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of Business and Professional Discourse Research

Communicating in Professions and Organizations

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THE INS AND OUTS OF BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL DISCOURSE RESEARCH
Reflections on Interacting with the Workplace

Communicating in Professions and Organizations

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The Ins and Outs of Business and Professional Discourse Research

Reflections on Interacting
with the Workplace

Edited by

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From Business Letters to Emails: How Practitioners Can Shape Their Own Forms of Communication More Efficiently

Franca Poppi

1 Introduction

The last few years have witnessed dramatic changes in technology, which, in turn, have permanently altered the way information and expertise are disseminated. Nowadays people and organizations around the world are connected to other people and organizations by means of electronic media, which create the necessary conditions for a rapid sharing of knowledge and information. While in the past knowledge itself was considered to be synonymous with power, in the 21st-century it is rather the quick and efficient retrieval and exchange of knowledge and information that provides parties with an edge in transactions, especially those of a business nature.

As a consequence, information has acquired the status of a power tool: the sooner information is available, the quicker decisions can be made. Organizations have therefore entered an era which is *informational*, *global* and highly *networked*, and “electronic propinquity” has become the new substitute for “physical propinquity” in business contexts (Korzenny, 1978), as different companies are increasingly relying on electronic data interchange and also web marketing.

In order to make the information-sharing process more efficient and effective, it is necessary to make the involved parties aware that it is crucial to better understand the complex workings of how people relate to each other across international and intercultural boundaries. They may need concrete help in this. In fact, those interacting

may not be fully aware of the direct and indirect implications of the way they structure the information they want to convey. They may feel unsure of how to shape their messages, especially in the light of the “winds” of genre variability brought about by the combination of new communicative needs (the necessity to exchange information as quickly as possible) and new forms of communication (computer mediated communication).

The objective of this chapter is to show how a greater awareness of the different genres and of the language strategies that can be relied upon by business practitioners can contribute to their creative empowerment, and therefore make them more efficient and effective communicators.

2 The relevance of genre knowledge in business communication

The relevance of the context of communication on the one hand, and of the linguistic strategies adopted by professionals on the other, have played a key role in research on the use of English for the purposes of international business communication since the 2000s. This has prompted a growing interest in the analysis of genres, as they are considered a valid and reliable tool, easily and readily applicable to the present global and networked business environment where, alongside a completely novel set of web-generated genres (Askehave & Ellerup Nielsen, 2005, 132), existing ones are undergoing serious adaptations as well.

The term “genre” is an abstraction used to refer to a class of recurrent communicative events characterized by similarities in substance and form (Miller, 1984; Yates & Orlikowski, 1992), and in purpose (Swales, 1990; Crowston & Williams, 2000). Among the many definitions of genre, the present study draws on Bhatia (2002, 5), who adopts Miller’s view of genre as social action (cf. Miller, 1984), and on Orlikowski and Yates (1994, 543), who define genre as a “distinctive type of communicative action, characterized by socially recognized communicative purpose and common aspects of form”.

A genre typically displays various patterns of similarity in terms of form, intended audience and communicative purpose. Some genres, such as memos and meetings, have clearly identifiable forms (a distinctive heading for the memo genre and structural devices such as the agenda and chair for the meeting genre); other genres are much more distinguishable by their purpose. On the grounds of the relationship between text and context, with the latter “viewed both as what surrounds a text, and as what makes a particular genre possible in specific contexts” (Gotti

et al., 2012, 12), each practitioner creates their own genre repertoire, in accordance with situational and contextual requirements.

The new kind of electronic nearness brought about by the success of the Internet as a privileged communication medium has had a noticeable impact on communication practices. Therefore, as practitioners engage in their professional activities and in social interactions, the knowledge of genre rules may increase their communicative competence by providing them with some guidance in shaping the texts appropriate for the novel communicative contexts they are confronted with. The relevance and importance of genre knowledge is confirmed by the results of an exploratory survey conducted by Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta between 2006 and 2009, and aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of language use in the context of global business (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011, 252). Drawing on Hymes' definition of "communicative competence" (1972), the two researchers take the parameters of possibility, feasibility, appropriateness and probability as the starting point for their analysis. Then they refer to Peterwagner's (2005) integration of Hymes' model, according to which competence includes the two dimensions of knowledge and ability. Moreover, considering that their main focus is on language use, they also integrate Hymes' and Peterwagner's views with insights from Canale and Swain's (1980) model originally devised to account for language acquisition. The resulting conceptual framework for the analysis of professional communication in a global business context is shown in Figure 13.1.

