Genre Based Analysis of Acknowledgement Texts Written by Pakistani Writers

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to analyze and describe the structure of acknowledgement texts written by Pakistani authors in the light of two-tier genre model presented by Giannoni (2002). The corpus of this study, consisting of 3 samples, has been taken from the books written by Pakistani authors through convenient sampling technique. Analysis of the corpus shows that the acknowledgements written by Pakistani authors of books do not conform to the said model and vary in structure construction process and linguistic choices which are affected by cultural expectations, social norms and socio-cultural conventions. The analysis also shows that Pakistani acknowledgements are different from the acknowledgements from other cultures. Plus, Pakistani acknowledgements have been observed to be complex and dynamic in nature and characterized by hybridism. The study concludes that the acknowledgement writing is a matter of serious concern for Pakistani authors and shows intensified and strong sense of indebtedness and gratitude.

Keywords: Acknowledgements; Construction of acknowledgements; Effects of socio-cultural aspects on acknowledgement writing; Genre analysis; Structure of acknowledgements

Introduction

"Writing acknowledgment text", say Davaei & Karbalaei (2013: 219),"is a separate page that academic writers of dissertations and books devote it toward those whom they would like to give their thanks for any kind of help received from others during the process of writing". According to Yang (2012), writing of acknowledgement texts is a common practice in academia which, in the words of Williams (2017), shows written appreciation remarks for the extraordinary efforts of organizations and persons that have played significant roles in the completion process of someone's article, book, dissertation, project, report, thesis, etc. Acknowledgements mean that though the organizations and the people do not have a direct hand in completing the work, yet they have great contribution in the form of encouragement, funding and cooperation (Cronin, 1995 and Shuttleworth, 2009). However, acknowledgements do not involve just the listing of the acknowledged persons (Yang, 2012). Instead, according to Hyland (2003: 256), they "are sophisticated and complex contextual constructs which bridge the personal and the public, the social and the professional and the academic and the lay". Writing of acknowledgements is an excited reaction. It allows the writers to convey warm feelings of gratitude for the people who have helped them complete their work in a formal way (Dunams, 2010).

The role of contributors has great value for the writers. For, their valuable contribution does not only make their work easier for them, but also it enhances the quality of their work. Sometimes, it becomes hard for the writers to express the full extent of what their help actually means to them (Greenleaf, 2018). Thus, it is the acknowledgements, which provide the writers with particular space

to signify interpersonal relationships by employing rhetorical devices (Yang, 2012) and formally appreciate the efforts of their contributors (Ragsdale, 2016). These acknowledgements are written in different patterns by different writers, which reflect a writer's personal identity as well as contextual, conventional, cultural and social values, different rhetoric and thought patterns (Yang, 2012 and Rofess & Mahmood, 2015), unequal frequency of language use (Kaplan, 1987 and Nkemleke, 2006) and socio-cultural variations are also found in acknowledgements which affect the expressions of thanking acts (Cheng, 2012; Yang, 2012; Davaei & Karbalaei, 2013 and Rofess & Mahmood, 2015).

Writing of acknowledgements has become an important part of books, research publications and thesis writings (Rofess & Mahmood, 2015), but still they are the most ignored entities in the studies (Giannoni, 2002; Hyland, 2003, 2004a, 2004b; Swales, 2004; Yang, 2012; Rofess & Mahmood, 2015 and Yasmin & Mahmood 2107). This situation can result in inadequate knowledge of acknowledgement patterns which further can result in improper acknowledgement writing (Rofess & Mahmood, 2015). This study aims at presenting the genre based analysis of acknowledgements written by Pakistani authors of books. It also aims to investigate that how Pakistani writers structure their acknowledgements and which lexical and syntactic elements are used by them in expressions of thanking acts. This study can be of much significance. It can help the writers write conventional or customized acknowledgements. It can also prove helpful in designing conventional and customized acknowledgements for the purpose of teaching to the students. The research can also invite the interest of the scholars and researchers and thus resulting in the presentation of a suitable pattern of the acknowledgements' writing particularly for Pakistani authors.

A limitation of the study is that its sample is very small and has been taken from three books only. Therefore, the results of this study cannot be generalized. For this purpose, a large scale study with a bigger sample is required.

Literature Review

The study of acknowledgements has passed through different stages of three different approaches i.e. register approach (Halliday, 1964), functional approach (Selinker & Trimble, 1976) and Genre Approach (Bhatia, 1993 and Swales, 1990).

