# A Linguistic Analysis of Farewell Emails by Malaysian Workers

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## ABSTRACT

*Email has been one of the most important means of communication in a workplace since the 1990s. This scenario comes about since email can disseminate information to different groups of people simultaneously. Information that is frequently disseminated via email includes introducing new employees, sending memos of meetings and bidding farewells. Of all types of emails, researchers have paid little attention to farewell emails. Essentially, some of the reasons to bid farewells are due to transfers or retirements. This study adapts a qualitative approach by examining farewell emails from a linguistic perspective. For this purpose, 12 emails were selected and analysed using a genre-based approach. The authors of the emails were employees of a university who differed in terms of their gender, position and reasons for leaving. As the setting of the present study is local, all emails were written in Malay. The findings revealed seven moves, some of which were realised through several steps. All the identified moves were classified as Typical since they had a high percentage of occurrences. The analysis also revealed some differences between the farewell emails sent by staff being relocated and retired. The study could benefit workplace communication and prepare future writers of this genre on what is expected and should be written in their last emails to leave a good impression on their colleagues.*

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Communication is key to a company's success, regardless of the type of business it conducts. One of the most important platforms for communication is email. Since the 1990s, following the introduction of the internet, email has permeated the world of workplace communication. Since then, the majority of workplace communication, whether for individuals or for different groups of people, has been done through email. This happens because emails can disseminate information simultaneously and can replace other forms of communication such as written memos, telephone conversations and face-to-face meetings (Waldvogel, 2007). It is therefore not surprising that the number of email interactions (received and sent) in the workplace has increased tremendously. In 2012, for example, the number of daily interactions was 89 billion. It was predicted that this number would rise to 143 billion in 2016 (Radicati, 2012). In a more recent development, Ceci (2022) found that there were 319.6 billion email interactions in 2021 and that this number will increase to 376.4 billion by 2025. As email is crucial for workplace communication, more activity takes place in work emails than in personal emails. An example of a workplace email is shown in Figure 1.
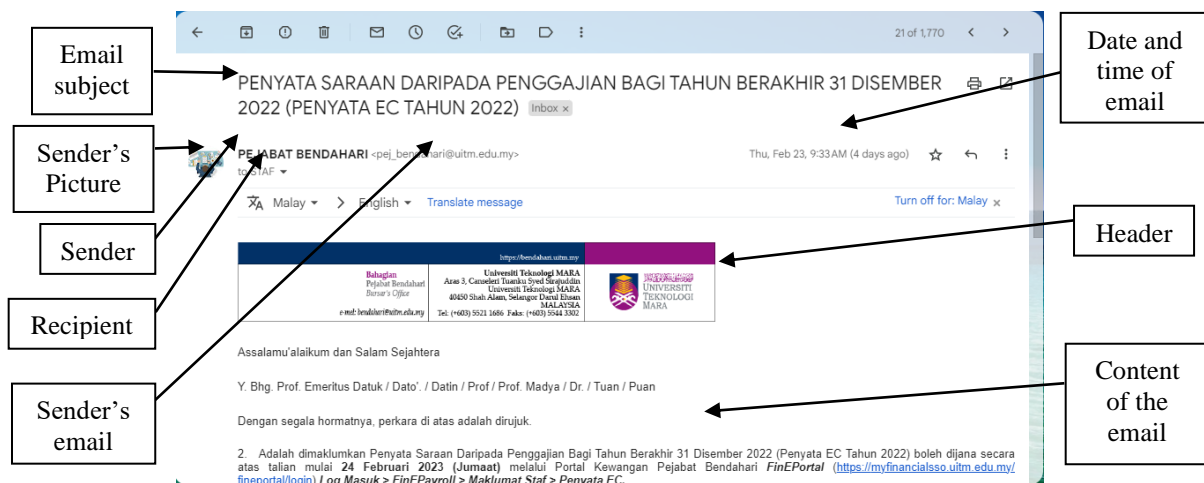