A competent communicator is at the same time both aware of and able to opt for what is possible, feasible and probable in terms of grammar, sociolinguistics, discourse and strategy use. Grammatical competence refers to those elements of the English language where professionals need to achieve intelligibility. Sociolinguistic and discourse competence includes those choices, in terms of words and sentences that practitioners consider feasible, appropriate and possible, in connection with a particular communicative act or genre. Finally, strategic competence is complementary in that it includes compensatory strategies in case of difficulties in the three other areas (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011, 250).

With regard to grammatical competence, the findings of the two researchers confirm that English language competence is an essential condition, yet grammar is perceived as less important than the genre knowledge of one's own field of expertise (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2013, 27).

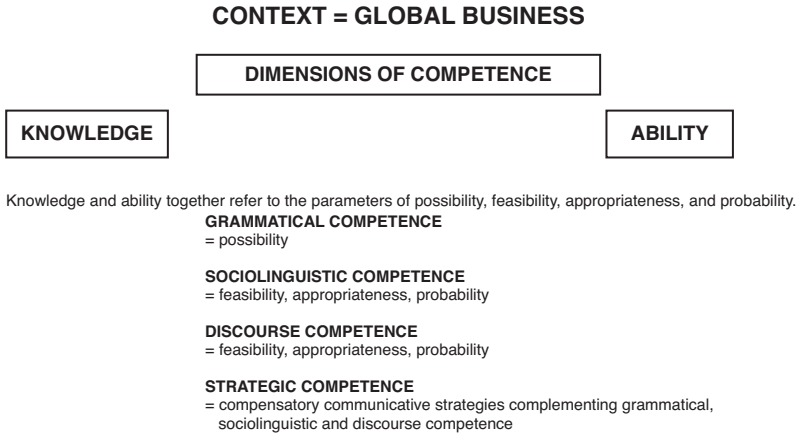


Figure 13.1 Conceptual framework for the analysis of professional communication in a global business context

Source: (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011, 251)

3 Materials, objectives and methods

The present study will focus on emails, which were initially developed as a facility of the Internet by the US Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency. Subsequently, they became a tool for exchanging information among computer users in a wide range of occupations and settings, to the extent that they have largely replaced the traditional communication media such as letters, faxes and telephone calls (Lightfoot, 2006, 218), used to conduct global business operations (Bargiela-Chiappini, 2009, 309).

Emails have been highly praised, in that they mitigate “[...] the negative impact of differences in verbal and nonverbal style, thus reducing miscommunication [...] [and] the challenges associated with cultural diversity” (Shachaf, 2008, 141). But they have also been criticized, because “[T]he lack of social context cues such as certain body messages, apparent in face-to-face communication, may pose a barrier in email communication” (Murphy and Levy, 2006, 2).

The documents that form the data used in this study were all received and dispatched by the employees of four companies based in Italy, which include:

- a multinational group with over 80 companies in 26 countries, controlled by the parent company in Italy;
- the Italian subsidiary of a multinational company;
- a family-run business which was started in Italy in 1802;
- a leading Italian company in the freight forwarding business.

Because of previously agreed disclosure restrictions, the actual names of the companies cannot be made available. The four companies will therefore be referred to by means of the following acronyms:

- IMG (Italian Multinational Group);
- ISMC (Italian Subsidiary of a Multinational Company);
- FRB (Family-Run Business);
- IFFA (Italian Freight Forwarding Agent).

Thanks to the help provided by the employees of the above companies, it was possible to have access to samples of emails written in English that they had retrieved from their incoming and outgoing email boxes over a period of 2–3 weeks, until they had reached 100 samples, making sure the selected samples accounted for multiple authorship.¹ The four corpora were collected in different periods: 2008 (IMG), 2011 (ISMC and FRB) and 2012 (IFFA). These temporal differences may add to the variety of the collected samples, and prove useful for the purpose of verifying whether it is possible to identify recurrent patterns over an extended period of time.