The register approach, presented by Halliday (1964), claims that different varieties of the text can be differentiated from each other on the basis of relative frequencies of lexico-grammatical features. This approach offers the justification of why certain forms are more or less frequently found in a specific variety. On the other hand, proponents of functional approach (Trimble & Selinker, 1976) have tried to fill an important gap by correlating grammatical function and choice. The limitation of this approach is that it has focused on the scientific texts only. It has failed to produce any generalized results.

The genre approach, by Swales (1987, 1990) and Bhatia (1993) has not only embraced the positive features of above approaches, but it has also guarded against their potential pitfalls (Farukh, 2005 and Ahmad, Hayat & Farukh, 2018). Actually genre approach, says Bhattia (1993), has highly conventional and structured constraints like lexis and moves which are utilized by the members of a community in communication. Quite the same view about genre has been shared by Behnam & Golpour (2014: 173) as "one of the research lines in genre studies received extensive attention from researchers is move analysis" (p. 173). "Move analysis in genre studies", according to Nwogu (1997), is the identification of schematic units. Move analysis, in simpler words, is the study of moves which analyzes the structural patterns of the texts (Swales, 1990; Salager-Mayer, 1992;

Nwogu, 1997; Samraj, 2002; Yang & Allison, 2003; Swales, 2004; Samraj, 2005; Pho, 2008 and Atai, 2012).

The significant feature of genre approach is that it recognizes the language and analyzes discourses in the light of specific conventions of the discourse community. It is due to the contribution of the said approach that these days genre is being considered as the most influential and powerful tool of language description by the scholars of linguistics. Another significant feature of this approach is that it has triggered a number of investigations in academic and occupational situations (Farukh, 2005; Behnam & Golpour, 2014; Rofess & Mahmood, 2015 and Ahmad, Hayat & Farukh, 2018). Genre analysis, in fact, helps better understand the dynamics of the situation based language use (Lee, 2001). Not only this, genre analysis also helps the researchers identify that how different texts are organized and distinguished in conventional and socio-cultural contexts for communication. Plus it presents plain and systematic explanations of the ways language functions in a society (Hyland, 2004). It is for these reasons that most of the researchers have relied on genre analysis approach for the study of acknowledgement texts (Yang, 2012 and Rofess & Mahmood, 2015).

Giannoni's (2002) article namely 'Worlds of gratitude: a contrastive study of acknowledgement texts in English and Italian research articles', published in Applied Linguistics Journal, has proved a significant effort to present and apply a two-tier genre model which established patterned model for the explanation of generic structures. His study concludes that generic structures are affected by the national patterns of disciplinary communities. Ginnoni's model had also a significant influence on later studies particularly in the presentation of models by Hyland (2003, 2004) and Hyland & Tse (2004)

Zhao & Jiang (2010) analyzed acknowledgement texts by Chinese speakers in China utilizing a corpus from English-related disciplines and observed that the Acknowledgement structures had some structural variations which were attributed to academic, cultural and mental differences in different contexts. They also observed that Moves 1 and 2, particularly Step 3.2, were missing in their corpus. Still in another study, on Acknowledgement texts written by Taiwanese students, Yang (2012) argued that Taiwanese students use direct, emotional and precise rhetorical language to pay gratitude. He listed academic conventions, institutional preferences, the language context and socio-cultural factors as the causes behind this inclination. Cheng & Kuo (2011) studied acknowledgements, written by Chinese speakers in Taiwan, in the field of applied linguistics. They observed that Taiwanese writers express thankfulness explicitly but they use complex strategies for this purpose.

Deviations in the arrangement of moves and further steps and in ways to say thank(s) to the people for their help have also been observed in other contexts. For example, a new step was observed in Muslim cultures from the corpus of Al-Ali (2006, 2010) by Arabic authors. He noted the existence of a unique step i.e. 'thanking Allah (God)'. Furthermore, these writers had also been found to use contextualized components in their thanking acts. Similarly, Lasaki (2011) in his study compares acknowledgements written by Iranian native and non-native writers and discovers the presence of a new step i.e. 'thanking God'. He adds that non native Iranians use this step more frequently than the native ones. According to Nkemleke's (2006) acknowledgers use nominal/titular phrases and deferential strategies to acknowledge their advisors, superiors and supervisors. Similarly, Afful & Mwinlarru (2010) argue that the authors use different discourse, grammar and lexis to map their identity and show their relationships with people being acknowledged. Likewise, Hyland & Tse (2004) argue that there are different linguistic features to realize the significance of thanking. The results of these studies show that the nominal expressions are the most frequently used expressions to pay the gratitude. The studies also indicate that most of the writers feel

