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**A contrastive study of generic organization of doctoral dissertation  
acknowledgements written by native and non-native (Iranian) students in applied  
linguistics by Farhad Golpour Lasaky**

**A contrastive study of generic organization of doctoral dissertation  
acknowledgements written by native and non-native (Iranian) students  
in applied linguistics.**

### **Author's Profile**

He has obtained his MA degree in TEFL. He is an English faculty member of The Holy Prophet Higher Education Complex (Bentolhoda Sadr Teacher Training Center, Rasht). He has presented papers at international conferences and his main area of interest is language teaching and learning.

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### **Abstract:**

Nowadays genre studies have attracted many researchers' attention. The present study was to observe the differences in generic structure of doctoral dissertation acknowledgements texts written by English native and non-native (Iranian) PhD students.

To this end thirty native English students acknowledgement texts and the same number of non-native (Iranian) dissertations acknowledgement texts were selected. The model that was used in this study was Hyland (2003) model. After analyzing each text the main moves and their steps were extracted and the frequencies of each one were calculated and compared. Also chi-square test was applied to check whether differences between native and non-native are meaningful or not. The result showed that there were some differences but these differences were not statistically significant. In addition, a new step called "thanking God" step was discovered throughout this study. And the difference in using this step between native and non-native students was statistically significant.

**Key words:** doctoral dissertation, acknowledgement, move analysis, steps, English native and non-native (Iranian) students.



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**Introduction:**

In recent years a great deal of attention has been given to notion of genre. According to Hyland (2002) the concept of genre relates to literary texts and language learning and teaching. Looking at genre in a new perspective separated it from traditional view that genre was a formal device for classifying texts. One important influence of the notion of genre in applied linguistics comes from the works of John Swales and others who have investigated the use of English in academic and professional settings (Swales, 1987, 1990; Bhatia, 1993; Rubin, 1996). According to Hyland (2003) being aware of rhetorical structures of different genres is helpful for ESP teachers because they can grasp how language is used in various contexts. He has indicated that studying texts reveals that academic and occupational genres are not purely informational but they have an interpersonal tone for their success. Therefore, it is essential for students to have a good command of discourse conventions which characterize scientific writings (Thompson, 2001; Hyland, 2003; Martin, 2003). So this idea encourages ESP practitioners for future explorations in academic settings. As a matter of fact dissertation is an academic genre and acknowledgement is a part of dissertation, so it can be called an academic genre. Giannoni (2002) mentions that acknowledgement is unstable varying from short notes to lengthy stand-alone section. Genette (1997) calls acknowledgement as a Para text category alongside titles, headlines, dedications and illustration. Hyland (2003) believes that acknowledgement in thesis and dissertation demonstrates students' awareness of some academic values as gratitude. He has emphasized that it would be a mistake to look at acknowledgement as a simple catalogue of gratitude since it enjoys rhetorical complexities and academic preferences which is the main interest of discourse and ESP teachers. Hyland (2003) beautifully appreciates the role of acknowledgement in which although physically it is separated from main text but meta-



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discoursally it is one important part of thesis.

There have been many studies that have investigated the importance of genre such as Swales (1981, 1984) and Bhatia and Tay (1987). These researches make students aware of rhetorical structure and schematic patterns of scientific texts. Following these findings some studies investigated the rhetorical structure and schematic pattern of research articles and dissertations.

Researches, so far, have mainly focused on the aspects of written academic English, for example research articles, abstracts and textbooks. In this section, some of major genre analytic studies on academic genres will be presented.

Dudley-Evans (1986) and Dudley-Evans and Hopkins (1988) have examined short M.S.C dissertation in biology from a British university. They showed in their introduction a stronger preference for cyclic pattern which discussed various elements germinates to the main topic at least in comparison to research articles.

Tinggoang & Taylor (1991) examined the introductions of thirty papers in the related fields of geophysics, metallurgy and some other texts. Articles were written by three groups of physical scientists: Anglo- Americans writing in English, Chinese writing in English and Chinese writing in Chinese. The finding shows that there is an underlying rhetorical structure common to all language groups and disciplines but there are systematic variations from this structure. Some differences characterize the disciplines rather than the language or nationality of the writers. It can be seen that each of the four moves of swales scheme was employed by a three groups- Anglo –American / English, Chinese / English, and Chinese/ Chinese, so the result conform to the archetypical 1-2-3-4 structure, and nature of these differences shows ineffectiveness of generalization about the connections between discourse structure and culture- linguistic systems.