Figure 1: Sample of an email

Emails serve different purposes depending on their category. Personal emails are often used for personal purposes, such as sending CVs to companies, sending large files to personal contacts or sharing important documents with other people. They are usually handled through personal emails as they do not concern work-related matters. However, workplace or professional emails serve other purposes, such as requesting, ordering, complaining, informing, offering, refusing and inviting (Park et al., 2021). The act of informing can be for a variety of reasons, such as introducing new employees, sending memos from meetings, or saying goodbye. Of all the types of emails, farewell emails have received scant attention from scholars hitherto. The reasons for goodbyes are mainly relocations or retirements. The need to conduct this study also stems from the fact that there are few studies in Malaysia on emails in professional settings. This could be due to the unwillingness of Malaysian companies to share their written documents (Yeoh, 2014). To shed light on this issue, the present study aimed to examine the farewell emails of Malaysian employees working at a local university from a linguistic perspective. However, it should be noted that the present study only focused on the content of the email as other features of the email are automatically generated by the workplace email system. This study was guided by the following research questions to understand the rhetorical features of emails:

i.    How are farewell emails rhetorically organised in terms of the move-step structure?

ii.     What is the typicality of each move and step of the emails?

iii.    How is the structure of farewell emails sent by staff being relocated similar to or different from those sent by retired staff?

## 2. GENRE ANALYSIS OF RHETORICAL MOVES

Genre analysis refers to the study of language use in a specific setting (Swales, 1990). It is a branch of discourse analysis that helps researchers make a connection between language and text types. Genre analysis often involves identifying the structural, linguistic and social features of a particular genre. It also provides room for understanding how these features contribute to the meaning and purpose of the text. Hitherto, a plethora of previous studies have focused on examining the structure of a genre. These studies have mainly served to determine the rhetorical features of a genre, which is also one of the main aims of the present study.

Basically, genres can be divided into three main categories: academic, professional and homely. Thus far, scholars have paid the most attention to academic genres. Presumably, when move analysis was first introduced by Swales (1981, 1990), the focus was on introduction of dissertations, which is an example of an academic genre. Some of academic genres studied include conference abstracts (Povolná, 2016; Samar et al., 2014; Yusob & Jelani, 2022), dissertation abstracts (Jalilifar & Dastjerdi, 2010; Kosasih, 2018; Suhadi, 2023), various sections of journal articles (Cheng, 2019; Fallahi & Erzi, 2003; Gao & Pramoolsook, 2023), academic papers (Yaakob, 2014) and academic presentations (Morton, 2009; Singh et al., 2019).

Swales' work was further expanded by Bhatia (1993), who shifted the focus from academic to professional genres. Some of the genres he highlighted were sales promotional letters, job application letters and legal documents. As a result, more studies were conducted on professional genres from different disciplines. The genres are usually genres used in professional settings, such as workplace and public relations-related documents. Some examples of professional genres are sections of annual reports (Aziz et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2019; Yusob et al., 2022), tender documents (Afida et al., 2020), book and product reviews (Dachoviboon, 2019; Skalicky, 2013), business letters (Gillaerts & Gotti, 2005; Pinto Dos Santos, 2002; Zamanian, 2014) and emails (Park et al., 2021; Van Herck et al., 2022; Zarei & Darani, 2013). Since the focus of this study is on farewell emails, the following section discusses emails as a genre in more detail.

The advancement of the genre-based approach has also led researchers to study homely genres. This type of genre often includes texts that are closely related to personal life events. A famous example of the homely genre is wedding invitations. The genre has been examined in countries where English is a foreign language, such as Egypt (Gomaa & Abdel-Malak, 2010), Iran (Faramarzi et al., 2015), Iraq (Al-Zubaidi, 2017), Jordan (Amjad & Riaz, 2020; Banikalef, 2020; Tawalbeh, 2021) and Pakistan (Hussain et al., 2021; Nisar et al., 2022; Yasmin et al., 2019). In addition to wedding invitations, genre analysts have also studied other texts such as obituaries (Al-Ali, 2005; Elekaei et al., 2015; Jalilifar et al., 2014; Jibril, 2019), cooking recipes (Afful, 2017; Klenová, 2010), instruction manuals (Cristobalena, 2018) and even epitaphs (Karimnia & Jafari, 2019). The different types of genres that have been studied so far prove that move analysis is a useful tool for analysing different types of texts.

