

## A DISCOURSE ON STRUCTURE OF ACKNOWLEDGMENTS IN DOCTORAL DISSERTATION IN A MULTIRACIAL SETTING

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### ABSTRACT

The existence of acknowledgment in academic paper has become an academic practice. This paper explores the generic structure of doctoral dissertation acknowledgments of three major races in Malaysia through discourse analysis. It also aims to find differences of the moves and steps used by the three races. Fifty samples from each race were selected based on their availability from local and foreign universities. The fundamental moves and steps were scrutinised and documented in the categories of the collected acknowledgements. The findings of the study disclosed that the structural arrangement of doctoral dissertation acknowledgements has the same structure with the arrangement of Arab dissertation acknowledgements. However, there is no vast difference of acknowledgement writing between the three races. From the findings, this study comes out with a modified model of generic structure of doctoral dissertation acknowledgements. The findings of this paper might be of interest to genre analysts as well as to second language theorists and practitioners even though it was done on small corpora. Based on the outcome of this paper, it is suggested that future study is carried out to determine the effects of academic disciplines differences in writing acknowledgements of doctoral dissertation.

**Keywords:** acknowledgement; discourse analysis; genre theory; move structure; move pattern

## KAJIAN STRUKTUR GENERIK PENGHARGAAN DISERTASI KEDOKTORAN DALAM KALANGAN MASYARAKAT BERBILANG KAUM

### ABSTRAK

Kewujudan penghargaan di dalam penulisan akademik telah menjadi satu amalan dalam kalangan penulis akademik. Kajian ini mengkaji struktur generik penghargaan yang ditulis di dalam disertasi kedoktoran oleh tiga kaum utama di Malaysia iaitu kaum Melayu, Cina, dan India menerusi analisis wacana. Kajian ini juga bermatlamat untuk mencari perbezaan pola dan langkah yang digunakan oleh tiga kaum tersebut. Sebanyak 50 sampel daripada setiap kaum dipilih berdasarkan kebolehdapatan sampel daripada universiti tempatan dan antarabangsa. Pola dan langkah asas penghargaan yang terkumpul telah diteliti dan didokumentasikan di dalam beberapa kategori. Dapatan kajian menzahirkan bahawa penyusunan struktur penghargaan di dalam disertasi kedoktoran mempunyai persamaan dengan penghargaan disertasi kedoktoran penulis Arab. Walau bagaimanapun, tiada perbezaan ketara yang ditemui di antara penulisan penghargaan oleh penulis daripada tiga kaum utama di Malaysia. Dapatan kajian juga membuktikan satu model struktur generik penulisan penghargaan di dalam disertasi kedoktoran yang dimodifikasi berjaya dihasilkan. Dapatan kajian ini berguna buat penganalisa genre, ahli teori dan pengguna bahasa kedua walaupun kajian ini dijalankan di dalam korpus yang kecil. Cadangan kajian masa hadapan boleh memfokuskan kepada kesan perbezaan bidang akademik dalam penulisan penghargaan di dalam disertasi kedoktoran.

**Kata kunci:** penghargaan; analisa wacana; teori genre; struktur pola; corak pola

### INTRODUCTION

Acknowledgement in published texts contains the appreciation and it is a platform for the writers of the texts to express their gratitude towards those who have contributed to the work that they have successfully completed especially if the work requires a lot of hard work. However, studies on dissertation or theses acknowledgment are very few (Alotaibi 2018) compared to other subject-matters discussed or chosen by researchers.

There are abundance of studies on various subject matters of a dissertation such as the introduction, the abstract, and the conclusion but only a few researchers have paid attention to the acknowledgment, which is a small but vital part in every research article. As Hyland and Tse (2004: 259-260) mention in their study, even though the acknowledgement plays a significant role in an academic practice as it is a requirement to be included in the texts, it has been largely neglected in applied linguistic studies, which usually focus on argumentative and persuasive genres.

Genre analysts like Giannoni (2002), Hyland (2003, 2004), Hyland and Tse (2004), and Cronin, McKenzie and Stiffler (1992) have enlightened the field of discourse analysis. A study by Al-Ali (2010) examines the generic patterns and socio-cultural resources in acknowledgement accompanying Arabic PhD dissertations. Al-Ali focuses on the rhetorical component used by the writers of PhD dissertation to express their appreciation and the influence of socio-cultural factors on the genre. The study has found out that Arabic writers use more socio-cultural components in

the context of religion, and academic and social conventions of the Arab writers. According to Md Zahril Nizam, Darwalis, Noriah and Mohd Najib (2020), genre implemented in the literary work is born from the experience and competence of the author's mind which is transmitted through the channel of writing to the reader.