Hewing (1993) analyzed the conclusion section of Master of business administration and noticed that they contain three extensive and recognizable parts as, a)to report b)to comment and c)to suggest. Dudley-Evan (1994) examined the discussion sections of biology and highway engineering. He concluded that discussion section in biology not only is longer but posses great differences structurally compared to those of highway engineering. Hyland (1994) has analyzed



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and compared a number of ESP and EAP textbooks to see the coverage given to hedging. He found that the main modal expression using descending orders were: modal verbs, adverbs, adjectives and modal nouns. Swales (1990) has stated that based on close reading of six dissertation from Michigan university he has found that the key differentiating aspects of dissertations writing is much greater use of meta-discourse or writing about evolving text rather than referring to the subject matter.

Peacock (2002) did a research on research articles and analyzed the communicative moves in discussion sections across these disciplines –physics, biology, environmental science, business, language and linguistics, public and social administration, and law with total corpus of 252 RAs. In this study he has used the Dudley- Evans model, however, he discovered some new moves and move cycle not predicted by Dudley- Evans and also found a number of market interdisciplinary and NS LNNS difference in the main part, evaluation.

Giannoni (2002) compared 100 acknowledgement texts of research articles to examine socio-pragmatic construction and textualization of scholarly acknowledgement in English and Italian journals from a genre- analytic perspective. Points of difference or similarity between corpora and academic culture are explored with special attention to such issues as generic complexity and staging personal involvement and peer- reference, authorial responsibility and pragmatic appropriateness, the findings suggest that generic frameworks reflect linguistic borders but also writers follow the national patterns that the communities deserve.

Martin (2003) investigated to the rhetorical variation between the research articles; abstracts written in English for international journals in the area of experimental social science. For this purpose 160 RA, abstracts written in English and Spanish has been selected. The findings reveals that the rhetorical structure of abstracts written in Spanish in the area of experimental social sciences generally reflects the international conventions based on the norms of the English academic discourse community. But some degree of divergence has been found mainly in the frequency of occurrence of the result unit and move 2 in the abstract introductions

Hyland (2003) analyzed the generic structure of dissertation acknowledgement texts written by Contones and Mandarin speakers writing in English.



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He selected twenty MA and twenty PhD dissertations from six academic disciplines written by students at five Hong-Kong universities totaling 3500 words. The disciplines consist of Electronic Engineering (EE) computer science (CS), business studies, (BUS) biology (BIO), applied linguistics and public (AD) ministration (PA). The findings of his study showed that the acknowledgement are complicated and complex textual construes which connect personal and the public, the social and the professional and academic and moral. And also by this generic structure writers are able to balance debts and responsibilities.

In the line with previous researchers, in this part because of the importance of rhetorical studies, some of these studies are presented.

Ventola and Mauraron (1991) showed the value of text analysis in a contrastive framework. Revisiting practices by native English speakers of Finish scientist's articles written in English were examined and writing of Finish scientists was also contrasted to the writing of native English speaking scientists. It was found that Finish writers utilized connectors less frequently in a less varied fashion than native English speaking writers. The Finish writers have problems in utilizing the article system properly, and there were variations in thematic progression- in addition, Mauanen (1993) discovered that Finish writers wrote less "metatext" and they also located their main point later in the text than native English speakers. Hotel-Burkhat (2002) has done an interesting research he states "rhetoric is an intellectual tradition of practices and values associated with public, interpersonal and verbal communication- spoken or written- and it is peculiar to the broad linguistic culture in which one encounters it." (P: 94). He means what is considered an argument in a culture is shaped by the rhetoric of that culture. Hotel- Burkhat refers to a well-known interview of the Ayatollah Khomeini and the Italian journalist Oriana Fallacy analyzed by John stone (1986). In the interview, fallacy utilized a logical argument supportable by verifiable facts. Khomeini proposed answers based on the words of God, in a tradition in which, according to Hottle- Burkhat he was schooled. Not only in the content of an argument, but also in the arrangement and style of argument, were differences observed between two styles of argumentation. Scollon and Scollon (1997) compared the reporting of the news story in 11 Hong- Kong newspapers and 3 People's Republic of China