## 3. EMAIL AS A GENRE

The widespread use of emails began in the late 20th century. Since then, emails have been used as one of the most important means of communication. Researchers around the world have also used emails as variables in their studies. However, there is still much to be studied when it comes to emails, especially from a genre-based perspective. Thus far, several genre studies have been conducted analysing the rhetorical moves of emails. They can be segregated into different categories, such as business emails (Carrió-Pastor & Calderón, 2015; Mehrpour & Mehrzad, 2013; Qasim et al., 2015), marketing emails (Cheung, 2008; McVeigh, 2020; Vanmulken & Vandermeer, 2005) and spam emails (Barron, 2006; Zarei & Darani, 2013).

As an essential communication tool, email writing has become increasingly important in workplace communication in recent decades (Park et al., 2021). Both Mehrpour & Mehrzad (2013) and Qasim et al. (2015) found that employees use certain genre features in their business emails, such as a formal tone, the use of standard phrases and expressions, and targeting the recipient's needs. Their study on comparative genre analysis of English business emails also found some differences between Iranians and native English speakers – such as the use of longer emails with more details and a stronger focus on building a relationship with the recipient in Iranians' emails (Mehrpour & Mehrzad, 2013). Pakistani employees, on the other hand, use business emails in ways that reflect their cultural and organisational context, and that the genre features of business emails play an important role in shaping workplace communication in Pakistan (Qasim et al., 2015), suggesting that these differences in genre characteristics may be influenced by cultural and linguistic factors.

Due to the widespread use and popularity of the email platform, more linguists have been concerned with the structure of marketing emails. According to Cheung (2008), the rise of new media has influenced the way persuasive messages are composed in direct marketing. In the study, he examines the use of hyperlinks as a means of inducing readers to take certain actions, such as clicking on a particular link. The results of the study highlight that this new feature allows for concise and efficient communication in the limited space of marketing materials, and also suggest that these multimedia elements can have a positive impact on capturing readers' attention and encouraging their engagement (Cheung, 2008). McVeigh (2020) also concurred with the findings as his research showed that email marketing has similarities to direct marketing; the language often contains commands or prompts. The method of analysis used in his study found that this is because the buttons that prompt the reader to take action need to be short and concise, and the use of commands allows the writer to address the reader indirectly without taking up extra space.

Another type of email that has come to the attention of linguists is unsolicited commercial email, better known as spam email. In her quest to gain insight into the linguistic and rhetorical features of spam messages, Barron (2006) found that spam emails employ a number of strategies, such as exaggerated claims, urgency and appeals for financial gain, to deceive and seduce recipients. In addition, the study unveils patterns of linguistic variation, including intentional misspellings and the use of multiple languages employed to bypass spam filters and appear more legitimate (Barron, 2006). Similarly, Zarei & Darani (2013) also observed variations in the linguistic features and cultural references used by spammers in each language. The findings highlight the adaptability of spammers in tailoring their messages to specific linguistic and cultural contexts.

# 4. METHOD

## 4.1 Data Procurement

In building the corpus for this study, we first searched for farewell emails in our workplace emails. In our search, we were able to find 12 farewell emails sent by different individuals. The emails were sent between January 2022 and February 2023. Five of the senders were female staff, while the other seven were male. Four of them were academic staff, while the other eight were non-academic staff. In terms of reasons for leaving the institution, the number was even, with six of them being transferred to another campus of the same institution, while the remaining six had to retire. Table 1 summarises the demographic information of the email senders:

Table 1: Demoraphic Information of the Email Senders

| Gender | | Position | | Reason | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Male | Female | Academic | Non-Academic | Relocated | Retired |
| 5 | 7 | 4 | 8 | 6 | 6 |

## 4.2 Data Analysis

The main objective of the present study was to identify the rhetorical moves of farewell emails. To this end, the analysis of the data was carried out following move analysis by Swales (1990). As the genre of farewell emails is new, the literature was limited. The analytical framework used in the present study was developed using previous genre studies of emails as a guide.