The main objective of this study is to examine the structural and linguistic differences in the expressions of gratitude in acknowledgments written by doctoral students from various disciplines, focusing on three major races in Malaysia which are Malay, Chinese and Indian. The second objective is to determine the different moves used by the writers from different races when writing the acknowledgments. Since the acknowledgment used in this study is just restricted to the races, there are various disciplines involved. This study identifies the different moves used so that comparison and contrast can be seen between the three races; Malay, Chinese and Indian. This will provide a clearer view on the different application of moves by each of the races.

The significance of this study is it investigates the area that has not been explored much in Malaysian context. These contribute to our understanding of how individuals of different races express their personal feelings and appreciation in their intellectual journey. The insights gleaned from the study should also serve as guidelines to doctoral students on how to write appropriate acknowledgement according to norms and conventions practiced. They need to bear in mind that writing acknowledgment is not solely about conveying appreciation, but it also reflects the impression of the writers in the eyes of the readers.

Generic structure is the term used for the design and patterns of textual discourse which focus on the language use by the writers to express their gratitude when writing an acknowledgment. Previously, John M. Swales (2004) proposed the Create A Research Space (CARS) model which is the latest revised version from his earlier four-model solely for introduction. In the CARS model by Swales (1990), he presents a three-move CARS model which includes Move 1 as Establishing a Territory, Move 2 as Establishing a Niche and Move 3 Occupying a Niche. Hyland (2004: 308) then comes out with another three-move model consisted of Reflecting Move, Thanking Move and Announcing Move which has become the main reference for the analysts to examine the structure of written pieces. As for this study, Hyland's move structure of dissertation acknowledgment is adopted in conducting the analysis in comparing the acknowledgments written by three different races in Malaysia.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Discourse analysis is the study of a language which is not only done at the surface level, but it is done in-depth and beyond the sentences and the words themselves and it has contributed to the formation of important discipline in research area. Bhatia (1993) states that discourse analysis has brought to an established discipline as it is known as a study of language use afar the sentence boundaries. The study of language has attracted so much attention in research area since years ago as the wide variety of language use in this world has to lead a variety of discourse types too. Discourse analysis is regarded as one of the important elements in research field because it involves the investigation of language patterns which has huge relation with academic writing. Thus, when it relates with huge scope of academic area, there are various definitions of discourse as have been interpreted by different researchers. Giannoni (2002) adopts the perspective that discourse analysis existed from genre analysis which has been strongly supported with the study done by Bakhtin (1981).

The concept of genre is fundamental in academic setting especially in the aspect of written and spoken language use. Traditionally, genre is defined as “(a) primarily literally, (b) entirely defined by textual regularities in forms and contents, (c) fixed and immutable, and (d) classifiable into neat and mutually exclusive categories and subcategories” (Freedman & Medway 1994:1). In a wider social and cultural understanding of language use, genre has been able to link the recognition of uniformities in discourse types (Freedman & Medway 1994).

According to Johns (2002), genre is actually a termed and fabricated discourse and text type to structural patterns within more multifaceted discourses. A genre is much more than a "text type" with a fixed, static, and subjective form. Tang (2006) claimed that genre existed in conjunction to the certain social devotion which synchronizes with the purpose of certain writing types; genres come to have the textual elements that they resemble because those textual elements have been found over time to be capable of undertaking what writers need to achieve with those genera of texts. Genre is a reflection of the values of the people which are reflected in the various structural patterns they use (Ery Eswary & Rahim Aman 2014: 53)

This emphasises the fact that the written genres are derived from certain form regularities and are actually driven by the social action in which the main objective of the writing is obtained. This is supported by Hyland (2003) who claimed that genre is “to (i) understand the ways individuals use language to orient to and interpret particular communicative situations, and (ii) employ this knowledge for literacy education”. However, there are some theories studied in identifying the recognisable structural identity, or “generic integrity,” of actual academic and workplace genres in terms of their stages (or rhetorical structures) and the restrictions on typical move sequences (Bhatia, as cited in Butt, et al. 2000). Based on the definitions discussed above, an acknowledgement is regarded as a genre, as this text-type genre is used in acknowledging people who have made contributions towards the completion of a thesis and it is in the form of moves and steps.