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papers. Four were English language papers, the rest were written in Chinese. The researchers focused on structural features and point of view as well as the attribution of content to sources. They discovered that both the classical structure and inductive and deductive organizational structures were found in the stories, written in either language concluding that "there is nothing in the linguistic or cognitive structure of either Chinese or English which determines the use of these structures"(p.107). However, they found differences in the practice of quotations across languages. According to the authors concerning the question of quotation, the clearest finding is that quotation is at best ambiguous in Chinese. No standard model has been observed across newspapers in this set and even within newspapers. It is not obvious which portions of the text are attributed to whom in contrast; the English newspapers present a fact of clear and unambiguous quotation.

Kong (1998) used two analytic frameworks, a move structure approach and Mann and Thompson's rhetorical structure analysis (1988) to investigate Chinese business request letters written in companies in Hong Kong, English business letters written by native speakers, and English business letters by non-native speakers whose first language was Chinese (Cantonese). Differences were seen in the occurrence and sequencing of the move as the rhetorical structure between the Chinese letters and English letters. The theoretical explanation in article is rich and draws on theories of politeness and face systems. Differences are attributed to different face relationship involved in business transactions rather than inherent rhetorical patterns of the language. This study disagrees with Kaplan's (1966) characterization of Chinese texts as circular.

Actually in Iran, to the best of researcher's knowledge, there is little research on dissertation and no research on acknowledgement. This study is unique since there has not been any research to compare the doctoral dissertation acknowledgements of native and non-native English students. It is concerned with the identification of schematic moves and sub-moves (steps) that are specific to acknowledgement text of doctoral dissertation in applied linguistics. After identifying the patterns they were compared to find similarities and differences between generic structure of native and non-native acknowledgement texts. Results of this study can help



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EFL, ESP and EAP teachers to teach these patterns to students and students in turn can use these patterns in their writing. Syllabus designers also can include them in their syllabuses of EAP writing .

This study aims to answer following research questions:

1. Is there any difference between type and frequency of move structure in doctoral dissertation acknowledgement texts written by English native and non-native (Iranian) students in applied linguistics?

2. Is there any difference between type and frequency of steps in doctoral dissertation acknowledgement texts written by English native and non-native (Iranian) students in applied linguistics?

3. Is there any difference between acknowledgement scheme in doctoral dissertation written by English native and non-native (Iranian) students in applied linguistics?

Based on the above questions the following null hypotheses were constructed:

1. There is no difference between type and frequency of move structure in doctoral dissertation acknowledgement texts written by English native and non-native (Iranian) students in applied linguistics.

2. There is no difference between type and frequency of schematic steps in doctoral dissertation acknowledgement texts written by English native and non-native (Iranian) students in applied linguistics.

3. There is no difference between acknowledgement scheme in doctoral dissertation written by English native and non-native (Iranian) students in applied linguistics?

## **Method**

### **The corpus of the study**

The corpus of the study compares the use of the academic discourse in English acknowledgement with the parallel texts in Iranian ones. So in order to conduct this study thirty acknowledgement texts were chosen randomly out of doctoral dissertations submitted to some universities in Iran are detailed in appendix1. Also thirty texts of English native students were selected in applied linguistics. The texts of native students have been selected randomly from



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umi.com site out of many texts from different English speaking country universities. Since there were more than one thousand dissertations texts in different sub-fields of applied linguistics, so researcher selected those related to teaching methodology. Some English native universities in which the dissertations were received, are detailed in appendix2.

**Criteria for the selection of the texts**

First, in order to make this study manageable "Applied Linguistics" was selected from among different fields. Within this field, those topics related to TEFL were chosen. Also the texts were limited to those presented from 2000 to 2003. Second, to make sure that the foreign acknowledgements were written by English native speaker students, they were contacted via e-mail. Third, to ensure the naturalness of the data, the lengths of texts were not controlled.

