoretical contribution. The model of analysis is OIL, including organization, ideas, and language, and will be discussed sequentially. Finally, the pedagogical implications of the study will be given.

5.1 Organization

Swale's (1990) move analysis refers to individual formulaic structures for each genre. After the business-English students were taught using a genre-based approach, they could output their move in business emails accurately. This showed the teaching benefits of a genre-based approach in various aspects. The results of the study show that genre helps students form the specific framework for specific communicative events and apply appropriate linguistic properties (Ariyanfar & Mitchell, 2020).

The results of the study also complied with Wicaksono et al. (2023) in that the genre-based approach enhances the students' writing in business correspondence because each move has its own function and objectives for the students to follow. However, some students missed the background information in the second move, where they were asked to recap what was asked by their customers, known as accommodation theory. Some students expected that their customers could remember the questions they asked, while recapping information in the section of background information helps the readers to retrieve what was asked as well as the fluency of reading.

The results show the students' substantial enhancement of organization in their business correspondence writing. The results of the study comply with Zalukhu et al. (2025) regarding the significant improvement of format and organization in the students' business writing. The pattern of move supports the students' comprehension of how to structure their business correspondence.

5.2 Idea

The participants could complete their email by completely answering the three questions asked. This means that they could complete their business correspondence in terms of the number of items to answer. However, they lacked knowledge of terminology to be used in the field, which can be seen in the proper names of hotel rooms, such as *Deluxe Room*, *Superior Room,* and *Junior Suite*. The error analysis highlighted errors in terms of terminology and specific names used in the field of hospitality. As supported by Lazovic & Vicfic (2015), knowledge of specific names and terminology in the field of hospitality makes business communication sound professional.

Regarding the pragmatic aspects of the cooperative principle, the maxim of manner in this context refers to the email writers responding sequentially to what was asked by customers. The results showed that only a few students jumped back and forth in their email writing. As supported by Yaghubyan (2024), the sequence of answers is an important factor in writing business correspondence. This is related to what information is prioritized by customers.

The students could develop their writing content effectively, especially in their closing move, in order to maintain a positive relationship with their customers. The content of business correspondence in previous studies showed formulaic and collocational expressions, such as in "please let me know if you need anything else". While it is true that this expression is useful for students to write in their closing move, the closing move could be made with figurative devices to create an impression and positive relationships, especially in hospitality and tourism business correspondence. This influences the email receivers to open and read the emails. Customer relationships and emotional support are given over company profits (Ting, 2012).

Regarding flouting the cooperative principle, showing sincerity is good, but over-expression of sincerity could be interpreted as flouting, referring to showing the speakers' intention to let the interlocutors know exactly what the speakers want from them. This seems to influence how the participants used figurative language at the closing move of their writing. Most participants used *hyperbolic expressions* to let the customers know that they really want them to book the hotel, which made business correspondence sound cheap. As supported by Limthaworn & Keyuravong (2017), repeating apologies several times with long expressions at the beginning move, supporting move, and closing move was a kind of flouting. Over-sincere expressions were shown in an email, which could lead one to misinterpret information.

Pedagogically, the English teacher can only provide knowledge of creative meaning devices for the students to learn and be aware of different techniques. However, how to use them contextually depends on each hospitality business's policy and the hotel's image. The students may apply this aspect more effectively when they join their internship programs. As supported by Coombes (2026), figurative devices are effective techniques to make one's business writing sound executive. Using simile in business writing allows flexibility. It leaves some room for the situation to be changed, as linguistic devices such as *like*, *as,* and *as if* make the meaning more flexible than metaphor, as in A is B (Coombes, 2026).

5.3 Language

Regarding Perceptions vs. Performance, students' perceptions of their business email writing were different from their actual linguistic performance. Khruawan et al. (2021) studied the senior university students' perceptions of business email writing and their language use. They perceived that vocabulary and grammar are challenging issues in business email writing. The problem was limited terminology, business vocabulary, and the selection of formal and informal vocabulary to use contextually. However, the students perceived that they were not worried about their capitalization and punctuation.

Sutakote et al. (2025) applied Dylay et al. (1982)'s error analysis to study the students' errors in their email writing. The framework of error analysis contained four surfaces, including omission error, addition error, misformation error, and misordering error. Omission error refers to leaving out essential elements and ignorance of grammatical completeness. Addition error is attempting to overgeneralize rules. Misformation error is the use of the wrong form and incorrect rule hypotheses. Misordering error relates to syntax difficulties. The results showed that omission was the most common error among Thai business English students when they form their email writing. Omission of verbs, omission of punctuation, and omission of the subject were the most frequent errors at 48.64 percent, followed by misordering errors.