The data analysis of the present study involved a genre-based approach which sought the rhetorical moves of the farewell emails. Thus, the analytical framework of move analysis was used in examining the rhetorical moves of the emails. It should be noted that the data in the present study were written in Malay, as the setting of the workplace is in Malaysia. In determining the demarcation of the moves, we examined the communicative purposes of each sentence. This process is crucial in answering Research Question 1. However, it was found that some sentences comprise more than one move or are also known as embedded moves (Swales, 1990). This was not surprising as similar occurrences had been observed in previous studies (see Doró, 2015; Loh et al., 2017; Tarvirdizdeh & Nimehchisalem, 2021).

Prior to finalising the moves and steps, we annotated the moves and steps individually. This was done to ensure the reliability of the analytical framework. A series of discussion was held to determine the percentage agreement of our analysis. Rau and Shih (2021) argued that the percentage agreement was sufficient to measure the reliability of inter-rater agreement. The result of our percentage agreement was 92%. Later, further discussion was held to address the issue of reliability.

The analytical tool used in this study was Atlas.ti v23. Each move and step was highlighted and annotated to facilitate the calculation of the moves and steps. An example of move annotation using the software can be found in Figure 2.
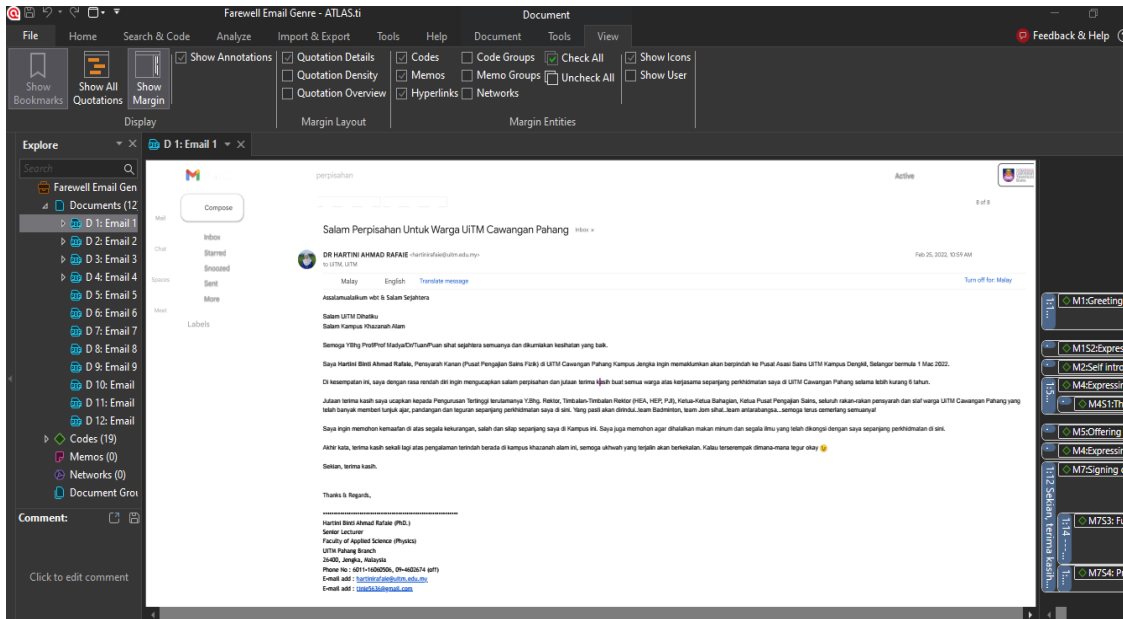
Figure 2: Move annotation using Atlas.ti 23

Upon answering the first research question, the frequency of each move and step was counted and converted into percentages. This was done to determine the typicality of the moves and steps, which is the aim of Research Question 2. They were divided into three categories: typical, conventional, optional and infrequent following Van Herck et al. (2022), as their study also focused on emails. The moves were considered typical if they had 76%-100% frequency, conventional if they occurred 51%-75% in the corpus, optional if the frequency was between 26% and 50% and infrequent if their occurrence was very low, 0% to 25%.