**Procedure**

After selecting some texts from both native and non-native dissertation each text was analyzed separately and moves and sub-moves of each text were extracted on the basis of Hyland's (2003) model. In order to obtain the reliability of analysis, texts were reanalyzed by two professors of university and the result was .73 by using phi coefficient formula. After extracting the moves and sub-moves of each text, first moves and then sub-moves were compared and also two models (one model of native writers' texts and other non-native ones) were obtained based on Hyland's model. Then these two models were compared. After identifying the types and the number of moves and sub-moves they were put in frequency table and chi-square test was utilized to see whether differences are significant or not. To clarify the stages of move analysis the Hyland scheme is presented below. Following that two examples are given: an acknowledgement written by a native English student an another one by non-native (Iranian) students.

**The Hyland model**

1. Reflecting Move: Introspective comment on writer's research experience.
2. Thanking Move: Mapping credit to individuals and institutions.
  - 2.1. Presenting participants: Introducing those to be thanked.
  - 2.2. Thanking for academic assistance: Thanks for intellectual support, ideas, analyzing





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and feedback.

2.3. Thanking for resources: Thanks for data access, technical and financial supports.

2.4 .Thanking for moral support: Thanks for friendship, sympathy, patience .

**3 . Announcing Move:** Public statement of responsibility and inspiration.

3.1. Accepting responsibility: An assertion of authorial responsibility for errors or flaws.

3.2 .Dedicating the thesis: A formal dedication of thesis to individuals.

**Design and data analysis**

The design of the study was ex post facto, because there was no cause and effect relationship. It means that the relationship of factors was discovered without any treatment.

This study sought to discover whether or not there were any difference in the types and frequency of the moves of doctoral dissertation acknowledgements written by English native and non-native (Iranian) students. To determine the frequency of moves and sub-moves, descriptive statistics were utilized. Also to determine the possible differences Chi-square test as an appropriate non-parametric statistical test was run.

**Results**

**Overview**

The purpose of this study was to see whether there were any significant differences including type and frequency of move structure in doctoral dissertation acknowledgments written by English native and non- native students in applied linguistics. After gathering data, the frequency of each move was calculated and the result was subjected to chi-square test to supply answers to research questions. The findings and results are discussed throughout this part. Thus in this part a brief explanation of each move and its steps will be explained.

**1. Reflecting move (move one)**

Reflecting move allows students to consider the understanding that they have gained as a result of research experience and often remember the struggles involved. The difference is not statistically significant, so the first null hypothesis regarding this move is supported.

**2. Thanking move (move two)**

According to Hyland (2003) thanking move is the main move in acknowledgement genre.



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This move occurred in all texts native and non- native ones. It involves four steps, which allows writers to introduce and thank people and institutions for their support. The difference is not statistically significant, so the first null hypothesis, regarding this move cannot be rejected.

### **2.1. Presenting participants (step one of move two)**

The main purpose of this step is to thank those who helped in all, those who helped morally, academically and so on. This step usually happens at initial position which functions as a foundation. This move occurred in 60 percent of native and non- native students' texts So the second null hypothesis regarding this step is supported.

### **2.2. Thanking for academic assistance (step two of move two)**

Hyland (2003) indicates that this is the core step which can be observed in acknowledgement texts. It is within this step that the writer thanks those who helped him/her academically and gave him/her critical comments. Indeed, it refers to those who taught him or played an advisory role, such as teachers, examiners, committee members or even those that had a marginal role. Hyland (2003) discovered that in this corpus 96 percent of students used this step. The present study discovered that all the students both native and non-native used this step in their acknowledgment texts, in other words 100 percent of students used this step. So the second null hypothesis, regarding this step is confirmed.

### **2.3. Thanking for resources (step three of move two)**

This step attempts to acknowledge those that provided some material supports. As Hyland (2003) mentions this step tries to thank those that helped the writer in providing data even by their participation and also thank participants and experts that helped in conducting the research. The results show that there are some differences in using this step between native and non-native students but differences are not statistically significant. So the second null hypothesis, regarding this step is confirmed.