The most significant model for the present study is the model proposed by Al-Ali (2006) who studied the generic structure and linguistic features and dissertation acknowledgements. The reason it is significant is because the similarity of background with the present study and Al-Ali’s (2006) background of study. Al-Ali (2006) incorporated Arab writers for his study and came out with an interesting finding in terms of socio-cultural in the community of Arab writers. In his study, 100 doctoral dissertation acknowledgements were analysed with based on Hyland’s (2004) generic structure model. The study by Al-Ali (2006) came out with new finding as there are several steps that existed in Arab dissertation acknowledgements. He came out with the modified version of Hyland’s (2004) model which is shown in Table 1 below:

TABLE 1: Al-Ali’s (2006) Move Structure of Arab Dissertation Acknowledgements. \*Italicized are the steps added by Al-Ali to Hyland’s (2004) model

<b>Move 1</b>	Reflecting move	Introspective comment on the writer’s research experience.
<b>Move 2</b>	<b>Thanking move</b>	Mapping credit to individuals and institutions
<i>Steps</i>	<i>1 Thanking God (Allah)</i>	Expressing gratitude to God
	<i>2 Presenting participants</i>	Introducing those to be thanked

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	<i>3 Thanking supervisor(s) and other academics</i>	Thanks for the intellectual support, ideas, analyses feedback
	<i>4 Thanking for data access and clerical and technical support</i>	Thanks for data access and clerical and technical facilities, data capture, libraries and access
	<i>5 Thanking for financial support</i>	Thanking for grants and scholarships
	<i>6 Thanking for moral support</i>	Thanks for encouragement, friendship, sympathy, patience etc
<b>Move 3</b>	<b>Announcing move</b>	Public statement of responsibility and inspiration
<i>Steps</i>	<i>1 Accepting responsibility</i>	An assertion of authorial responsibility for flaws or errors
	<i>2 Dedicating thesis</i>	A formal dedication of the thesis to an individual(s)

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Al-Ali's (2006) newly modified model still maintains the three-tier structure with three main moves. The first move remains the same with Hyland's (2004) model which is the optional Reflecting Move with no constituent step. The central body of the structure is the obligatory Thanking Move with several newly-added steps. Al-Ali (2006) added Thanking God (Allah) as the first optional step under Thanking Move. This is equivalent with the background of the study which is Muslim writers. It shows that Thanking God (Allah) for the source of inspiration and strength is common among Muslims. Apart from that, the study by Al-Ali (2006) also proposed that there was a practice of thanking for monetary aid among Arab writers. The writers of the dissertation acknowledgements conveyed their appreciation to those who had contributed financially for their studies in terms of research grants and mainly scholarships. Al-Ali (2006) also proclaimed that there might be similar patterns in writing an acknowledgement as the discourse is used to convey the same function of expressing gratitude in the cultural setting.

## METHODOLOGY

The analysis of the data was done qualitatively as the process involved was to analyse a corpora of doctoral dissertation acknowledgments written by 150 doctoral graduates of Malay, Chinese and Indian ethnic groups who graduated from local and abroad universities. The collection of the acknowledgments was taken from various faculties from universities all over the world.

The type of research design adopted in this study was primarily qualitative, namely content analysis whereby the acknowledgments written by doctoral graduates were analysed. In addition, frequency counts of the data have also been added. There are variables that have been identified

in this study. Swales (1981) as cited in Stein (1997: 24) claims that if both approaches are implemented in a study, it will produce a rich source of material when both approaches are ventured. As the view of Darwalis, Noriah, Md Zahril Nizam and Sa'adiah (2021) this approach is able to help researchers to use the space fully and is suitable to be applied to expressive type of data.

The present study adopted primarily content analysis qualitative method as it involved text analysing. Hyland (2002) claims that content analysis is crucial because it can expose the genre that has been used and the secret behind effective writing. "Content analysis is a technique that enables researchers to study human behaviour in an indirect way, through an analysis of their communication (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006: 472). As from the way they write, we can analyse their behaviours and ways of conduct. A study by Darwalis et. al (2021) mentioned that a qualitative approach was used to describe all data. A feasibility study was also carried out to measure the effectiveness of the data taken before the analysis of the study is carried out. Coding system was used in this study to assist the effectiveness of data presentation. The usage of coding system is introduced by Fraenkel and Wallen (2006: 476) who claim that "after the researcher has defined as precisely as possible what aspects of the content are to be investigated, he or she needs to formulate categories that are relevant to the investigation". Quantitative approach is a minor method as it is used to present the statistical value of the data gathered in the study which was presented in the form of frequency and percentages.