Before handing over the materials, the contributors had deleted most (not all, though) sensitive data like names and references to places or products. Therefore, it is neither possible to establish the identity and the nationality of the writers, nor to make a distinction between the Italian contributors (whose messages were often contained in one or more of the “embedded emails”) and other nationalities. Overall, it is only possible to state that the emails contained in the four sub-corpora were drafted by internationally operating professionals who use English as a means of communication when interacting with speakers of different first languages, in international negotiations.

The starting assumption underpinning the present analysis is that communicative competence entails the knowledge of and the ability to opt for the most appropriate grammatical, sociolinguistic, discursal and strategic choices. Accordingly, the form, purpose and intended audience of the different documents under scrutiny will be investigated with a view to establishing whether emails are a completely new genre characterized by a rather informal tone (Baron, 2001), requiring less careful

editing than in ordinary business correspondence (Bondi, 2005, 303), and displaying typical textual features (“email-isms”),² or whether they still retain some of the generic potential of the business letter.

4 Business letters vs. emails

In 2003 Ashley contended that:

[P]ersonal and sensitive correspondence such as messages of congratulation, condolence or a complaint are usually best done by letter. Confirmation of contracts, memos which are confidential and must be signed to acknowledge receipt, and any correspondence which may be needed for legal or insurance purposes should not normally be sent by email. (Ashley, 2003, 245)

Even so, in 2013 the Radicati group stated that 100 billion³ of the 182.9 billion emails that were sent and received worldwide on a daily basis, were business emails. Such a huge number of message exchanges inevitably must have had a great impact on communication, language in general and the emergence of new trends and patterns.

Structural features

Starting from the mid-19th century, business letters have had a distinctive format, whose “rules” were exemplified in model letter books (cf. Del Lungo, 2005) which are still used today, as shown in Figure 13.2.

(Company’s Logo/ Sender’s Company Name /Company
Address)
Date
(Recipient’s Name, Title and address)
Salutation
Main text –Introduction
 –Body
 –Conclusion
Closing,
Signature
Sender’s Name (& Title)
(Attachments/ Enclosures/CC:)

Figure 13.2 Typical layout of a business letter

Source: (Bhatia, 2005, 36)

Also, the structure of emails includes a series of common elements which may be different graphically or displayed in a different order, but which are quite standardized and universally recognized by email users (Crystal, 2006).

When we access our email account and decide to compose a message, the screen that we use is generally bipartite, “with a preformatted upper area (the header or heading) and a lower area for the main text (the body or message)” (Crystal, 2006, 100). As regards the headers section, the layout includes the following main fields:

- the Recipient’s e-address, generally introduced by To;
- the Sender’s address, generally introduced by From;
- the Subject line;
- the Date and Time fields, which are automatically filled in by the software.

S I IMOLA 12/02/2008 10.54
Nr. Doc. 94/SC/dd

CCR
Oggetto: meeting on 26th Feb. -hotel reservation

Dear,

Thank you for your yesterday’s e-mail addressed to. He and Vezio will be pleased to meet with you on 26thFeb.

As per your request, two single rooms type ‘De Luxe’have been booked under your names, for one night (in 25.02.08 –out 26.02.08) at the hotel.

Should you need any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Kindest regards

Phone 7393

Figure 13.3 Email no. 1 (IMG subcorpus)

In addition to these main elements, many other optional fields are available in the header section:

- the CC field;
- the BCC field;
- sometimes we can also find a priority field, in which an icon or a symbol is used to highlight the urgency or importance of a message.

Email no. 1 (Figure 13.3) displays the Recipient's name, the Date, the Salutation, the Closing and the Sender's name. The main text is organized into Introduction, Body and Conclusion. Moreover, the Company's Logo and address are also present.