### **2.4. Thanking for moral support (step four of move two)**

The last step in thanking move offers gratitude for friendship, sympathy, patience and care. Hyland (2003) found that 70 percent of all papers in his study included this step. Mostly in this step writers intend to thank their own family and also close friends, especially for their patience



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during writing the dissertation. The difference between native and non-native (Iranian) in using this move is not statistically significant. So the second null hypothesis regarding this step can be confirmed.

### **3. Announcing move (move three)**

This move includes two steps; the first step refers to accepting responsibility for any errors and flaws that occur during writing thesis. The second one is dedicating the thesis to some one. Hyland (2003) discovered that this move occurred in 11 percent of the corpus of his study.

To find differences in using this move, chi-square test was run up. There is no difference in using this move between native and non-native writers. So the first null hypothesis, regarding this move cannot be rejected.

#### **3.1. Accepting responsibility**

In this step the writer of the thesis attempts to accept responsibility for any shortcoming, in data, results and the idea of dissertation. As Hyland (2003) states the writer tries to indicate the ownership of the product and exempt his/her advisor's any flaws. This step occurred in 3.3 percent of non-native writers' texts but none of the native writers used this move.

So the second null hypothesis regarding this step cannot be rejected.

#### **3.2. Dedicating the thesis**

This step seeks to thank those who helped the writer beyond the research context (Hyland, 2003). This step occurred in 10 percent of native writers' acknowledgement texts and 6.6 percent of non-native ones. But the interesting point is that those non-native writers considered a special page for this purpose but only two native writers dedicated a special page for this purpose.

Therefore, it is worth comparing this step in two ways, first with in acknowledgement text and second comparing acknowledgement texts as separate pages. As the frequency of this step within the text mentioned before the frequency of this step out of text for native students was 6.6 percent while for non-native ones was 10 percent.

Some explanations about the dedication step seem to be necessary. This step occurred in applied linguistics dissertations (both native and non-native) on a separate page; however, there is also a difference in using this step. The frequency Table showed that this step occurred in 6.6



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percent of native writers' dissertations but all non-native (Iranian) writers dedicated a special page to it and all the writers used this step, it means that the frequency of using this step was 100 percent. In addition this study showed that 70 percent of these people dedicated their dissertations to their own family and the rest to their academic contributors, friends and some famous people. This step was used by writers both native and non-native (Iranian) as a separate page. So, the difference in using this step between native and non-natives is statistically significant. So the second null hypothesis, regarding this step (out of text) can be rejected.

By investigating both native and non-native (Iranian) acknowledgement texts, in terms of Hyland (2003) scheme a new step was detected. This step does not exist in Hyland (2003) scheme. This is called a step not a move, since this step is a part of thanking move. Here the writer acknowledges God, his creator. In all papers, it occurred in the initial position in thanking move. This step occurred in 3.3 percent of native writers' acknowledgement texts and 26 percent of Non-native students' texts.

Here the writer thanks his creator for helping him/her to write his/her dissertation. The difference is statistically significant. And the second hypothesis regarding this step can be rejected.

The overall schemes of native and non-native students' acknowledgements (Iranian) were compared. As the result shows in Table 1, the observed statistic  $\chi^2 = 12.19$  at probability level .05 with degrees of freedom of 7 is less than the critical value ( $\chi^2 = 14.067$ ) (See the table B).

**Table 1 (the whole scheme)**

Nationality	Moves	Frequency	Percentage
Native	1	2	6.6
	2.1	1	3.3
	2.2	18	60
	2.3	30	100
	2.4	18	60



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	2.5	24	80
	3.1	0	0
	3.2	3	10
Non-native	1	0	0
	2.1	8	26
	2.2	18	60
	2.3	30	100
	2.4	25	83
	2.5	23	76
	3.1	1	3.3
	3.2	2	6.6

**(Table B; the whole scheme)**

$\chi^2$	df
12.19	7

To sum up, there are some differences between Hyland (2003) scheme and the scheme that this study discovered. In the new scheme one new step was unfolded and called "thanking God" step, a step of the thanking move. Here, the new scheme is represented.