Finally, to answer Research Question 3, the farewell emails of two groups of employees were analysed – those who were transferred and those were retiring. The analysis took place because, through observation, we were able to identify differences in the generic structure of the emails sent by the two groups of senders. In the analysis, we paid attention to the length and rhetorical moves of the emails. It should be noted that for the benefit of the research, translation was provided for each example presented in the results and discussion section.

## 5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In answering the research questions, the present study divides this section further into two parts. The first part discusses Research Questions 1 and 2 while the second part answers Research Question 3. Overall, the analysis of the farewell emails shows that the emails often comprise seven moves in which all of them are typical. The analysis also shows that some of the moves are realised by steps. Summary of the moves and steps of the farewell emails is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Move-step structure of farewell emails by Malaysian workers

| Moves and steps | Percentage of Frequency | Typicality |
|---|---|---|
| **M1: Greeting the readers** | **91.7** | **Typical** |
| M1S1: Addressing the readers | 58.3 | Conventional |
| M1S2: Expressing good wishes to the readers | 16.7 | Infrequent |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **M2: Self introduction** | **100.0** | **Typical** |
| M2S1: Announcing the last date of service | 83.3 | Typical |
| M2S2: Mentioning the period of working years | 58.3 | Conventional |
| M2S3: Mentioning the service start date | 16.7 | Infrequent |
| **M3: Informing the farewell** | **100.0** | **Typical** |
| **M4: Expressing gratitude** | **91.7** | **Typical** |
| M4S1: Thanking the Upper Management | 58.3 | Conventional |
| M4S2: Thanking all co-workers | 91.7 | Typical |
| M4S3: Thanking specific group of people | 33.3 | Infrequent |
| **M5: Offering General Apology** | **100.0** | **Typical** |
| **M6: Conveying Hope** | **100.0** | **Typical** |
| **M7: Signing off** | **100.0** | **Typical** |
| M7S1: Ending with a pantun | 25.0 | Infrequent |
| M7S2: Signing the email | 8.3 | Infrequent |
| M7S3: Full name and position | 66.7 | Conventional |
| M7S4: Providing contact details | 16.7 | Infrequent |

## 5.1 Rhetorical Moves of Farewell Emails and The Typicality of Moves

### Move 1: Greetings the readers

The analysis found that all emails begin with greetings. Thus, this move is regarded as Move 1 of the genre. Previous studies by (Carrió-Pastor & Calderón, 2015) and (Van Herck et al., 2022) also found greetings as part of the opening move. Carrió-Pastor & Calderón (2015) however, noted that most emails in her study began with referencing prior to greetings. Nevertheless, it shows that greetings are necessary, and the senders are implying that the recipients of the emails are significant to them (Waldvogel, 2007). In the present study, only one email does not contain the move but this does not change the typicality of the move since it has 91.7% of occurrence. It should be noted that since all email writers were Muslims, they began their email with similar greetings which was "Assalamualaikum" (Peace be unto you) and sometimes followed by "Salam Sejahtera" which has similar meaning to the previous greeting but is usually meant for the non-muslim recipients.

Move 1 is realised by two steps. The first step, M1S1 is addressing the readers which is an optional step with 58.3% of occurrence. Through this step, the email senders include all possible salutations that the recipients possibly might possess such as "YBhg. Prof. / Prof. Madya Dr. / Dr. / Tuan / Puan". This way of addressing recipients is considered as personal and rather formal (Van Herck et al., 2022). It is interesting to note that this step is a unique way of addressing recipients by Malaysians since previous studies conducted among email writers from other countries showed this step was fulfilled in simpler ways. Mehrpour & Mehrzad (2013) found Iranian writers just wrote "Dear, sir" while Carrió-Pastor & Calderón (2015) noted that Indian

writers usually used "Greetings" such as "Greetings for the week" or "Greetings for business". However, Van Herck et al. (2022) discovered that some English native speakers in the UK were inclined to practise similar ways of salutations like Malaysians when the marital status of recipients were not confirmed. They preferred to write "Dear Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms Smith (name)" instead of general greetings.