A total of 150 PhD dissertation acknowledgments written by participants of the three major races in Malaysia were used in this study. The cohort for each of the races made up of fifty acknowledgments written in English and submitted during the period of 1988 to 2020. The samples were chosen between this time frame as to acquire ample Chinese and Indian doctorate acknowledgement since not many accessible doctoral acknowledgements from these two races. Convenient sampling was employed for the data collection process in this study. The samples were selected based on their availability from local universities and universities abroad. Fifty samples from each race were chosen in this study and were selected independently. The samples used ranged from the year of 1988 to 2020. The distribution of doctoral dissertation acknowledgements from two different categories of institutions is shown in Table 2 below.

TABLE 2: Distribution of Corpus According to Institutions

Variables	Universities	
	Local	International
Malay	21	29
Chinese	38	12
Indian	33	17

The size of the corpus is 150 doctoral dissertation acknowledgements with total of 37,499 words. Table 2.1 below illustrates the word count of the corpus involved in the present study.

TABLE 2.1: Corpus Word Count According to Race

Variables	Length of Acknowledgements
Malay	11, 057
Chinese	14, 347
Indian	12, 095
TOTAL	37, 499

In obtaining the accurate findings for the research questions, this study adopted two models which are Al-Ali's (2006) Move Structure of Arab Dissertation Acknowledgements and Hyland's (2004) Generic Structure of Dissertation Acknowledgements.

Al-Ali's was chosen as the referred model because the background of the study has similar elements to the current study. The multiracial setting that is based in Malaysia has a similar environment with Al-Ali's socio-cultural background in which the writers of the acknowledgements used in this study were not native speakers of English. This study adopted the model by Al-Ali (2006) because it has been modified from Hyland's (2004) model to fit the background of the samples used in the present study. Al-Ali's (2006) Move Structure of Arab Dissertation Acknowledgements is shown in the Table 3 below:

TABLE 3: Al-Ali's Move Structure of Arab Dissertation Acknowledgements

<b>Al-Ali's Move Structure of Arab Dissertation Acknowledgements</b>			<b>Move/Step Category</b>
<b>Move 1</b>	<b>Reflecting move</b>	Introspective comment on the writer's research experience.	<i>Obligatory</i>
<b>Move 2</b>	<b>Thanking move</b>	Mapping credit to individuals and institutions	<i>Obligatory</i>
<b>Steps</b>	<i>1 Thanking God (Allah)</i>	Expressing gratitude to God	<i>Optional</i>
	<i>2 Presenting participants</i>	Introducing those to be thanked	<i>Optional</i>
	<i>3 Thanking supervisor(s) and other academics</i>	Thanks for the intellectual support, ideas, analyses feedback	<i>Optional</i>
	<i>4 Thanking for data access and clerical and technical support</i>	Thanks for data access and clerical and technical facilities, data capture, libraries and access	<i>Optional</i>
	<i>5 Thanking for financial support</i>	Thanking for grants and scholarships	<i>Optional</i>
	<i>6 Thanking for moral support</i>	Thanks for encouragement, friendship, sympathy, patience etc	<i>Optional</i>
<b>Move 3</b>	<b>Announcing move</b>	Public statement of responsibility and inspiration	<i>Obligatory</i>
<b>Steps</b>			

<i>1 Accepting responsibility</i>	An assertion of authorial responsibility for flaws or errors	<i>Optional</i>
<i>2 Dedicating thesis</i>	A formal dedication of the thesis to an individual(s)	<i>Optional</i>

The frequency and occurrence of the structural moves and steps found in the study were presented in descriptive form.

Rofess and Mahmood (2015) studied Pakistani Doctoral thesis acknowledgments and based their analysis using Hyland (2004b) and Al Ali (2010) coding schemes. They introduced a seven-moves structure in acknowledgements based on their findings. The structure includes a new move which is crediting, while the new steps are; stating research place, praising academics, crediting individuals, and over-all thanks. The study revealed that thanking move makes up 72 percent of all moves in Pakistani doctoral thesis acknowledgments.