Body of the message

The standard parts of a letter have been said to go back to Cicero's division of the oration into: salutation, exordium, narration, petition and conclusion. (Gillaerts & Gotti, 2005, 15–16). However, it is also possible in the case of emails, to single out several moves, which have been labelled "framing moves":

- Move I: Identifying subject;
- Move II: Salutation;
- Move III: Referring to previous contact;
- Move VII: Pre-Closing;
- Move VIII: Closing;
- Move IX: Signature;

and "content moves":

- Move IV: Indicating enclosures;
 - Move V: Providing information;
 - Move VI: Requesting.
- (Kankaanranta, 2005, 272).

All the above-mentioned moves are present in sample no. 2, a long and detailed email (Figure 13.4).

In addition, this email also displays the use of graphic conventions (listing, use of precise punctuation), which make it very similar to a business letter.

	From To: CC:
Move I: Identifying subject	Subject: Confidentiality policy and Information security Priority: High
Move II: Salutation	Dear xxx
Move III: Referring to previous contact	Thank you for your mail and your security bullets regarding Confidentiality policy and Information security. To inform you what the Security Department in xxx is doing for Information security and Confidentiality, please read our comments below.
Move V: Providing information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include information about the confidentiality policy in introductory kits to all new employees. • * This is done by the Security Department. Security training for all new employees and includes parts of Confidentiality policy and information about every employees's responsibility. This is a mandatory training and 634 employees have participated in the training since 2003. In the information kit to all new employees the "Information Security Guidelines brochure" and "Confidentiality Policy quick guide brochure" are included. • Include IPR and confidentiality policy training in project managers' training programmes (either mandatory as mentioned by Andrew, or as suggested by one participant, possible to gain credits). • The Security Department has run the change management project in all IMSC companies except IMSC Ambient, in Confidentiality policy and classification matrix of their information and implementation of the organisation. IMSC Ambient wanted to run their project themselves. • Companies in Sweden that have accomplished our 4 hour information security training for white collar employees are: • AB IMSC, IMSC REcart, IMSC R&D, IMSC Plant Engineering, IMSC Chilled, IMSC Business Support and IMSC Processing Components. Until now 950 employees have participated in the training. IMSC Technical Service will start their training November 2007. IMSC Processing systems and IMSC Dairy and Beverages are planned for 2008. <p>As you can see the former IMSC Ambient, now a part of IMSC Packaging Solution, has not attended the training. This autumn IMSC Packaging Solution is going through the GAP-analyses and the training will probably start in 2012.</p> <p>I believe that xxx and his team is a part of the former Ambient organisation and therefore have not been trained.</p> <p>[...]</p>
Move IV – Indicating enclosures	Enclosed please find Information Security Guidelines Brochure and Confidentiality Policy quick guide brochure.
Move VI - Requesting	Keep a list (possibly stored at HR or by GIM?) of all the access rights which an employee has and cancel or change or transfer them immediately, if and when the employee changes position or leaves the company. This is not an issue managed by the Security Department.
Move VII: Pre-closing	As you can see we work actively with information security issues and we are planning to perform our courses and awareness activities also in the future.
Move VIII: Closing	You are welcome to suggest more activities around these issues which we will consider to include in our training programs.
Move IX: Signature	Regards. Xxx

Figure 13.4 Moves in email no. 2 (ISMC subcorpus)

Style of language

So far, the evidence provided seems to suggest that emails can also display the well-articulated structure and the graphic conventions typical of business letters. Practitioners should therefore realize that it may prove misleading to think that *all* emails are informal, edited less carefully than ordinary business correspondence and characterized by some typical features such as contracted forms and spelling mistakes. Therefore, it does not seem correct that some modern textbooks should claim that the traditional business letter discourse features are now considered outdated in modern business communication (Locker, 1998, 92; Bovée et al., 2003, 119–120; Munter, 2003, 77). These textbooks provide lists of phraseology to be avoided in modern business communication because the phrases are considered obsolete, stuffy, or bureaucratic:

- As per;
- At your earliest convenience;
- In due course;
- Under separate cover;
- Enclosed/attached please find;
- Don't hesitate to;
- Kindly advise;
- Please/Kindly be informed.