The second step, M1S2, is intended to express good wishes to the recipients. This is another unique trait of emails sent by Malaysian workers to their colleagues since similar practice is not found in previous studies. It only has 16.7% of occurrence which makes it an infrequent step. This step is usually embedded with M1S1. An excerpt from Email 1 illustrates the step: "Semoga Y.Bhg.Prof/Prof Madya/Dr/Tuan/Puan sihat sejahtera semuanya dan dikurniakan kesihatan yang baik" ("May Y.Bhg.Prof/Assoc. Prof/Dr/Mr/Ms be in good health and well-being, and be blessed with good health."). Even though the percentage was low, we found the practice to be common through observation in other types of emails. This consistently shows that genre is closely related to the situation and culture. It also proves that genre is commonly shared by the discourse community and thus it can be exclusively found within the shared community (Ford-Sumner, 2006; Swales, 1990; Thompson & Campling, 2003).

*Move 2: Self introduction*

Self introduction is used by the email writers to briefly describe themselves. It often comprises information such as name, current position and department. This can be seen in the following example taken from Email 2: "Saya (name) Kerani Kanan (Pengurusan Stor) ingin memaklumkan akan bersara pada 27 Ogos 2022." (I, (name), Senior Clerk (Store Management), would like to inform that I will be retiring on 27th August 2022."). In the example, the move is also embedded with M2S1: Announcing the last date of service since most of the emails were written briefly. Since the move is important, it is not surprising that it can be found in all emails analysed. This makes the move typical with 100% of occurrence.

The first step that realises the move, M2S1 informs readers the last date of service of the email senders. This is often done by announcing the date prior to the farewell (see example in Email 2 above) or after they have left the workplace. For instance, in Email 5, the writer informs that she has reported for duty at the new workplace prior to the email: "Saya (name), Penyelia Asrama Kanan telah melapor diri di (new workplace) sebagai Pegawai Eksekutif pada 16 Ogos 2022" ("I, (name), Senior Dormitory Supervisor, have reported to (new workplace) as an Executive Officer on 16th August 2022."). It is also found that retired staff prefer to send emails on the last day of their job. This can be observed in Email 9: "Hari ini adalah hari terakhir saya sebagai (name of position and department) setelah berkhidmat di (name of workplace)." ("Today is my last day as (name of position and department) after serving at (name of workplace).") The step is also typical in the corpus since it took place in 83.3% of the emails.

The following step is M2S2 which mentions the staff's periods of working years. The step occurred in 58.3% of the emails and thus making it conventional. An excerpt from Email 7 shows how the step is written: "Di kesempatan ini saya dengan rasa rendah diri ingin mengucapkan salam perpisahan dan jutaan terima kasih buat semua warga atas kerjasama sepanjang perkhidmatan saya di UITM Cawangan Pahang selama 25 tahun." ("On this occasion, I humbly wish to bid farewell and express my deepest gratitude to all members for their cooperation throughout my 25 years of service at UITM Pahang Branch.") Following the step is M2S3 which lets readers know the date which the staff reported for duty. However, the step only has 16.7% of occurrence and making it an infrequent step. An example of the step can

be seen in Email 5: " Saya mula berkhidmat di (name of workplace) pada 4 Jan 1991…" ("I began my service at (name of workplace) on 4th January 1991...").

## *Move 3: Informing the farewell*

This move functions as the ultimate purpose of writing the emails. Through the move, the email writers inform readers that they are bidding farewell as they are going to leave the workplace due to retirement or being relocated. Thus, it is not surprising that the move occurred in all emails (100% of occurrence) and is regarded as a typical move. The following excerpt (Email 7) serves as an example of the move: "Di kesempatan ini saya dengan rasa rendah diri ingin mengucapkan salam perpisahan buat semua warga atas kerjasama sepanjang perkhidmatan saya di (name of workplace)." ("On this occasion, I humbly wish to bid farewell to all members for their cooperation throughout my service at (name of workplace).").

