

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude and deep appreciation to Professor Dr. Dankmar Böhning, my major advisor, for his guidance, helpful comments, invaluable advice, supervision and encouragement throughout this study.

I am also grateful to Dr. Ronny Kuhnert for devoting his precious time for invaluable advice, encouragement and especially for supervision in programming.

I also wish to thank Dr. Ekkehart Dietz for his helpful comments and discussion related to the analysis of the generalized linear mixed models.

Furthermore, I wish to thank Frau Yoong Moy Chew and Frau Ina Danquah for their useful comments and perseverance in reading my thesis.

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my beloved family for their encouragement throughout my whole life of education.