It is true that email language may, at times, tend to being “more spontaneous, less inhibited and more carefree than traditional written communication” (Lightfoot, 2006, 218), due to the speed and spontaneity of the medium which do not encourage a reflection on the text (Crystal, 2006, 117). However, in real-life business interactions, the above-mentioned, somewhat prescriptive rules, which ban the use of traditional business letter phraseology, cannot always be applied, as proved by the evidence contained in the different email sub-corpora.

In fact, in email no. 1, we find:

“As per your request...”

“Should you need any further assistance, *please do not hesitate* to contact us”.

(IMG subcorpus)

In email no. 3, it is possible to read:

Dear xxx and xxx, I'm sending you *hereto attached* the technical report on the last visit of our technician to your plant.

(IMG subcorpus)

Email no. 4 reads as follows:

Dear John,

Here is the calendar of next Product Portfolio Master trainings.

May 19–23 (fully booked, seats available only in case of last minute cancellations)

September 22–26 (seats available)

November 17–21 (seats available)

Attached you can find the agenda.

Would you like me to keep you informed regarding a potential seat in May? Only thing I am worried about is if Solomon needs visa, we will not have enough time to do it.

Do not hesitate to call me for any additional info.

Kind regards. Rada

(ISMC subcorpus)

Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2005, 76) explain the mixture of elements typical of emails and business letters by claiming that in their case-study corpus, these features were generally displayed in messages written by secretaries who used to be the foreign language experts, and who were well-versed in business phraseology, having received their formal training in business writing.

In the present study, therefore, in order to rule out this possibility, it was decided to take into account other messages written by the same writer of email no. 4.

Looking at emails nos. 5, 6 and 7, it is immediately evident that they display a more informal tone than email no. 4:

(5) Perfect,

you too

rada

(ISMC subcorpus)

(6) Hi susan,

I am taking the group for dinner this evening. would you like to join us? think about Zelmira ☺

rada

(ISMC subcorpus)

(7) Hi Cass,

Just made 1 seat available, kindly ask Tran Anh to fill in the application form: http://*****

See you soon

Rada

(ISMC subcorpus)

In particular, email no. 5 contains no salutation, and the writer also omits the capital letter when writing her name. In email no. 6, capitalization is only used to refer to the name of the restaurant, and not to the names of the addresser and addressee. Moreover, an emoticon is also employed.

Email no. 7 is the most formal of the three, as proved by the use of the semicolon and of capitalization, even though the initial sentence lacks a grammatical subject.

Communicative purpose

On the basis of the evidence provided in emails nos. 1, 3 and 4, it is possible to claim that contemporary emails can include distinctively polite phraseology. In fact, the comparison of emails written by the same person confirms that the need to use a more formal or informal tone and move arrangement depends on the communicative purpose and the relationship with the addressee, rather than on some prescriptive rules

A very insightful analysis of the business email as a genre is provided by Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen, who discuss a corpus of 282 internal email messages written in English by Swedish and Finnish business practitioners working at a Swedish–Finnish paper corporation (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta &, 2005). In their analysis, the two researchers use the communicative purpose of the message as the main criterion to identify email genres, but they take into consideration the immediate context of the message as well. They identify three main communicative purposes in the corpus:

- informing employees of the corporation's activities (*Noticeboard genre messages*);
- delivering other documents for information and/or for comments (*Postman genre messages*);
- exchanging information about the corporation's activities (*Dialogue genre messages*).

Noticeboard genre messages

Noticeboard genre messages should be thought of as messages on a noticeboard. Their aim is to inform the employees about the organization's activities but no response is expected. The dominating move is providing information – most of the time new – about various topics concerning the corporation's internal and external life.

(8) Subject: Digital Certificates

Hello,

Digital certificates within ISMC have a validity period of 12 months. After expiration of the certificates, encryption is no longer available. The renewal process is quite similar to the enrolment and require about 30 minutes to complete. Your presence is required as your personal password has to be confirmed different times.

Your personal digital certificate will expire within the end of May. About 2–3 weeks before expiration you will get a message from xxx about renewal. Before that mail, renewal is not allowed. (ISMC subcorpus)

Please do not activate the renewal by yourself. Instead, agree on a suitable date and time directly with the HelpDesk (or directly to xxx).