## *Move 4: Expressing gratitude*

In expressing gratitude, the phrase "thank you" (or terima kasih in Malay) is often used. The practice is also observable in Move 4. The move is typical and has 91.7% of occurrence. This move is often realised by three steps since the email writers usually dedicate their gratitude to three different groups of people: upper management, general co-workers and specific group of people.

The first step of Move 4, M4S1 functions as thanking the upper management of the workplace. This is a common practice in any official occasions where the people at the higher position will be mentioned first. However, in the case of farewell emails, the step only appeared in 7 emails (58.3%), thus making it conventional. Presumably, the emails are personal for the writers and therefore, they do not follow any official emails they have received. An excerpt from Email 2 shows how M4S2 takes place in the email: "Jutaan terima kasih juga saya ucapkan kepada Pengurusan Tertinggi (name of workplace) terutamanya Y.Bhg. Rektor dan Timbalan-Timbalan Rektor." ("I would also like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Top Management of (name of workplace), especially to Y.Bhg. Rector and Deputy Rectors."). The following step, M4S2 shares similar communicative purposes with the previous step but is meant for all co-workers in general. The step has 91.7% of occurrence and therefore is regarded as a typical step. An example of the step is shown in the following excerpt from Email 11: "Di kesempatan ini saya ingin mengucapkan jutaan terima kasih kepada semua warga UiTM Pahang yang telah banyak membantu dan memberi tunjuk ajar sepanjang kerjaya saya di sini" ("On this occasion, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all members of UiTM Pahang who have provided immense assistance and guidance throughout my career here.").

The last step to realise Move 4 is M4S3 which is thanking a specific group of people. It is regarded as infrequent since it is only found in 33.3% of the emails. The step is dedicated to a group of staff who are close to the email writers and often written with an additional note. This is evident in Email 1: "Yang pasti akan dirindui...team Badminton, team Jom sihat, team antarabangsa, semoga terus cemerlang semuanya!" ("The ones that will definitely be missed... the Badminton team, the Jom sihat team, the international team, may everyone continue to shine!").

## *Move 5: Offering general apology*

Apology is common among Malay people since it is part of showing politeness even in the workplace (Azlina et al., 2019). Thus, it could be the reason for Move 5 to take place in the corpus. The move is typical with 100% of occurrence. The move is considered general since

the email writers do not specify to whom the apology is meant for. This can be seen in the following excerpt taken from Email 3: "Dikesempatan ini, saya ingin memohon maaf kepada saudara saudari semua sekiranya atau memang ada kata-kata saya atau kelakuan saya yang mengguris hati saudara saudari sepanjang perkenalan." ("On this occasion, I would like to apologise to everyone if there were any words or actions from me that may have hurt your feelings throughout our acquaintance.").

### M6: Conveying hope

Prior to concluding the email, the senders often express their hopes and well wishes to readers. This is shown in Move 6. In fulfilling the move, email writers often wish for continuous relationship with their colleagues in future as evident in Email 10: "Adalah menjadi harapan agar hubungan sillaturrahiim akan tetap berterusan dan terjalin erat." ("It is hoped that the bond of friendship will continue to be maintained and strengthened."). The move has 100% of occurrence since it can be found in all emails.

### M7: Signing off

Closing in a workplace email is just as important as the opening part. The closing part of the email helps strengthen the rapport between colleagues and lay the groundwork for future interactions (Waldvogel, 2007). In the present study, all emails are found to include closing or Move 7 (100% of occurrence) which makes the move typical. The move is often fulfilled by thanking the recipients or greeting them. For example, "Sekian, terima kasih" (Thank you) in Email 4 or "Sekian, Wassalam" in Email 11. Further, Move 7 contains four steps which show variety in concluding the emails.