1. Reflecting Move: Introspective comment on writer's research experience.
2. Thanking Move: Mapping credit to individuals and institutions.
  - 2.1 Thanking God: Thanking of the creator
  - 2.2. Presenting participants: Introducing those to be thanked.
  - 2.3 .Thanking for academic assistance: Thanks for intellectual support, ideas, analyzing and feedback.
  - 2.4. Thanking for resources: Thanks for data access, technical and financial supports.
  - 2.5 .Thanking for moral support: Thanks for friendship, sympathy, patience .
- 3 .Announcing Move: Public statement of responsibility and inspiration.
  - 3.1 .Accepting responsibility: An assertion of authorial responsibility for errors or flaws.
  - 3.2. Dedicating the thesis: A formal dedication of thesis to individuals.

It is worth mentioning that in this study three new schemes were discovered. The first model is common between native and non-native speakers as elaborated above. The second scheme of non- native (Iranian) English writers who acknowledge in English and the third one is that of the



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native English speakers. In the second model none of the non-native speakers used "reflecting move" (move one). In the third model English native speakers ignored the use of "accepting responsibility" (step one of move three).

Here models of native and non native are represented:

**Non-native acknowledgement model:**

1 .Thanking Move: Mapping credit to individuals and institutions.

1.1 Thanking God: Thanking of the creator

1.2. Presenting participants: Introducing those to be thanked.

1.3 .Thanking for academic assistance: Thanks for intellectual support, ideas, analyzing and feedback.

1.4Thanking for resources: Thanks for data access, technical and financial supports.

1.5 .Thanking for moral support: Thank for friendship, sympathy, patience .

2 Announcing Move: Public statement of responsibility and inspiration.

2.1. Accepting responsibility: An assertion of authorial responsibility for errors or flaws.

2.2. Dedicating the thesis: A formal dedication of thesis to individuals.

**Native students' acknowledgement model:**

1. Reflecting Move: Introspective comment on writer's research experience.

2 .Thanking Move: Mapping credit to individuals and institutions.

2.1 Thanking God: Thanking of the creator

2.2. Presenting participants: Introducing those to be thanked.

2.3 .Thanking for academic assistance: Thanks for intellectual support, ideas, analyzing and feedback.

2.4Thanking for resources: Thanks for data access, technical and financial supports.

2.5 .Thanking for moral support: Thanks for friendship, sympathy, patience .

3 .Announcing Move: Public statement of responsibility and inspiration.

3.1 .Dedicating the thesis: A formal dedication of thesis to individuals.

So here some explanation of non-native (Iranian) model regarding the frequency of each move, their steps and also whether they are optional or obligatory are discussed. According to Hyland (2003) the moves or steps with sixty and more percent occurrences can be regarded as



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obligatory and less than sixty percent is called optional.

Here a common pattern of move and steps that are optional or obligatory are presented. A comparison shows that there is no difference between native and non-native students in using optional and obligatory moves and steps. In the following Table move one (reflecting move) is optional and move two (thanking move) with four obligatory steps is obligatory. And also when two steps of move three (announcing move) are optional, so this move is optional, too.

**Table 4.16(A common pattern of optional and obligatory moves)**

Native and non-native		
Move	Obligatory	Optional
1		✓
2.1		✓
2.2	✓	
2.3	✓	
2.4	✓	
2.5	✓	
3.1		✓
3.2		✓

To sum up, in the analysis of native and non-native acknowledgement texts some differences have been observed although such differences are not statistically significant in most cases. Mostly native and non-native writers follow Hyland (2003) scheme.

The first question that examines differences of type and frequency in using main moves between native and non-native, the statistical analysis revealed that these differences are not statistically significant. Also it was observed that none of non-native (Iranian) students used the first move (reflecting move), so the second null hypothesis cannot be rejected, either.

The second question intends to find the differences in using the type and frequency of steps. To answer this question, the statistical analysis showed that there were some differences. First, English native students did not use step one of move three (accepting responsibility). Second, there was significant difference in using a new unfolded step, "thanking God step" between English native and non- native (Iranian) students; therefore, the second null hypothesis,



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regarding this step is not confirmed.

To answer the third question which intends to investigate the differences in using the whole acknowledgement scheme between native and non-native students, the statistical analysis shows that the differences are not statistically significant, so the third null hypothesis can not be rejected.