In a different study by Zare-ee and Hejazi (2019), 200 samples of acknowledgements written in Persian or English were analysed to verify the occurrence, frequency, and variation of moves and steps in three small corpora of acknowledgments. The writers are students from six disciplines namely applied linguistics, business management, computer science, electrical engineering, microbial biotechnology, & biochemistry. It was found that acknowledgements written by native Persian speakers (in Persian & in English) contain all the moves and steps defined by Hyland (2004) plus a new step called ‘thanking-God’ step, which was significantly different across Persian (100%) and English (84%). The research also found that the most frequently move used were ‘thanking move’ while ‘reflecting move’, ‘Accepting responsibility’ and ‘dedicating the thesis’ were used least frequently by all writers.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

In collecting the required data for the study, there were several steps and procedures needed to be followed to guarantee the smooth process of data collection. After the process of compilation was completed, the acknowledgements were sorted according to each racial component race and then were identified accordingly for coding process. The coding system was created according to race and the university where the writers studied. The coding system is as follows; *M* for Malay, *C* for Chinese, *I* for Indian and for the university; *L* for local and *A* for abroad. Then numbered system was used to label the sample. The coding system could be illustrated as *MLA* which means the sample is *Malay*, studied *local* and it is sample number

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

There were several steps and techniques involved in the process of analysing the data. The first step was the samples collected for the study were printed out and were manually assessed. Then, the samples were sorted according to races and institution. The samples of each race were numbered from 1 to 50 and labelled as L or A for the coding process then all samples were manually counted. Next, the sums of the words for each acknowledgement were recorded to determine the differences of word counts of each race. Once the counting step was done, detailed reading of the samples involved was done to give the general outlook for the researcher to determine the moves and steps found in the corpus. Then, thorough analysis of moves and step



was done according to Al-Ali's (2006) structural model. After the identification step was completed, the data was transferred into statistical format using Microsoft Excel and presented in the form of percentages and frequencies.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The analysis of the data shows the patterns of the doctoral dissertation acknowledgments written by the three races which were used to compare with Al-Ali (2006) Moves Structure of Arab Dissertation Acknowledgements. After the data has been analysed, it is noted that doctoral dissertation acknowledgments have also the same pattern as Hyland's three-tier structure. The structure has three moves which are Reflecting, Thanking and Announcing moves.

The findings for the analysis of generic structure of doctoral dissertation acknowledgment are presented in this section in which the comparison is based on the Al-Ali (2006) Move Structure of Arab Dissertation Acknowledgements. The analysis is done according to 3 cohorts, Malay, Chinese and Indian with 50 samples each. It contributes to 150 corpora altogether. The result of the generic structure from all 150 corpora of Malay, Chinese and Indian doctoral dissertation acknowledgements are presented below:

Based on the data presented in previously, the moves that have been analysed in this study according to Al-Ali (2006) are as follow:

Move 1: Reflecting Move (Optional)

Move 2: Thanking Move (Obligatory)

Step 1: Thanking God (Allah)

Step 2: Presenting Participants

Step 3: Thanking Supervisor(s) and other Academics

Step 4: Thanking for Data Access and Clerical and

Technical support

Step 5: Thanking for Financial Support

Step 6: Thanking for Moral Support

Move 3: Announcing Move (Optional)

Step 1: Accepting Responsibility

Step 2: Dedicating the Thesis

*Move 1 (Reflecting Move)*

Reflecting move is the section where the writers reflect their challenges and experience that they have to come across in the journey of completing their dissertation. From the percentage, it obviously shows that this move is peripheral and optional to the genre. As stated by Hyland (2004), thesis and dissertation acknowledgements are found to have a "three tier structure consisting of a main thanking move framed by optional Reflecting and Announcing moves" (p.308). However, to some writers this move is still vital as they have included in their acknowledgement.

The result has shown that only 6.7 percent of all acknowledgement utilise this mov. 0.7 percent of them were Malay writers while 3.3 percent were Indian writers which is the highest percentage to include this move in their acknowledgements. Meanwhile, only 2.7 percent of Chinese writers used this move. Similarly, only a small percentage of acknowledgement by Pakistani doctoral students (7%) included this move, and a new step in reflecting move, 'stating

research place' step was introduced in 4 percent of the dissertation acknowledgements (Rofess & Mahmood, 2015).

### **Move 2 (Thanking Move)**

The Thanking Move is another move that can be found in acknowledgements. The steps offering thanks are the core of the genre (Hyland & Tse, 2004). This move is also considered as an obligatory move in the structure of acknowledgement (Hyland, 2004). This is proven by the result that this move occurred in all DDA (Doctoral Dissertation Acknowledgement) samples in which all the three races included this move in their acknowledgements. In what follows are the steps that support this move.