comfortable to use first person pronoun 'I' in their acknowledgements. Scrivener (2009) adds to it saying that the acknowledgers are inclined to include more and more persons to thank to and they have dramatically shifted from third person to first person 'I' thus they have made the acknowledgements less formal. It is important to note here that these days the use of personal pronouns 'I/We' has increased in academic genres. Plus the writers of different discourse communities are not following the same tradition of the use of personal pronouns. 'I' has been stated to be in maximum use than all other pronouns. This variation is culture, convention, norms and discipline bound (Yasmin & Mahmood, 2017). Different writers use first person pronouns with different intent i.e. for the purpose of communication with readers and "self mention-markers" (Yasmin & Mahmood, 2017: 255), exhibition of personal input in academic discourse (Kuo, 1999), self promotion (Harwood, 2005), making of claims and arguments (Hyland, 2003), establishment of relationship with community and readers (Sayah & Hashemi, 2014). Still another study by Rofess & Mahmood (2015), on acknowledgements written by Pakistani writers, generalizes that Pakistani acknowledgement writers follow a general pattern while writing their acknowledgements. They add that Pakistani acknowledgements are highly complex, elaborated and distinct in variety and are influenced by socio-cultural factors with Islamic colouring. DA writing is not just a formality for Pakistani writers. Instead, they take it as a serious concern. Pakistani authors are aware of acknowledgement writing trends and their acknowledgement structures are a unique blend of different models.

To be brief, the construction of acknowledgements is dynamic in its nature and is characterized by hybridism. The reason is that acknowledgements are shaped in accordance with novel and localized socio-cultural practices. Different strategies and linguistic features, used in acknowledgements such as academic conventions, cultural expectations, institutional practices, linguistic background and social norms affect the construction process of acknowledgements. (Bhatia, 2004; Hyland, 2004a; Scrivener, 2009; Al-Ali, 2010; Lasaki, 2011; Yang, 2012; Davaei & Karbalaei, 2013 and Rofess & Mahmood, 2015).

This study aims to analyze acknowledgement texts penned by Pakistani authors for their books with an identical ethnic background. This study also aims to investigate whether socio-cultural differences affect the linguistic choices and structure construction process in realizing the thanking acts. Furthermore, it also aims to know that, whether or not, acknowledgements written by Pakistani writers are similar to those in previous studies in terms of generic structures and linguistic features. Still another aim is to see how strong sense of gratitude is reflected in acknowledgements written by Pakistani authors and what type of structural pattern is followed by Pakistani acknowledgement writers.

Methodology

The corpus of this study consists of three acknowledgement texts taken from three books composed in English by Pakistani writers, having experience of living in local, European and Western countries. The corpus was selected through convenient sampling technique based on easy availability/access of books having acknowledgement pages. Names of the books include; 'English Fiction in Pakistan. Focus on Qaisra Shahraz' (2015), 'Pakistan: A Personal History' (2011) and 'I am Malala: How one girl stood up for education and changed the world.' (2014) written by Huda Majeed (HM), Imran Khan (IK) and Malala Yousafzai (MY). The texts of the acknowledgements of the said books were read and suitable examples of different moves were separated from the main texts and then the quantity and frequency of the moves and lexical devices were calculated manually.

Corpus Analysis

The corpus has been analyzed in the light of 'two-tier' moves/sub-moves model by Giannoni (2002) as presented in the table below;

Table 1: Giannoni's (2002) two-tier model

MOVE	STEP	TITLE
1		**Introductory Move**
	1.1	Citing parent texts or events
	1.2	Acknowledging those involved
	1.3	Asserting community authorship
2		**Main Move**
	2.1	Acknowledging institutional support
	2.2	Acknowledging individual contributions
	2.3	Accepting responsibility

Results and Discussion

Moves and Steps in the Corpus

The absence/presence/frequency of moves and sub-moves in accordance with Giannoni's (2002) model has been given as under;

