Acknowledgement Structure in Persian and English Theses and Dissertations: A Contrastive Genre Analysis

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Abstract
Acknowledgement appears at the forefront of the high-stakes academic genre of thesis/dissertation writing. Previous research shows the generic structure of acknowledgements written by native Persian postgraduate students contains a 'thanking-God move', absent in native English speakers' acknowledgements. In an approximate replication of Hyland's (2004) study of the generic structure of acknowledgments, we aimed to verify the occurrence, frequency, and variation of moves and steps in three small corpora of acknowledgments from six disciplines (applied linguistics, business management, computer science, electrical engineering, microbial biotechnology, & biochemistry). Each corpus contained 200 sample acknowledgements written in Persian or English. The authors were native Persian speakers and native English speakers. Fifty acknowledgements (100-400 words) were randomly selected from each corpus and analyzed using Hyland's model. Two coders carefully, content-analyzed, and coded the acknowledgments. Then the data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The results confirmed findings of previous research indicating that acknowledgements written by native Persian speakers (in Persian & in English) contain all the moves and steps defined by Hyland plus a new step called 'thanking-God' step. The use of this step was significantly different across Persian and English (84% in English & 100% in Persian; X^2= 1.63, $p \leq 0.05$) and across writers (84% Persian & 34% English; X^2= 28.17, $p \leq .05$). 'Accepting responsibility' and 'dedicating the thesis' were used least frequently by all writers, while 'thanking move' and 'reflecting move' were used most frequently. Pedagogical and conceptual implications are discussed.
Keywords: acknowledgment, genre analysis, M.A. thesis, move analysis, Ph.D. dissertation