#### **Move 2 (Step 1: Thanking God [Allah])**

Move 2 Step 1 which is Thanking Allah or God has equal presence in all races with 7.3 percent of occurrence for each. According to Al-Ali (2006:38), this step “embodies a form of gratitude to Allah (God) who is believed by Muslims as the source of inspirations, strengths and confidence”. Even though the percentage of occurrence of this step is not in the higher state, some of the writers make use of this step in the move to express their religious beliefs.

The obvious difference that can be seen from the examples given is the use of Allah that differentiates that the acknowledgement is written by Malays who are Muslims. As for examples of the other two races, it is hard to differentiate between them because both use the same word ‘God’ to express their religious beliefs. In Malaysia, Islam is the most widely professed religion (61.3%), and the other religion present are Buddhism (19.8%), Christianity (9.2%), and Hinduism (6.3%) (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2010). The total percentage of dissertations including thanking God step is 21.9 percent. This step was also found in Pakistani dissertation acknowledgement, but was categorised as the Opening Move based on Al Ali (2010) model. This step was used to begin 76 percent of the acknowledgements (Rofess & Mahmood, 2015). The percentage is much larger than the current study.

Another difference with the current study is that out of the 76% of the acknowledgements, Pakistani doctoral students also thanked the Prophet besides thanking and praising Allah (33%). This step was not found in the current study. This signals cultural differences between Muslims in Malaysia and Pakistan in expressing their gratitude.

#### **Move 2 (Step 2: Presenting participant)**

This is the step in the move in which the writers introduce the people that they want to thank. As claimed by Hyland (2004) this move is “bridge between the moves and as a prologue to signal the purpose of the move which is to acknowledge all those involved in the thesis” (p.313). In other words, it involves the crucial step of signalling what is to come next. The result shows that the highest percentage of occurrence of this step belongs to the Indian writers with 20.0 percent of the samples. Meanwhile, the Chinese writers’ average is 16.7 percent and the Malay writers’ is 13.3 percent.

It can clearly be seen that from the examples shown, most of the writers tend to use ‘list of’ or ‘number of individuals’ that they were going to thank. This step in the move is where the writers choose “to signal that a list (of people to be thanked) will follow”, (Hyland, 2004, p.

314). This is the way the writers introduce the people who have contributed to and played vital role in helping them complete their theses.

Similarly, Rofess and Mahmood (2015) found this step in 23 percent of all acknowledgement. However, they categorised two ways of presenting participants: a confession that the writer is not the only proprietor of his dissertation but others contributed too; and the intention of thanking the individuals who contributed in finishing the dissertation. The former way was present in 28 percent of all acknowledgements containing the presenting participants step while the latter was used in 78 percent of the step.

### **Move 2 (Step 3: Thanking supervisor(s) and other academics)**

Thanking supervisor(s) and other academics move is the obligatory and the pillar of this genre as the occurrence is 99.9 percent for all the three races involved. This step is meant for the writers to show their appreciation for the intellectual support, ideas, analyses, feedback etc received from their supervisors, advisors, senior academics and lecturers. Specifically, the people who are thanked in this step are those “who have acted as principal or occasional dissertation advisors, doctoral committee members, senior academics, instructors, and teachers”, (Al-Ali, 2006 p.38). Similar findings were found in other studies.

Yang (2013) found that this step was present in all acknowledgement by PhD students across various disciplines in Taiwan. However, not all writers addressed their advisors. Instead, Taiwan writers have a list of people they are thankful to that is more diversified than advisors and colleagues, which extends to religious beliefs, authors of literary work, and even their pets. It was also concluded that the writers follow strict guidelines in writing acknowledgement, though they may employ creative writings such as personal stories and poems in expressing their gratitude.

### **Move 2 (Step 4: Thanking for data access and clerical and technical support)**

Thanking for data access and clerical and technical support is the section where the writers use to express appreciation for the support that they have obtained from the organizations or institutions from which the data were collected. This also includes the clerical support that they have received and technical assistance that has supported their studies. This move is the space where the writers express their gratitude for helping them in “data capture, entry, analysis and or use of institutional facilities, including equipment, and libraries and embraces access to clerical support including typing, and proofreading”, (Al-Ali, 2006, p. 39). The Malay has the highest percentage (26.7%) of the errand to include this move in their acknowledgement. While the other two races share almost the same percentage with the least found is in Chinese acknowledgement (20.7%) and Indian comes after Malay with the percentage of 21.3 percent.

Next is thanking for clerical or administrative support in which the Malay data has the highest percentage, 16.7 percent; 10.0 percent of the Chinese have included this focus in their writing and again the least comes from the Indian with only 8.0 percent.