The first step, M7S1 which is ending the email with a pantun. Pantun is a short poetic rhyme usually consisting of two or four lines in one or more stanzas. It is used on various occasions related to Malay culture and sometimes at the beginning or end of speeches. In the present study, three emails (25% of occurrence) are found to have pantun in the last move. This makes the move infrequent. An example of this can be found in Email 3:

> "Kalau ada sumur di ladang,
>
> Boleh kita menumpang mandi,
>
> Kalau ada umur yang panjang,
>
> InsyaAllah kita berjumpa lagi"

The next step is M7S2 which is signing the email. However, the step is infrequent since it is only available in one email with 8.3% of occurrence. Following the step is M7S3 which provides the full name and position of the email writers. The step is conventional since it can be found in 66.7% of the emails analysed. Lastly, Move 4 is also realised by M7S4 which provides contact details of the staff. The step has 16.7% of occurrence which makes it infrequent. The contact details shared include address, phone number and alternative email address. To ensure the anonymity of the email writers, no example of these steps will be shown.

### 5.2 Differences in Structures of Emails Sent by Relocated Staff and Retired Staff

Through analysis of the farewell emails, there are some noticeable differences between the emails sent by relocated and retired staff. Firstly, the emails sent by relocated staff are relatively longer than retired staff. The former stands at 1314 words with 219 words in average while the

latter only comprises 947 words with 158 words in average. Further observation on emails sent by relocated staff shows their emails contain more emotional attachment which results in the use of more words. This is usually done by recollecting memories from the workplace. Retired staff mostly prefer to write more straightforward emails by just announcing their retirement.

Secondly, the difference also lies in the move occurrence. Since there is no existing guideline in writing farewell emails, the writers write them based on their personal experience. Some of them also use previous farewell emails to a guide. This is noticeable since due to similarities in the word choice and paragraphing of the emails. The practice contributes to similar moves adapted in some emails. Thus, it is not surprising to observe the emails by relocated staff seem to fulfil more moves and steps (except for Email 5) than the ones sent by retired staff. Besides that, relocated staff tend to use more steps in realising the moves. For instance, in Move 7, most of the retired staff are inclined to conclude the emails by thanking the readers only while relocated staff choose to end their emails in various ways. These differences show both groups have their preferred communication style (Waldvogel, 2007) which may occur as a result of generation gap.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The present study investigated 12 farewell emails sent by relocated and retired staff from the same workplace. Using genre analysis, seven moves were found. All of them were categorised as typical due to their high occurrences in the data. Some of the moves were realised by a few steps (Moves 1, 2, 4 and 7) while the rest did not contain any steps. Further, the analysis of farewell emails also reveals distinct differences between emails sent by relocated staff and those sent by retired staff. Relocated staff's emails are longer, while retired staff's emails are shorter. The emails from relocated staff display more emotional attachment through the recollection of workplace memories, while retired staff opt for a straightforward approach by simply announcing their retirement. In terms of the transition, there is no established guideline, leading writers to draw on personal experience and previous emails. As a result, similarities in word choice and paragraph structure are observed. Emails from relocated staff tend to involve more moves and steps, with varied conclusions, while retired staff commonly express gratitude to readers. These distinctions suggest differing preferred communication styles, potentially influenced by a generation gap.

To conclude, the implication of the findings is intended to increase understanding of the different facets of email communication in the workplace setting. The objective of the current study was to contribute in a little way to the research of the structure and characteristics of farewell email communication. Drawing on the study's outcomes, there is an optimistic aspiration that these findings will hold substantial significance in raising awareness about workplace email conventions. Furthermore, it is anticipated that these findings will aid in preparing prospective writers of this genre with the necessary insights on what is expected and should be incorporated within their concluding emails. This, in turn, is aimed to leave a positive impression on their colleagues.

## AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

KFY and KN carried out the introduction and literature review sections. KFY wrote the methodology section, collected the data and refined them. KFY and KN and performed the data

analysis using Atlas.ti. KFY wrote the results and discussion section. KN wrote the conclusion and references sections. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

None declared.

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