Do not hesitate to contact me for any doubt/question

(ISMC subcorpus)

(9) Subject: Encryption

Please be informed that, following the Confidentiality Policy and its related Information Handling Manual, you have been applied for registration to the DigitalID and Encryption service.

The Confidentiality Policy and the Information Handling Manual can be found, like all other ISMC policies and procedures, on the Corporate Governance web site: <http://xxx> in the Group Policies and Group Procedures pages).

If not already done, you will be contacted by the Help Desk in order to schedule the installation and configuration of the necessary tools on your PC:

- 1) Enrolment and installation of your certificate and keys
- 2) Installation of Secretxxx
- 3) Installation of Spyxxx

Before we can start, please have a quick look at the attached documentation.

Here is an introductory document that gives you some basic information about Encryption, Signing and xxx/xxx Keys.

Thanks for your attention

(ISMC subcorpus)

The common communicative purpose shared by these messages, which are addressed to a multiplicity of addressees, is to make sure that the employees comply with the company's global attitude towards protection, and in this particular case, towards the protection of data. The structure and the language employed display an almost standardized character, with graphic conventions and a neat move arrangement not dissimilar from those usually found in a business letter.

The same applies to other messages. Email no. 10 deals with events which are organized inside the company on a regular basis:

- (10) Subject: Temporary Contract Prolongation

Dear all,

I'm pleased to inform you that xxx will prolong her assignment until xxx.

Should you need further information do not hesitate to contact Recruitment Team at xxxx.

Best regards,

Xxx

(ISMC subcorpus)

While email no. 11 was written to confirm the acceptance of a delegation which was to spend some time on the company's premises:

- (11) Dear xxx san,

Thank you for your emails.

We'll be very happy to welcome your delegation to our premises on Friday, 19th Feb.

We'll arrange a pick-up service from Pelliconi Ozzano plant to XXX Imola on

Friday at 1:20 pm and from XXX Imola to Boscolo bologna Tower Hotel

around 4:30 pm.

Please do not hesitate to contact us again for any further assistance you may need.

Looking forward to meeting your delegation, kind regards.

(IMG subcorpus)

Noticeboard genre messages are sent on a regular basis to a multiplicity of addressees. Therefore, they can almost be considered as templates which are already available when the need arises, and which consist of fixed stretches of language which have to be integrated with the missing data. Their analysis reveals the presence of:

- standardized language patterns: *Please do not activate the renewal...; Please be informed that...; Please find enclosed the preliminary programme; Thank you very much in advance for your contribution!; Thanks for your attention...; Thank you for your emails...;*

- relatively formal register: *I would be most grateful...; Do not hesitate to contact me for any doubt/question; Should you need further information do not hesitate to contact Recruitment Team...; Looking forward to meeting...*

Postman genre messages

Postman genre messages are used to deliver other documents, attachments or messages in order to get comments or information about them. These messages usually present a move indicating the enclosure of additional information:

They can be reasonably detailed, like email no. 12

- (12) Hello
Sorry for the delay
Enclosed you can find complete pre-alert
(you have already handled a previous shipment to Capo Canada).
Please get in touch with the receiver Mr Massimo@ XXXXXX to
arrange customs and delivery
All charges are prepaid (excluding duty and taxes) we will bill directly
to the receiver, please quote me all costs up to DOOR
Thanks and regards
xxx
(IFFA subcorpus)

or rather short:

- (13) Spare parts catalogue for the tools
(IMG subcorpus)
- (14) See below. We'll send you an indicative packing list as soon as possible,
so that you can inform
Transtar.
(IFFA subcorpus)

Dialogue genre messages

Dialogue genre messages are exchanges of information about corporate activities (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2005, 69). In this case, communication is not one way: a message can open an exchange and is expected to have an answer that, in turn, can become an opening message, thus giving rise to a chain of messages linked together.

Dialogue genre messages generally display the widest range of variations.

In fact, they can include examples like email no. 15 (see also emails nos. 5, 6 and 7), characterized by informal phrasing and structure:

(15) Hi Selye,

Pls postpone booking to a week later; it is possible to back date hbl to nov. 30th as well?