The last focus is data capture and also thanking those respondents of the study. This focus is the most prominent as the percentage of occurrence for each race is as follows, Malay (32.0%), Chinese (28.7%) and Indian (26.08%)

### **Move 2 (Step 5: Thanking for financial support)**

Move 2 Step 5 can only be found in Al-Ali's structural model. In this step, the writers express their appreciation to those who provide them with scholarships or grants (Al-Ali, 2006). However, the percentage of occurrence among the races is quite low. 18.7 percent of the Malays include this step in their acknowledgements which showed it is more common among Malay samples while only 12.7 percent of the Chinese and 8.0 percent of Indian include this step in their acknowledgements.

### **Move 2 (Step 6: Thanking for moral support)**

Acknowledgement also provides space for the writers to thank those who are not in the academic world; they have been greatly influential in helping candidates deal with their inner feelings such as the stress and obstacles they faced during their journey of completing the thesis. Their gratitude addresses the love, care, friendship, encouragement and patience received from spouses, family members, friends and colleagues. Hyland (2010) states that "the category of 'moral support'... includes all expressions of thanks for encouragement, friendship, sympathy, patience, and care" (p. 262). The result of this study shows 32.7 percent of the samples from Malays have this step in this move. Most of the Malay samples have included this step in their acknowledgements and this constitutes the highest percentage. It is followed by samples from Indian which constitutes 30.7 percent occurrences and, those of the Chinese with 28.7 percent of the occurrences. It can still be considered as an obligatory step move because it has among the highest percentage of occurrences in the acknowledgements analysed.

Zare-ee and Hejazi (2019) found a slight difference among Persian and English writers. In their study 60 percent Persian and 58 percent English writers included this step (thanking for moral support) in their acknowledgement. Rofess and Mahmood (2015) suggests that thinking for moral support is one of the most important steps, where in their study 94 percent of the writers used this step in their acknowledgements. Rofess and Mahmood (2015) explained that the writers offer their gratitude to friends, colleagues, classmates, research fellows, academics, and family members for moral support, encouragement, friendship, sympathy, and patience.

### **Move 3 (Announcing Move)**

Announcing move has the lowest percentage of occurrence compared to the other moves. This move has two constituent steps which are accepting responsibility and dedicating thesis.

#### **Move 3 (Step 1: Accepting responsibility)**

This step gives the opportunity for the writers to affirm their responsibility towards the flaws and imperfections of the content of their thesis. Al-Ali (2006, p. 39) states that this step is where "the acknowledgers assert their authorial responsibility for the dissertation's imperfections and contents". "On the interpersonal plane, this step emphasized the contrast between collaboration and responsibility" (Giannoni, 2002, p. 22). One possible explanation as suggested by Rofess and Mahmood (2015) is that those who used this step seemed to owe their work to others. It was found in their study that the writers used this step because they perceived the study as a collective effort of many individuals. Hence, those who used this step seemed to be more realistic in indirectly

claiming their authority and ownership to their work by stating responsibilities, accepting errors and shortcomings to their work, and absolving other contributor of the blame of limitations and insufficiencies in their work.

However, this practice is not common among Malaysian writers. As for the result of this study, none of the samples from all the races has included this first step in their acknowledgements which contributes to 0% for all the three races. From the data it is clear that step 1 in Move 3 does not occur.

### **Move 3 (Step 2: Dedicating thesis)**

The last step in Move 3 is the platform for the writers to dedicate the thesis that they have written to someone/something as they feel that it is actually something of great value to them. Al-Ali (2006) claims that the writers who included this step in this genre feel “they have something of great value to offer, if only symbolical, for the ‘addressee’ as a reward for a unique effort” (p. 40). The analysis shows that Chinese has the highest percentage of occurrence for this step as 4.7 percent of the samples dedicate their thesis to someone special. The occurrence of this step in Malay samples is 4.0 percent while the Indian samples have the lowest occurrence with only 2.0 percent.

Rofess and Mahmood (2015) and Zare-ee and Hejazi (2019), in their study, have also reported small percentage of writers who used this step. In Zare-ee and Hejaze (2019) dedicating thesis in acknowledgement was found only in 8 percent Persian and 17 percent English writers while in Rofess and Mahmood (2015), only 2 percent of the writes use this step in acknowledgements. However, Rofess and Mahmood explained that in their study the reason for such a low frequency of this step is that all of the writers have included their dedications on a separate page, apart from the acknowledgement text.