Table 2: Frequency of moves in the corpus

MOVE	STEP	IK	HM	MY
1	1.1	1	1	8
	1.2	2	2	8
	1.3	0	1	4
2	2.1	0	0	2
	2.2	0	0	0
	2.3	0	0	0

Results in the table show that the frequency of the moves and their steps varies from author to author. Acknowledgement by Imran Khan (IK) comprises only of first two steps of the first move with least frequency. Third step of the first move and second complete move is missing in his acknowledgement text. Similarly, the acknowledgement by Huda Majeed (HM) also consists of the same structure as Imran Khan (IK) with a slight difference i.e. her acknowledgement comprises of all the three steps of the first move. Like (IK) she also has missed the second move. On the other hand, Malala Yousafzai (MY) has written first move completely along with first step of the second move. But she has missed last two steps of the main move. Another unique step 'thanking God', which is in popular use in the acknowledgements written by the writers from Muslim cultures, has also been observed in the corpus. But it has been written by one author only i.e. (MY). The other two authors have missed it.

It is thus evident that Pakistani writers do not write their acknowledgement texts according to the model. Instead, they follow their own unique pattern. They seem not to be aware of the moves and sub moves. This result validates the results of the study by Rofess & Mahmood (2015) which show that Pakistani acknowledgements neither conform to Hyland's (2004) nor to Al-Ali's (2010) models.

These studies also conform to the present study in many ways i.e. in the corpus of these studies sometimes some step(s) or full move has been observed to be missing. Another conformity of the results of this study to the results of said the studies includes; complex structures, Islamic colouring, social influence, borrowing/adapting of the patterns, focus on the word 'help' etc. However, a number of differences in the results of the present study have also been observed as compared to the results of the mentioned studies such as; most of the structures are not well organized, there are no additional moves, writers are not well aware of acknowledgement writing practices at international level.

Length of Acknowledgements

The present corpus consists of a total of 1,284 running words. The length of the acknowledgements ranges from 49 to 869 words with an average of 428 words. Following table gives a clear picture of the length of acknowledgement texts.

Table 3: Number of words used in the corpus

AUTHOR	WORDS	PERCENTAGE
IK	49	3.8
QS	366	28.5
MY	869	67.7
TOTAL	1284	100

The table shows that the shortest acknowledgement text has been written by Imran Khan (IK) which comprises of 49 words only (forms 3.8% of the whole corpus) and the longest acknowledgement has been written by Malala Yousafzai (MY) which consists of 869 words (forms 67.7% of the whole corpus). It means that shortest acknowledgements written by Pakistani authors consist of near about 49 words whereas longest acknowledgements comprise of 869 words. The average of words in acknowledgements is 428 which further means that Pakistani books' acknowledgements consist of an average of 428 words. These results, however, did not match with the results of the study of Rofess & Mahmood (2015). Their study was on the Ph. D acknowledgements. According to the results of their study average number of words in Pakistani dissertations is 372.3. However, it is important to note here that their study was on dissertation acknowledgements. Whereas, this study focuses on the acknowledgements of books. Therefore, a further study is required to compare both types of acknowledgements to have a clear understanding of the differences.

Lexis of Gratitude

All the three authors have used different lexis to pay gratitude to the acknowledgees in their acknowledgement texts. The most frequently used words are 'debt', 'grateful', 'owe', 'thankful', 'thank(s)' etc. The frequency of the use of these words has been given hereunder;

Table 4: Frequency of lexis of gratitude

WORDS	IK	HM	MY
Debt	1	0	0
Grateful	1	1	0
Gratitude	1	1	0
Owe	1	1	0
Thank(s)	0	0	13

The results show that the authors have used different lexis of gratitude in their acknowledgements with different frequency. It is evident that the less frequently used word is 'debt' which has only once been used in the acknowledgement by Imran Khan (IK). The other words such as 'grateful', 'gratitude' and 'owe' have only been used twice in the acknowledgements by Imran Khan (IK) and Hadia Majeed (HM). Malala Yousafzai (MY), on the other hand, did not use any of these words i.e. 'debt', 'grateful', 'gratitude' and 'owe'. She has only relied on the use of word 'thank(s)' which she has used with highest frequency i.e. 13 times as compared to the other authors. An interesting comparison can be noticed with the use of the word 'debt' by Pakistani and English and Italian authors in a study by Giannoni (2002). According to Ginnoni (2002) both English and Italian authors avoid the use of the word 'debt' due to different national monetary metaphors. As mentioned earlier, in methodology, the authors of the corpus of this study have an experience of living with the English, perhaps, that is why they also have learnt to avoid the use of the said word. However, it cannot be categorically affirmed. Further study with bigger sample is required to confirm this practice.