Rgds

XXX

(IFFA subcorpus)

And also more formal messages:

(16) Dear xxx,

I am sorry for my late reply to you email message dated 21.12.07, but our

offices were closed for Christmas holidays the last ten days.

After checking with our Planning Dept. I regret having to inform you that the

delivery of the machines covered by contract No. 23005CO00 has been rescheduled for 20.02.08.

This unforeseen delay is somehow due to us waiting for the final confirmation

and preparing of tooling.

In fact, some parts of the tooling are manufactured by subcontractors and the

late confirmation forced them to change their priorities.

Apologizing for the delay and inconvenience caused in this matter,

Best regards.

(IMG subcorpus)

There is a remarkable difference in the structure and tone of the two messages. This is probably due to the fact that sample no. 16 was not only written in order to force the addressee to accept a delay in the delivery of some machines, but it was also meant to try and explain a difficult situation. As a consequence, in view of the delicate handling needed, a formal and extremely polite tone was adopted.

Thus the evidence suggests that it is the writer's purpose and the relationship with the intended audience, rather than the choice of the communication medium, which guide the practitioners' shaping of their messages.

In fact, email no. 17, which deals with a less delicate issue than the one tackled in email no. 16, displays a lighter tone, even though it is still arranged into several distinguishable moves:

(17) Hi Sofia

Apologies, I missed the "G". I have done some research and as far as I can establish there is no refrigerant gas R134G, only R134a which is a very commonly used refrigerant gas particularly in motor vehicles/machinery air-conditioners and fridges.

Thanks for your phone call explaining the situation. There are two options for the import of a fridge/cooler gassed with HFC (R134a):

+ Either it can be imported gassed and the importer applies for a low volume import licence (LVIL) for pre charged equipment (\$400 plus a some cents as a levy on the volume of gas in the equipment); or

+ Have the fridge/cooler degassed and a degas certificate issued by a licensed refrigeration degas technician (or the manufacturing factory if leaving the factory degassed) in the jurisdiction in which the degas takes place. NOTE: Degassing the equipment once it arrives in Australia is not an option.

For detailed information about the import of equipment pre charged with refrigerant please refer to our website at: <http://www.environment.gov.au/atmosphere/ozone/licences/vehicle-import.html>.

Licence applications can only be submitted on-line, please refer to the per-charged equipment licence webpage at: <http://www.environment.gov.au/atmosphere/ozone/licences/vehicle-import.html>, which has a link to the application form.

I trust this resolves your query.

Regards

xxx

Program Officer

(FRB subcorpus)

5 Discussion of the results

The fact that the messages considered were typed onto the screen obviously points to similarities with written language, but emails are not static, fixed and monological texts: rather, they are dynamic and dialogical and may include a number of individuals simultaneously who share involvement and immediacy (Crystal, 2006). This is why emails may encourage quick and brief messages, may be informal and may tend to be less explicit and elaborate than traditional written texts. At the same time it has been proven that the "email has partially taken over the multiple functions of the traditional business letter" (Gillaerts & Gotti, 2005, 9) and that "when using email the discourse community members

selectively draw on the traditional business letter genre rules, sometimes maintaining them and sometimes rejecting them" (Lohuiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2005, 75).

In the first place, practitioners should adopt a comprehensive approach when dealing with emails. Since they are located half way between tradition and innovation, stability and change, and have been defined as a moving linguistic system (Baron, 2001), it is difficult to precisely single out which elements can or cannot be included in an email.

However, the classification of emails into the dialogue, postman and noticeboard genres responds to the "various situations arising in the corporate context" (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2005, 75). Accordingly, in order to help professionals better coordinate their everyday work activities, it is possible to state that they can use:

- noticeboard genre messages, when they need to inform about the organization's activities;
- postman genre messages, when in need to deliver other documents, attachments or other messages;
- dialogue genre messages when planning to exchange information about the corporate activities.

Moreover, concerning the structure of these different types of messages, the results of the analysis suggest that:

- 1) noticeboard genre messages, which are usually addressed to a multiplicity of addressees, are often characterized by an articulated, structured form and by the presence of standardized language patterns and a relatively formal register;
- 2) postman genre messages, whose main function is to deliver something, usually tend to be quite short, as what really matters is what is being delivered;
- 3) dialogue genre messages are meant to exchange information concerning corporate activities and can vary widely, ranging from short and informal texts, not dissimilar to the lines of an on-going conversation (email no. 5) to very formal and extremely polite ones (email no. 16).