### **Unclassified Steps**

Other than steps found in the analytical model proposed by Al-Ali (2006), this study also found out that there are two unclassified steps or moves which are not included in the previous models. The steps are identified as *thanking for proofreading and editing* and *approval to continue studies by employer*.

#### **Thanking for proofreading and editing**

The writers take the opportunity to thank those who have proofread and edited their work in this step. The percentage of occurrence for this step is common compared to the other unclassified steps. Chinese has the highest percentage with 4.7 percent followed by Malay and Indian who share the same amount of percentage; 3.3 percent.

#### **Approval to continue studies by employer**

This is the space where the writers convey their gratitude to their employers as they are given the chance to take leave and pursue their studies. This step exists in Chinese sample- 2.7 percent which is the highest and 2.0 percent of occurrence for both Malay and Indian samples respectively.

Based on the finding of the study, comparing to Al-Ali (2006) structural model, there are some modifications that have been made.

The first move; Reflecting Move remains as the optional move in the new model. This is because the role of the move itself is flat as it is regarded as a discrete way of introduction.

Conversely, for the central and obligatory move, Thanking Move, it has the most modification. This move has several steps that have become obligatory based on the results of this study. The first step, Thanking Allah (God) is maintained as optional for all the races as the presence of this step is low. The second step, Presenting Participants has changed to obligatory step for Indian as the percentage of occurrence is high. Yet, this step is still optional step for Malay and Chinese. Thanking supervisor(s) and other academics is the most prominent step in this move as this step is present in all samples. This step is regarded as an obligatory step as it has 100% of presence in the acknowledgements. The same goes for the next step which is Thanking for data access, clerical and technical support as it changed to obligatory step for all races. This step can be found in most samples. Thanking for financial support is obligatory for Malay samples as most writers tend to include this step in their acknowledgements. However, it is maintained optional for the other two races.

There are two new steps that have been introduced based on the finding of this study. The new step is Thanking for proofreading and editing. The presence of this step in some of the acknowledgements for all the three races shows that it is a prominent step. Even though the existence of this step is noticeable, it falls under the optional step. The next newly-discovered step is Approval to continue studies by employer. This step is included in the acknowledgements written by all the three races involved. Again, this step is optional step as the presence is still low in the samples.

Based on the result of this study, Announcing Move is declared as an optional move due to its low presence in the corpus. The constituent steps of this move have the lowest percentage of occurrence of all the moves in the model.

TABLE 4: Generic Structure of Doctoral Dissertation Acknowledgements in Multiracial Setting. The Italicized Phrases are Newly Identified Steps.

<b>1</b>	<b>Reflecting move</b> <i>(optional move)</i>	Introspective comment on the writer's research experience.
<b>2</b>	<b>Thanking move</b> <i>(Obligatory move)</i>	Mapping credit to individuals and institutions
	1 Thanking God (Allah) <i>(obligatory step)</i>	Expressing gratitude to God
	2 Presenting participants <i>(optional step)</i>	Introducing those to be thanked
	3 Thanking supervisor(s) and other academics <i>(obligatory step)</i>	Thanks for the intellectual support, ideas, analyses feedback

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4 Thanking for data access and clerical and technical support <i>(obligatory step)</i>	Thanks for data access and clerical and technical facilities, data capture, libraries and access
5 Thanking for proofreading and editing <i>(optional step)</i>	<i>Thanking the general readers and editors in checking through the thesis</i>
6 Thanking for financial support <i>(optional step)</i>	Thanking for grants and scholarships
7 Thanking for moral support <i>(obligatory step)</i>	Thanks for encouragement, friendship, sympathy, patience etc
8 Thanking employer for the leave Approval <i>(optional step)</i>	<i>Thanking the employer as they approve the leave</i>
<b>3 Announcing move</b> <i>(optional move)</i>	Public statement of responsibility and inspiration
1 Accepting responsibility	<i>Do not exist</i>
2 Dedicating thesis <i>(optional step)</i>	A formal dedication of the thesis to an individual(s)

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## CONCLUSION

This study highlighted that there are no vast differences between the races in writing the acknowledgements. This means that cultural or racial background does not play an important role in writing acknowledgment in doctoral dissertation.

In addition, there were two new steps found in this study which are thanking for proofreading and editing, and thanking employer for the leave approval. It is suggested that future study is carried out to determine the factors that influence the writers' choice of move and step to be included in their acknowledgement. This is also to discover whether the writers used other dissertations as references and guidelines when writing their acknowledgements. This is due to the general academic commonalities that is proven by this study.

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