Another point that has been observed in both native and non-native dissertations was specification of a special page to dedication, in addition to mentioning this step in acknowledgement page. The number of the students who used this page was surprising. All the non-native students (Iranian) used this step in a separate page and most of them dedicated their dissertations to their own family while few native students have this page separately in their dissertations.

However there are some differences between the Hyland (2003) model and the new model that this study unfolded. In the new scheme a new step was found in thanking move which is called "thanking God step". This step was observed in both non-native and native students' texts, although its number in non-native texts was greater. These differences were statistically significant.

## **Discussion**

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

Generally, native and non-native students follow the Hyland (2003) scheme and the differences between native model and non-native students' model were not statistically significant. This can be attributed to the fact that most non-native (Iranian) students when writing this genre take note from graduate students' dissertations or even imitate native speakers' instances of this genre. It can be said that in Hyland's (2003) investigation of the PhD and MA students' acknowledgement texts great differences were not found in using this model in different disciplines between MA and PhD students'. He concluded that students imitate each other.

However, some differences in using the main moves were observed, which were not statistically significant. Few differences in using these moves also can be explained by the idea of imitation. Hyland (2003) stated that during his study he had interviewed some students and





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they reported that they received little instruction in this genre, stating that they generally looked at other dissertations to get ideas for structure, expression and content. So in this study it was noticed that students by imitating other students' dissertations they have written their own acknowledgement texts. Even this imitation can be referred to lack of information about academic convention. Coolly and Lewkowicz (1997) discovered that Hong-Kong postgraduate students had problems with discourse elements and conventions.

However, by comparing each step, some differences were observed: in the new model both native and non-native students used a new step, which is called "thanking God step". The differences in using this step between both groups were statistically significant. These differences can be attributed to the cultural and religious issues. Since in the Iranian culture everyone usually starts his/her work by the name of God and finishes it by thanking to God, so it is natural if such a step is to be found even in dissertation acknowledgements. Hottle-Burkhart (2001) in an interview of an Italian Journalist with Imam Khomeini the Journalist, Fallacy, used logical arguments supportable by verifiable facts but Khomeini offered answer based on words of God in a tradition in which according to Hottle-Burkhart, he was schooled.

By comparing native and non-native (Iranian) texts it was observed that non-native students lack reflecting move (move one). It implies that non-native students do not consider this move very important. It is because of assuming the writing of dissertations as their own duty. Also ignoring the step one of move three (the accepting responsibility for any error or flaws) can be attributed to the cultural issues of western countries in which accountability for what one does is not given great importance.

Specification of a special page to dedication was seen in both groups' acknowledgements, but native and non-native students' differences were surprising as all non-native (Iranian) students add this page to their dissertations and few native students had this page in their dissertations. The specification of a special page may be due to the Iranian culture in which the concept of family is very important. Even they may think by dedicating a special page they reveal their love and respect more effectively than mentioning it within the acknowledgement texts.



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**Implication and application**

Genre analysis studies can be applicable to teaching English in professional settings. These studies can contribute to our understanding of genre structure. Comparing generic structure of texts belonging to the genre but different disciplines, we can distinguish between textual characteristics that are related to disciplinary norms and those that are features of that specific genre.

Being aware of the structure of genre and other generic conventions in discourse community is a must; these conventions must be taken up by writers in different situations. In deed "successful achievement of communicative purposes outlined in a specific discourse community depends on such communicative knowledge conventionalized linguistics and discoursed recourses" (Bhatia, 1993: 1). It has been observed that many students are not sufficiently aware of move and move structures. Salahshor (1999) found that Iranian academic centers have little information about generic conventions and regulation so this lack of genre awareness has been one barrier in their academic communication. Barzgar (2002) compared and analyzed the introductions of some research articles written by Iranian and non Iranian (English) researchers. He found some inconsistencies in the number of some moves. So it is necessary for syllabus designers to include these subjects in preparing EAP materials. By including some subjects, as move structure of articles and dissertation and their different parts students instead of imitating from each others' writing can follow a common model. Also teachers should prepare acknowledgement texts of different disciplines and by giving the model and ask students to do the analysis or write some acknowledgement texts.

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### Appendices

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