Finally, relying on the evidence gathered on the occasion of this small-scale study, it is possible to claim that within each of the above genres a further distinction can be made, depending on the relationship between the parties involved, their number and the intended

communicative purpose. When the emails still maintain the rhetorical structures introduced by the traditional business letter, a kind of message is produced, where the generic potential/capabilities of the business letter are used in relatively conventionalized and somewhat standardized ways. These messages could be defined as “business letter-emails”. On the contrary, when a more innovative attempt has been made towards a novel construct and the exploitation of established conventions and available generic resources, we are dealing with “email-emails” (see Table 13.1).

The samples analysed here, though limited in size, represent some of the most frequent uses of email communication in the companies under scrutiny, but are not meant as a representative sample of business settings in general. They have shown that, since the phrasing and organization of email messages vary greatly, as they are influenced by many different factors, it is unthinkable to provide practitioners with a template which they could use when the need arises. It is, however, possible to provide a few guidelines practitioners could follow, when writing emails.

In particular, the present study claims that each of the three types of messages singled out by Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2005) can be further articulated in accordance with the typical features of a “business letter-email” and/or an “email-email”. “Business letter-emails” appear to be almost as frequently used as “email-emails” (they represent respectively about 40% and 60% of the corpus). They are longer than “email-emails” and tend to be employed when:

- the relationship between the two parties involved is either in its early stages or of a rather formal nature;
- the issues at stake require careful and tactful handling.

6 Conclusions

Nowadays, professional messages are invariably conveyed electronically and electronic media have brought about rapid transformations in the manner in which corporate business is conducted.

The present analysis has drawn upon the integration of linguistic and genre aspects in the context of professional practice, and has shown that the medium can influence the message in terms of formal constraints and unmarked conventions. However, in order to be able to decide how to draft an email, it is not possible to refer to structural characteristics and

Table 13.1 Summary table of what is possible, feasible and appropriate in email interactions

Communicative purpose	Audience	Genre	Subgenre	Typical features
To inform about the organization's activities	Multiple	Noticeboard	'Business-letter email'	Standardized structure and language
To deliver other documents, attachments or other messages	Multiple Restricted group of stakeholders	Postman	'Email-email'	Usually short Mostly informal when addressed to a well-known addressee
To exchange information about the corporate activities	One interlocutor Restricted group of stakeholders	Dialogue	'Business-letter email' 'Email-email'	Variable nature Language and structure can be informal when addressed to a well-known addressee; But tend to become more formal and standardized when particular care is required

style of language alone, since in business communication the boundaries and expectations of the genre are often overruled by inventiveness and creativity, and by the specificity of the company's intentions and its relationship with the intended audience. Accordingly, it is not possible to explain genre variability on the grounds of the adoption of a new medium of communication. This is why the two definitions: "email-emails" and "business letter-emails" have been provisionally suggested.

The evidence gathered has shown that hard-copy business letters are hardly ever used or posted via "snail-mail" any longer, but their generic resources have been re-contextualized as a consequence of the widespread use of computer mediated communication, and in the process have led to different types of emails, which practitioners can draw upon, depending on their own agendas.

The world of email communication is very complex, especially if we focus on business emails. Even though an analysis like the present one

has uncovered several distinguishing characteristics of business emails, it remains fair to say, as remarked by Pérez Sabater et al., that: “[T]he oral characterizations and linguistic formality involved in the use of emails are still in need of research” (2008, 84).

Notes

1. This is why most of them selected embedded emails “made up of an initial message which starts the communication event, a series of internal, subordinated messages which depend on the first message to make sense, and a final message which brings the communication event to an end” (Gimenez 2005:235–236), which are likely to involve several people.
2. Such as for instance, contracted forms, and spelling mistakes (Mallon and Oppenheim, 2002: 9).
3. <http://www.radicati.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Email-Statistics-Report-2013–2017-Executive-Summary.pdf>

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