Use of Personal Pronoun

The use of personal pronoun 'I' has been observed to be in a greater frequency. It has been used 1, 11 and 15 times by Imran Khan (IK), Huda Majeed (HM) and Malala Yousafzai (MY) respectively. Thus, the minimum use of the said pronoun has been made by (IK) and the maximum use of the said word has been made by (MY). The average use of first person 'I' has been found to be 9 times.

These results conform to the results of the study by Giannoni (2002). According to Ginnoni (2002) English and Italian authors do not avoid the use of first person pronoun I. Same has been observed in the acknowledgements of Pakistani authors in a greater frequency. The results of this study also match with the results of a study by Yasmeen & Mahmood (2017) which claims that 'I' is the most frequently used pronoun by Pakistani writers. The reason behind such an increased use of first personal pronouns is that, in modern times, their use has become a popular fashion in academic writings. Writers are using it with different intentions i.e. for "self mention-markers" (Yasmeen & Mahmood, 2017: 255), exhibition of self input in academic discourse (Kuo, 1999), self-promotion (Harwood, 2005), making claims and arguments (Hyland, 2002) and establishment of a relationship with the readers (Sayah & Hashemi, 2014). Pakistani authors might have also used first personal pronoun 'I' in their acknowledgements with all of these intentions.

Use of the Words 'Help' and 'Encouragement'

Use of the words like 'help' and 'encouragement' has also been observed in the corpus of the study. The use of word 'help' has been seen 7 times whereas the use of word 'encouragement' has been seen 3 times in the corpus. Thus, it is evident that Pakistani authors use the words encouragement and help in their acknowledgements.

The results of this study, concerning particularly with the use of word 'help', conform to the results of the studies by Giannoni (2002) and Rofess & Mahmood (2015). Both of these studies observed the use of the word 'help' in their corpus. However, Giannoni's (2002) results show another aspect regarding the use of the said word. According to him English writers focus greatly on the use of the word 'help' which, in the view of Giannoni (2002), might be the indication of utilitarian approach of Anglo-Saxons. Giannoni (2002) adds further that Italian authors do not use the word help, instead, they use the word 'value' at its place which refers to the value favoured understanding of the Italians.

However, the case is different in Pakistani context. According to Rofess & Mahmood (2015) acknowledgement writing is not just a formality for Pakistani writers. Rather, it is a matter of serious concern for them. Therefore, they are more sensitive in paying indebtedness even for the

slightest help. This might be the indication of their humility as a response to the help provided to them and giving due worth to their benefactors. In other simple words it might be the reflection of their strong sense of gratitude paid with extreme seriousness.

Naming, Signing and Mentioning of Dates

The tradition of naming, signing and mentioning of dates, has been avoided by the writers of the acknowledgements of this study. Only one author i.e. Malala Yousafzai has written her name at the end of her acknowledgement. This shows that majority of Pakistani authors avoid writing of their names, signing and mentioning of dates at the end of their acknowledgements. These results, however, do not conform to the results of the study by Rofess & Mahmood (2015). In their study, this section has been found in greater frequency i.e. 66%. On the basis of these results, they claim that Pakistani "writers properly sign off their acknowledgements with a signature. Signing off signature comprises name of the author, date of completing or submitting the thesis, and the name of the place (city) where the research was conducted and completed" (p.141). But, in the present corpus no such tradition has been observed. It is important to note that Rofess & Mahmood's (2015) study was on thesis acknowledgements whereas this study is analyzing the acknowledgements from the books. Therefore, to have a clear understanding of the reasons of differences in results a comparative study, on books' and thesis' acknowledgements, is required.

Conclusion

The construction of acknowledgements written by Pakistani authors is structurally complex and dynamic in its nature and is characterized by hybridism. The reason is that Pakistani writers shape their acknowledgements in accordance with varied and localized socio-cultural practices and linguistic choices and structure construction process involved in the realization of thanking acts is affected by socio-cultural conventions, expectations and norms. The acknowledgements written by Pakistani writers are different from the acknowledgements written by writers from the other cultures in terms of generic structures and linguistic features. Plus acknowledgement writing is a matter of serious concern for Pakistani authors and shows intensified and strong sense of indebtedness and gratitude.

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