5.4 Differences with Previous Research Studies

A major difference between the results of the current study and previous studies was *pragmatic transfer*, which is the interference of L1 communicative styles on L2 (Kasper, 1992; Wannaruk, 2008). In this study, the results of the move analysis showed that most Thai EFL learners applied all 10 sub-moves in their email writing to inform their clients. On the other hand, the writers of business emails in previous studies tend to write shorter. Li (2022) reported that Australian English speakers and Mandarin Chinese speakers wrote their business emails shorter, using an average of 8.4 and 6.4 moves, respectively. Writing shorter, including only the necessary parts, seems to be the nature of business email writing in English. Thai EFL learners' long written texts are due to L1 interference (Bennui & Hashim, 2014; Watkhaolarm, 2005). The transfer of cultural elements that Thai students think in Thai but write the answer in English makes their written text longer. Unlike English, the Thai language does not have a full stop, so the style of writing is not as direct to the point as the English style of writing. As further mentioned by Liu et al. (2025), the L1 pragmatic transfer of different cultural students is not the same. For example, Chinese students whose cultural values focus on hierarchy and seniority pay attention to the opening salutation, which contains formal titles and surnames. In contrast, Russian people write their emails shorter and very direct to the point (Litvinova & Larina, 2023). Thus, the length of business email writing, as compared in Thai, Chinese, Australian, and Russian writers, reflected that the L1 cultural aspect is a hidden property, which is an interesting aspect to investigate in further research studies.

Along the same line as L1 pragmatic transfer, politeness strategies differ in Thai business email correspondence from other studies. Since the context of the study was hospitality services focusing on luxurious hotels, the students took this factor into consideration when writing emails to inform their customers. These high levels of politeness were shown in formulaic collocation patterns in the opening salutation as in *sir/madam,* and the closing salutation, *sincerely yours*. In contrast, McKeown & Zhang (2015) indicated that regular emails employed *hi* and *hello* for opening salutations and ended with *regards* and *best*. This showed that the students have cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity in terms of power and distance between the addresser and addressee, correctly and appropriately.

5.5 Pedagogical Implications

While previous studies focused on error analysis, this section provides pedagogical implications for teaching business correspondence based on move-meaning focus. In the early weeks, the students should be taught to understand the business concept of *target audiences*. This is a key concept relating to the move of the recipient in business email writing. To build this knowledge, the students may scaffold by thinking of five to six keywords about the meaning of the *target audience* based on their own perceptions. To facilitate their understanding, the teachers could give an example of gender, including males and females. The outcome of students' brainstorming about the inclusion of target audiences could be *age*, *occupation,* and *lifestyle* as target audiences. As supported by the instructor, age refers to different generations of people, such as Generation Z, Generation Y, Generation X, and Baby Boomers. Each generation has its own preferences and lifestyles. Occupations are divided into *white-collar* and *blue-collar*. White-collar workers are exemplified as government and bureaucratic officers. In contrast, blue-collar workers could be exemplified as bus drivers and

construction workers. Lifestyle is someone's way of living. For example, when a person travels by air, that person selects an economy class seat or a first-class seat.

In addition, figurative meaning could be something new for the students majoring in Business English in the field of hospitality. The teachers may introduce these properties, including metaphor, simile, hyperbole, personification, and repetition. Firstly, metaphor is the comparison of two entities (objects) in the form of *A is B* or *B is A,* as in *John is a tiger* and *a tiger is John*. Certain characteristics that are similar or the same between the two entities are compared to each other. Like a metaphor, a simile is the comparison of two subjects by the use of devices such as *like*, *as if,* and *as*. For example, *he smiles like a tiger*. This denotes that his smile looks ferocious, like a tiger. The third one is hyperbole, which is an exaggeration of certain entities/objects. For example, I *would like to say sorry a thousand times*. The fourth one is personification, which is making inanimate objects into animate objects. For example, *the sun smiles beautifully*. The fifth one is repetition. It is a kind of device to repeat the same word or sound, such as *Wear El Grego, wear elegance*. With the theoretical concepts of meaning devices to develop creativity in writing, the students could be placed in a group of 5-6 students to complete the following activity.

Following Siricharoen & Wijitsopon (2020), functional categories and lexical bundles could be applied to teach business email writing. The concepts of functional categories could be stance expression (i.e., I would like to), expectation (I look forward to), and prediction (i.e., it would be a). This is useful for the students to use in their business communication.

After that, the students can be asked to write five sentences with the given words relating to Surat Thani's natural properties, such as dam, waterfall, mountain, and river. After the end of the activity, each group takes turns to present.

1. *Rajjaprabha dam welcomes everyone*.
2. *Khao Sok is paradise on earth*.
3. *Muangtuad Waterfall is a crying baby*.
4. *Cheow Lan Dan is swirling like a ballet*.
5. *Khao Sok protects the forest.*
6. *Visit Ratchaprapha. Visit paradise.*

The pedagogical implication in this study shows that lessons in the classrooms of English for Business Correspondence could help to fulfill the Thai national policy and university policy to promote Thai tourism at an international level. Messages sent to invite international tourists to travel in Thailand bring income to boost the Thai economy and support the sustainability of local tourism in Thailand.

6. Conclusion

This study has investigated undergraduate students' perceptions and performance in their business email writing to answer the following question: What are the pragmatic and move analyses in Thai university students' business correspondence writing in the field of hospitality services?.

While Thai EFL learners' business email writing is likely to be written longer due to L1 pragmatic transfer, the students acquired cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity in their business email writing as shown in the empirical evidence of opening saturation and closing

saturation correctly and appropriately with the context of hospitality services. The results of the study were limited to only the third-year students in the field of hospitality English at a public university in the southern part of Thailand. Generalizing the results of the study to other groups may not be applicable to the optimal level. For future research studies, it is recommended that applying this teaching model to other types of business email writing, such as refusal and handling complaints, would contribute something new to the field.

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